

Investigating the Impact of Instagram Travel Influencers on the Travel Intentions of Chinese Students Studying in the UK

Hongyu Lin

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

ABSTRACT

Social media influencers (SMIs) marketing has proven to be a successful strategy in the travel industry, engaging with specific consumer target groups in a trustworthy and approachable manner. Of the many social media platforms, Instagram is the most popular with Generation Y and Z. The majority of Chinese students in the UK for higher education are Gen Z and Chinese students spend the most on travel in the UK. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK. This study proposed hypotheses based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response model that the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers, their credibility and popularity & engagement have a positive effect on the generation of follower trust, and that trust has a positive effect on travel intention. To test the hypotheses, this study collected data from Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK by means of a questionnaire. The results showed that the credibility and popularity & engagement of Instagram travel influencers had a positive effect on followers generating trust and trust had a positive effect on travel intention, while the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers had no effect on trust. This study contributes to the existing literature for the impacts of SMIs on international students' travel intention and provides practical implications for travel agencies in the UK to choose appropriate SMIs to promote the destinations and for travel influencers to reap benefits from the travel industry.

KEYWORDS

Social media influencers (SMIs) marketing; Influencer marketing; Instagram travel influencers; Stimulus-Organism-Response model; Chinese students in the UK.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The popularity of web 2.0 technologies has considerably increased how important social media is to daily life [110]. Numerous businesses, particularly those in the travel and hospitality sectors, have seen a substantial change in their marketing communication strategies as a result of the strong information and communication conduits that social media has become [87]. The travel industry is the primary focus of this research. Websites and programmes that enable users to generate and share information or engage in social networks are known as social media and include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and others [89]. Over 4.9 billion people accessed the Internet and over 4.2 billion of them used social media in the world in 2021 [28]. Additionally, earlier studies have demonstrated that social media has always been crucial in determining where people choose to visit. Most customers (travellers) turn to social media for travel-related information, inspiration, and suggestions when making decisions, mostly because it has a wide audience and is a potent persuasive tool [61].

Influencer marketing, a particular form of social media marketing, has gained prominence in recent years [21]. Influencers are thought of as a new kind of opinion leader and brand advocate with the potential to influence followers [91]. They are people who have the power to affect other people's purchase decisions [1]. Influence often takes the form of persuading consumers to purchase a certain brand or item, and these goods or services typically fall under a variety of categories, including lifestyle, fashion, beauty, technology, travel, etc [56]. Influencers may be categorised into four groups, according to [45]: celebrities, industry experts and thought leaders, bloggers and content producers, and micro-influencers. Utilizing well-known celebrities or industry experts, however, is not inexpensive. Small firms find it challenging to use them for marketing initiatives as a result. Bloggers and micro-influencers are more well-liked by their followers than well-known celebrities are because they actively create and share material on social media platforms, which makes followers feel more reachable and a part of their community [76].

Due to the experiential character of travel products, prospective travellers rely on other people's online evaluations and travel experiences to make selections about locations and travel products [108], which lowers the risks involved with the booking process. As a result, the travel industry likes to utilise social media influencer (SMI) marketing, which has shown to be a successful and useful strategy for interacting with particular consumer target groups in a trustworthy and approachable manner [3]. Influencer marketing is growing common in the tourist industry in addition to the beauty and fashion sectors. Travel influencers who promote places on social media appear to encourage their followers to visit such places [27]. Therefore, the use of SMIs in the tourist sector, which combines the two, creates a wealth of potential for tourism organisations or destination marketing organisations.

Despite the fact that there are other social media sites, I will concentrate on Instagram. Instagram is a prominent social networking platform popular with generations Y and Z (born in 1981 and after) that enables users to publish photos and videos for others to view, comment on, and like. Over 40% of travellers between the ages of 18 and 33 who participated in Schofield's research prioritised how "Instagrammable" their vacation will be [6]. And currently the largest group of Instagram users worldwide is 18 - 34 years old, with 61.9% [28]. Besides, the age range of Chinese students coming to the UK for higher education is 17-25 years old [68], which also belongs to the generation Z. Gen Y and Z decide where to travel, where to stay, what to see and other travel factors based mainly on the travel experiences or advice posted by Instagrammers. According to a poll by Chase Card Services, 44% of Gen Y and Z travellers look for comments and suggestions on Instagram while making vacation plans [67]. Gen Y and Z believe that Instagram travel influencers' recommendations are more trustworthy and authentic than those of for-profit travel agencies. According to [54], Gen Y and Gen Z are more inclined to heed the advice of social media influencers they can relate to or look up to because they trust their peers more than businesses and celebrities. In addition, 38% of Generation Y and Z trust digital influencers and the material they produce, and influencer marketing plays a significant role in influencing their decision-making [54]. Additionally, Gen Y and Gen Z are the generations with the highest spending power and social media activity. They will continue to support tourism since they are ready to pay more for experiences [84].

1.2. Research Problem

The influence of social media marketing on customer purchasing decisions has already been the subject of several research [51], [39], [58]. There is, however, little study in this field of tourism, particularly in regard to social media users' travel intentions, given the idea of SMIs is still relatively new. Moreover, few studies have focused on international student travellers, despite the fact that they are one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in developed countries (including the UK) and are growing in importance [65]. Therefore, this research aims to fill the existing literature gap by investigating the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK.

Hence, this study will contribute to the current literature by testing the impact of influencer marketing on social media users' travel intentions, which will help marketers to develop and deliver appropriate promotional messages, properly understand the traveller population and tailor appropriate promotional strategies to the preferred target consumers (in this study, Chinese students studying in the UK).

1.3. Research Objectives

The aim of the research can be achieved by the following objectives:

- (1) To analyse the perceptions of Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK on social media marketing and Instagram travel influencers
- (2) To investigate the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that affect followers travel intention
- (3) To determine the connection between the attributes of Instagram travel influencers and the emotional reaction of followers to those attributes
- (4) To investigate the connection between the followers' emotional reaction to such attributes and their travel intention

1.4. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

- (1) What are the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that influence followers?
- (2) To what extent attributes elicit a favourable emotional reaction in followers, i.e. trust generated by followers?
- (3) How these attributes affect the trust between Instagram travel influencers and their followers?
- (4) How do followers' emotional reactions affect their intention to visit the destinations Instagram travel influencers promote?

2. LITERATURE REFERENCES

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the use of social media marketing and Instagram travel influencers in the tourism industry. It then applies the Stimulus-Organism-Response model to examine how followers' travel intentions are influenced by the characteristics of Instagram travel influencers in order to identify a research gap and develop testable hypotheses. Numerous researches have examined the effects of social media marketing on customer purchasing choices [58]. Besides, previous research found that the use of influencers has a positive impact on consumer purchase intentions [26]. However, there is still a lack of research on the use of social media influencers in travel, particularly in relation to the travel intentions of social media users. Furthermore, few studies have focused on international student travellers, though they are one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in developed countries (including the UK) and are increasing in importance [65]. Therefore, this research aims to fill the existing literature gap by investigating the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK.

2.2. Social Media Marketing and Tourism

In the tourist sector, social media marketing is growing in popularity. The promotion of a business and its goods using social media platforms is known as social media marketing [8]. It enables Internet users to share original content with other users via "blogs, videos, or images," or user generated

content (UGC), on a worldwide scale [14]. Due to the potent nature of social media platforms, marketers utilise social media to improve consumer loyalty and communication, generate traffic more effectively, and raise brand exposure [15], [31]. According to [57], social media looks to be an important strategic instrument in the management of tourism and hospitality. Travellers utilise social media to share their travel experiences by writing evaluations of their vacations online or by posting photos, videos, and blog entries. These methods have an unbiased and strong textual and visual impact that inspires other users to produce travel intentions [105]. In the next section, I will discuss the role of influencer marketing in tourism.

2.3. Influencer Marketing and Tourism

Influencer marketing is playing an important role in tourism. Influencer marketing represents a specific type of social media marketing that are industry efforts to ‘use content posted by SMIs to promote products or increase brand awareness for the company or brands’ [16]. According to [33], influencers are a new category of unaffiliated third-party promoters who sway the opinions of their followers by sharing texts, images, and videos from their daily lives on Instagram and other social media platforms. These key opinion leaders (KOLs) have gained recognition in recent years as more effective brand promoters than other marketing strategies, such as hiring well-known celebrities. The utilisation of KOLs, such as micro-celebrities, is seen to be efficient and cost-effective [42]. KOLs have demonstrated success in influencing customers [13]. These influencers are popular, trusted by their followers and they regularly interact with their followers as a way to shape their followers' perceptions and achieve persuasion of consumers to buy a product or brand [46]. Due to the experiential nature of the travel product, prospective travellers rely on other people's social media posts and online reviews to acquire a thorough understanding of the location and travel product in order to make judgments and lower the risk of the booking process [108]. As a result, travel companies have started to consider partnerships with social media influencers, not only to capture the attention of customers but also to increase sales [110]. In the next section, I will present Instagram and the reasons why Instagram travel influencers influence the travel intentions of Gen Y and Z.

2.4. Instagram and Instagram Travel Influencer

Instagram is recognised as a modern photo sharing social networking site popular with the generations Y and Z. It is also a smartphone app that allows users to take pictures or videos, change the look of the photo using various editing techniques and share them immediately with friends. By exchanging photos rather than text alone, interaction with friends and a larger group of users with common interests on Instagram has become more desirable, easy and fun [44]. Furthermore, by connecting the physical and digital worlds, Instagram increases online presence and identity, allowing for more positive interactions for personal reasons and business purposes [5]. [97] and [44] demonstrated that young people spend more time on Instagram more than on Facebook, possibly because young users are very comfortable capturing photos on their smartphones and sharing them immediately.

Instagram travel influencers' posts have become the main source of travel decisions for Gen Y and Z. Instagram travel influencers are the new type of independent third-party advocates who form followers' opinions by posting travel content on Instagram [33]. Gen Y and Z consider Instagram travel influencers' posts as a main information source when deciding travel factors like location [67]. [85] made the case that travel-related content shared on Instagram travel influencers frequently incites others, giving them the impression that they want to visit the same places and have the same experiences as the other influencers, which influences their travel plans. Gen Y and Z are frequently exposed to a variety of moving pictures, videos, and messages due to Instagram influencers who frequently share their life with the public, which can significantly affect their decision-making process [35]. Gen Y and Z are the generations that often identify with the influencers' lifestyles and therefore influencers might affect the travel choices of Gen Y and Z who looked up them. Additionally, Gen Y and Z see an Instagram influencer with a sizable following, solid connections

with their audience, and engaging posts as trustworthy and dependable, thus making the same travel decision as influencers. [85]. In the next section, I will explain the theoretical model for this study.

2.5. Stimulus-Organism-Response Model

This study will develop a theoretical framework based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. Mehrabian and Russell proposed the S-O-R model in 1974. It was initially employed in the investigation of environmental psychology, and subsequently it was also utilised in the research of consumer psychology. The idea describes how consumer behaviour and emotions are interrelated [10]. The S-O-R model defines stimulation as outside forces that have an impact on the person. The organism is the end outcome of the stimulus and acts as a bridge between the outside forces influencing the individual and the behaviour that results. Response, meanwhile, is the outcome or the person's choice [7].

The characteristics of Instagram travel influencers serve as the stimuli in this study and have an effect on consumers' emotional reactions. [7] asserted that external stimuli are employed when the S-O-R system is used to depict consumer behaviour. Trust generated by followers is used as the organism. As the ultimate objective of brand marketing, trust is one of the key elements in forging a close relationship between consumers and companies [43]. Consequently, it is seen as a favourable emotion produced by the follower. In the S-O-R model, the reaction is represented by the follower's final outcome. These effects "may take the form of avoidance or approach behaviours" [82]. This study focuses on approach behaviours, i.e. the intention to visit the destination, which suggest favourable activities that may be directed toward a certain place. In the next section, I will discuss how the attributes of Instagram travel influencers as stimuli influence their followers' emotional responses.

2.6. Instagram Travel Influencers as Stimuli

Quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers, credibility and popularity of Instagram travel influencers and their engagement with followers have been shown to make their followers generate trust to them.

2.6.1. Quality of Information generated by Instagram travel influencers

The high-quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers helps to create followers' trust to them [86]. Defined quality of information as "the extent to which customers perceive information to be valuable, good, current, accurate and reliable". According to [17], the influence of Instagram travel influencers depends to some extent on the quality of information they provide through blogs, posts or videos. The way the Instagram travel influencers create content to evoke awareness of products and services among their followers is known as content marketing, which helps brands reach their target audience more widely and build relationships with them [72], [2]. Instagram travel influencers create an emotional bond (i.e. making their followers generate trust to them) with their followers in order to gain customers brand loyalty and their support. Instagram travel influencers generate valuable and satisfying content for an emotional connection [96]. [20] also argued that emotional connections between influencers and consumers are best established when the content is natural, honest and realistic. Additionally, Instagram travel influencers offer material that caters to their audience's demands [39]. The information presented should be interesting to look at and useful. Therefore, the content posted by influencers will ultimately have a memorable, beneficial or lasting impact on followers [90], [53].

2.6.2. Credibility of Instagram travel influencers

For highly-credible content generated by Instagram travel influencers, followers are more inclined to trust and accept them. One of the most used metrics for measuring the value of marketing endorsements is credibility [92]. Source credibility, according to [69] and [37], can positively influence consumer perceptions. Receiver regard and acceptance of communicators with high source

credibility has been discovered by researchers [64]. The message source's credibility reflects the recipient's level of trust in the sender [104]. Source credibility in the context of social media refers to the degree to which content creators are regarded as trustworthy and knowledgeable [111]. A study by [34] categorised credibility into two key elements, which are expertise and trustworthiness.

Expertise signifies that the source is knowledgeable and competent [73]. [99] claimed that a credible source can influence consumers' beliefs, opinions, approaches and actions. Consumer responses and behaviours have been proven to be significantly influenced by expertise as a measure of credibility [102]. It also influences consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, as [93] have concluded. If an influential person is an expert in his or her field, he or she is considered trustworthy (reliable) [23].

Trustworthiness as an element in being measured for credibility is described by [73] as the honesty and character of the source of information as perceived by the buyer. [66] stated that influencers being perceived as experts in the field and trustworthy have a greater impact on followers' perceptions. The validity of information rises with the sense of a celebrity's knowledge and reliability, according to [50]. In other words, consumers are anticipated to be more receptive to products that are promoted by well-known influencers than to those that are simply advertised to [78]. Furthermore, reliable sources of information ensure that consumers better understand the brand message and thus are more likely to predict the resulting possible travel intentions [98], [101]. Therefore, social media influencers who are seen as experts and trustworthy have a higher impact on the behaviour of their followers.

2.6.3. Popularity of Instagram travel influencers and Engagement with followers

Followers tend to trust the Instagram travel influencers with high popularity. According to [26], an influencer's popularity is heavily influenced by their followers' base. This demonstrates the scope of the network of Instagram travel influencers. Therefore, the more supporters there are, the greater the scope for the endorsing posts. The influencers with more followers had more opportunities to learn about different topics and perspectives and are thus more capable of reaching beyond their own social environment, which may facilitate opinion leadership. Besides, [18] proposed that a measure of influencers with different types of influence, the first being the influencer's audience size, or the number of followers they have. Since ideas travel more rapidly and widely when an influencer has a high number of followers, opinion leadership may be easier for them to exercise because interpersonal influence is also increased. However, large groups of followers are not necessarily representative of the popularity of all influencers, e.g. micro-influencers [30]. As [52] point out, the popularity of influencers does not equate to opinion leadership. When influencers have a lot of social media followers, the sense of connection that followers have with them may dissipate, leading to a decrease in follower identification with them [52]. [30] found that Instagram micro-travel influencers with fewer followers were also popular with their followers, and followers prefer to trust these micro-influencers instead of influencers with more followers.

According to [36], trust develops between influencers and their followers when there is a high amount of connection or engagement between them. Engagement/interaction with followers is focused on cooperative communication and information exchange and is generally accomplished by asking for input. For Instagram travel influencers, they interact primarily through comments on content with their supporters. Positive or negative comments and opinions are offered by followers, and the relationship between them strengthens when followers perceive that the influencers will appreciate their constructive criticism and make adjustments. This contributes to build a greater trust between influencers and followers [100]. In the next section, I will explain the role of trust in followers' purchase intention and in the influencer-follower relationship.

2.7. Trust as Organism

Followers' trust in Instagram travel influencers positively impacts their purchase intentions. According to [55], trust develops when the people involved have a shared understanding and are

prepared to rely on one another when faced with danger. A confident positive anticipation about another person's motives, trust is an expectation that is subject to certain limitations and restrictions [12]. From an online marketing perspective, trust has been designed as a key factor in building and maintaining successful long-term online transactional relationships [71]. According to [32], consumers must have enough trust in the parties involved for them to submit sensitive financial information in order to complete their online transactions. The credibility of SMIs and the quality of information they provide are necessary conditions for followers to believe influencers' postings, according to earlier research on SMIs [59]. However, [75] argued that trust is developed between influencers and their followers when there is a high degree of interaction between the two. Moreover, [59] found that followers' trust in influencers posts positively influenced their purchase intentions.

In the relationship between an influencer and a follower, trust is also essential, as only when Instagram travel influencers are trusted by their followers can the former encourage their followers to follow their advice [25]. Although Instagram travel influencers are motivated to generate more revenue for brands, for the same brand, consumers are more likely to trust the views of the influencer than traditional print media advertising. According to [49], photos and information shared by fellow tourists are considered more trustworthy than official branding. In order to influence their followers' purchase decisions, influencers must first earn their followers' trust [38]. Even when paid material is used, followers still believe their influencers when influencers provide honest product reviews whether positive or negative [74]. In the next section, I will explain define of the intention to visit and the reason why Instagram followers generate travel intention.

2.8. Intention to Visit as Response

Followers' travel intention is largely based on trust in Instagram travel influencers. The behavioural intentions of consumers may be a good predictor of their purchasing behaviour in the future. [47]. The main purpose of influencer marketing is to positively influence consumers' purchase decisions [19]. The intention to travel was described by [19] as "a strong desire to go to a certain place in the near future." According to research by [19], customers' propensity to buy is significantly influenced by their level of trust. Consumers' propensity to buy in this study is defined as their desire to travel. [60] discovered that followers' willingness to follow advice from Instagram travel influencers was significantly determined by their level of trust in such influencers. In addition, [106] argued that there must be consistency between Instagram influencers and the destinations they promote to improve the chance that their followers will actually visit. In the next section, I will present the research model about this study.

2.9. Research Model

The research model shown in Figure 1 was created using the aforementioned study and the SOR model. In this study, the attributes of Instagram travel influencers, i.e. quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers, their credibility and popularity & engagement, are treated as stimuli. Trust is seen as the organism, and intention to visit to the destination is regarded as the response.

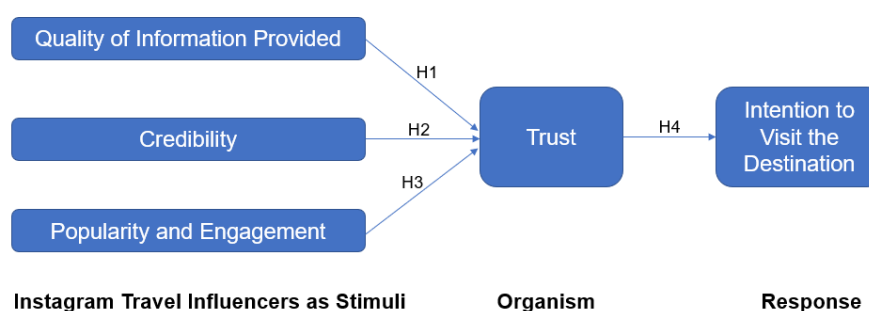


Figure 1. Research Model

2.10. Hypotheses

In light of the above arguments in literature review, I have proposed the following four hypotheses, which are from sections 2.6, 2.7, 2.8.

H1: Quality of Information provided by Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on building trust

H2: Credibility of Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on building trust

H3: Popularity of Instagram travel influencers and Engagement with their followers has a beneficial effect on building trust

H4: Trust in Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on the intention to visit the destination

2.11. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on how Instagram travel influencers impact the travel intentions of their followers and presented the four hypotheses above. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology of the study, including research design, data collection method, sampling method, data analysis method and ethical considerations. The methodology provides an overview of the entire methodology design process to identify the correct methods for achieving the research aim and objectives and drawing conclusions.

3.2. Research Design

This research philosophy of the study falls under positivism, and this study uses a deductive theory approach. The reason for choosing them in this study is that their focus is both on testing hypotheses derived based on existing literature, which is consistent with the purpose of this study. The positivist research paradigm places a strong focus on measuring variables and evaluating general causal explanation-related hypotheses [62]. The deductive method develops hypotheses based on ideas already in existence before designing a research plan to determine whether the hypotheses are true [103]. Both of these fit with the purpose of this study, in order to test whether the attributes of Instagram travel influencers have positive impact on the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK. The attributes of Instagram travel influencers, which are quality of information generated by them, the credibility, popularity and engagement of them have been examined in the existing literature to have a positive impact on followers' trust generating, and trust in Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on the intention to visit the destination. This study proposes the hypothesis that these three attributes of Instagram travel influencers will also positively influence the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK, and then test and validate the hypothesis.

For research method, this study adopts quantitative method. Because it focuses on collecting numerical data through questionnaires and extending it to the entire target group, which is in line with the purpose of this study to collect primary data and is similar with the characteristics of positivist research and deductive approach. According to [77], quantitative research methods concentrate on precise measurements and statistical or numerical analysis of data gathered through surveys, questionnaires, and opinion polls. They can also be used to manipulate pre-existing statistics through the application of computational techniques. Additionally, quantitative research places a strong focus on gathering numerical data and using it to generalise to populations or explain a particular occurrence.

Both of these fit with the purpose of this research, to collect a certain number of objective thoughts from Chinese student consumers studying in the UK on the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that influence their travel intentions, and then analyse the numerical data collected and generalise the findings to the entire group of Chinese students studying in the UK. In order to offer evidence in a quantitative format for positivist research, hard data must be primarily collected in numerical form [80]. Deductive approaches are also applicable to measure concepts quantitatively [103]. These are similar with the characteristics of quantitative research method.

Moreover, the study adopts a positivist research paradigm and a quantitative research method also because both focus on testing hypotheses related to general causal explanations, which is consistent with the aim of this study. The majority of quantitative research techniques adhere to the established scientific framework for evaluating hypotheses and theories [4]. The most crucial aspect of quantitative research is the requirement to test hypotheses against actual data to see if they are supported. Additionally, the majority of quantitative researchers look for causal connections that will enable them to generalise and make predictions with a high degree of probability [4]. This is consistent with the focus of positivist research paradigm to test hypotheses related to general causal explanations. Based on above, the reasons for choosing them are because that the aim of this study is to explore the causal relationship between the attributes of Instagram travel influencers and consumer travel intentions and that the relationship is open to interpretation, hence the need to collect empirical data to generalise the findings to the entire group and test the hypotheses, i.e. explaining whether it is valid that the former would have a positive impact on the latter. In the next section, I will explain the data collection method of this research.

3.3. Data Collection Method

From the above, quantitative methods allow for data collection through questionnaires. Therefore, primary data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire. Questionnaires save the time and effort of the investigators. In addition, it is simpler to process and analyse the results of the questionnaire and to quantify the findings [24]. The questionnaire was planned to be posted on WeChat, Little Red Book (Chinese social media platforms), What's app and Instagram through Qualtrics (an online survey tool) for potential respondents to fill in. The survey (Appendix A) was created in both English and Chinese. It was chosen to suggest an online data collecting strategy because to the highly infectious nature of Covid-19 and the need to prevent face-to-face interaction with a geographically scattered target group.

A pilot study with 16 participants was conducted to test whether the scales used in the study contained items that were not regarded or comprehended in the same way under real conditions and to reduce the likelihood of problems being encountered in formal application. The pilot research is crucial for learning how the scale's statements are interpreted and answers are categorised in relation to the pertinent literature [107]. The results of the pilot study calculated a Cronbach Alpha (α) coefficient for all Likert-type statements in the scale of 0.685. Therefore, no changes were made to the scale, as the score indicated an acceptable level of item consistency and there were no other statements that would have added significantly to the reliability, so the scale is in its final form.

The questionnaire was structured in three main sections (see Table 1). The options in Question 1 were divided by generation, with 18-27 years being Gen Z born after 1995 and with 28-42 years being Gen Y born between 1980 and early 1990. The options in Question 4 were based on the report [94] that the average monthly disposable income of Chinese students studying in the UK is £2,353. On a 5-point Likert scale, from "Strongly Disagree (1)" to "Strongly Agree (5)," respondents were asked to choose an answer.

Table 1. The Structure of Questionnaire

Questions	Types
Questions 1-4	To get demographic characteristics of the participants (age, gender, education level, income status)
Questions 5-6	To filter out valid respondents (whether or not to follow travel influencers on instagram and time spent using instagram each day)
Questions 7	q1-q9: To measure various characteristics of instagram travel influencers q10-q12: To measure the trust generated q13-q15: To measure the impact on intention to visit q16-q17: Reverse questions to measure attitudes or opinions more fully and to prevent respondents from giving careless answers

However, some problems may be encountered during the questionnaire collection process. Participants may be reluctant to face sensitive questions such as income, leading to a situation where they may not answer honestly. To address this issue, I will use Qualtrics, a confidential survey tool, to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the survey data to gain the trust of the participants. Besides, participants may not respond carefully resulting in low validity of the collected results. To address this, I set up reverse questions in the questionnaire to prevent participants from giving careless responses. In the next section, I will explain the sampling method of this research.

3.4. Sampling Method

The target population for this study includes all Chinese students studying in the UK, and following travel influencers on Instagram. The sampling frame consisted of Chinese Generations Y and Z studying in the UK, who follow Instagram travel influencers. The reasons for choosing the population are that Gen Y and Z are active users of Instagram and Chinese students are the biggest spenders on travel in the UK. People born after 1980 are referred to be members of generations Y and Z. [11]. It is thought that they use technology more frequently. Additionally, 80% of Instagram users are from generations Y and Z, making it a popular social media network for them [88]. Besides, China is the largest international market for UK universities, accounting for 35% of all non-EU students. And Chinese students are the biggest spenders on travel in the UK, with four times the disposable income of UK students, and focus their spending on leisure and entertainment such as travel [95].

For sampling method, this study uses a voluntary response sampling from non-probability sampling. This is because this type of sample is more readily available and less costly, helping to obtain primary data more quickly for this study that needs to be completed in a limited time frame. In non-probability sampling, not everyone has the opportunity to be included. Voluntary response sampling is a sort of non-probability sampling when respondents provide the sample willingly (e.g., by responding to a public online survey). It is simpler and less expensive to get this kind of sample [63]. Due to the need to obtain primary data in a limited time frame for this study, this sampling method is more appropriate. The sample size for the study was 150.

However, there are some limitations in the sample strategy. Non-probability sampling carries a higher risk of sampling bias. This means that the method makes weaker inferences about the aggregate than a probability sample and may draw more limited conclusions. Besides, insufficient sample size was collected due to time constraints, which may also lead the results not being generalizable to all target populations and thus reducing the generalizability of the results. To improve the generalizability of the results, I am still committed to making the sample as representative of the total as possible by controlling for the quality of the questionnaire. In the next section, I will clarify the data analysis method of this research.

3.5. Data Analysis Method

The results of the survey are analysed using SPSS software based on my current knowledge. Descriptive analysis and statistics, reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis and regression analysis are some of the data analysis techniques employed. Descriptive analysis includes demographic data about the respondents, such as their age, gender, education level and income, as well as descriptive statistics like means, skewness and kurtosis. The consistency of variables with the concepts they are meant to measure is evaluated by a reliability test [41]. It is usual practise to assess the internal consistency and reliability of measuring items using Cronbach's alpha [83]. Validity test is an assessment of the validity and energy efficiency of the items within the questionnaire, which helps to filter out the useful items. Correlation analysis assesses whether the variables are correlated with each other and the strength of the correlation, using Pearson's correlation coefficient to quantify the strength of the connection. The purpose of the regression analysis is to determine the casual links between the two variables. In the next section, I will describe the ethical considerations of this research.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The terms and conditions of the data suppliers are respected by the secondary data used for this study. I make no attempt to identify any specific persons in the data and don't create any tables or charts that make it possible to do so. My data collection is sensitive to any groups with specific cultural, religious, or societal views when gathering primary data for this project. Beyond the hazards the individuals face in their everyday lives, my experiment does not induce psychological stress or worry. Members of vulnerable groups including minors (under18), persons with learning or communication disabilities, those in custody, etc. are not involved in my research. Additionally, my research avoids talking about delicate issues impacting specific participants or those involved in criminal activity (e.g. drug use). In addition, I make sure that participants were completely aware of what their participation in the questionnaire would involve before they answered it. I explained to participants that they gave their informed consent and that participation was completely optional. I told participants they may leave the survey whenever they wanted and for any reason up until it was sent in. I assured participants that the information they provided would be kept private. I obtained their consent, both electronically and in writing, prior to the start of primary data collection. And that these consents would be kept confidential and that I would produce them if requested by the university. Moreover, I received ethical clearance from my university for the ethics form I applied for.

3.7. Conclusion

To summarize, this research uses a positivist research paradigm, a deductive theoretical approach and a quantitative research method. The study uses a voluntary response sampling to collect primary data from 150 Chinese Generation Y and Z students studying in the UK through an online questionnaire. The collected data are subjected to descriptive analysis and statistics, reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis and linear regression analysis through SPSS software. And, this study was granted ethical clearance from my university. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of this study.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this study through descriptive analysis and statistics, reliability test and validity test, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The purpose of this section is to

verify whether the data collected is consistent with the existing literature. In the next section, I will discuss the results of descriptive analysis.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1. Profile of Respondents

This section focuses on describing the demographics of the participants. It includes the age group, gender, education level and monthly disposable income status of the participants. In addition, this section also provides information on whether they follow travel influencers on Instagram and how much time they spend on Instagram each day. Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percent
Age 18-27 years old	132	83
28-40 years old	18	11.3
Above 40 years old	3	1.9
Gender Male	35	22
Female	112	70.4
Prefer not to say	5	3.1
High school or below	4	2.5
Education Bachelor's degree	63	39.6
Master's or above	85	53.5
£1000 and below	77	48.4
£1001-£1500	36	22.6
£1501-£2000	19	11.9
Income status £2001-£2500	12	7.5
£2501-£3000	3	1.9
£3001-£3500	3	1.9
£3501 and above	2	1.3
Whether or not Yes follow Instagram	117	73.6
travel influencers No	34	21.4
0-30 minutes	53	33.3
Time spent 31-60 minutes	45	28.3
using Instagram 1-2 hours	21	13.2
each day 2-3 hours	3	1.9
More than 3 hours	1	0.6

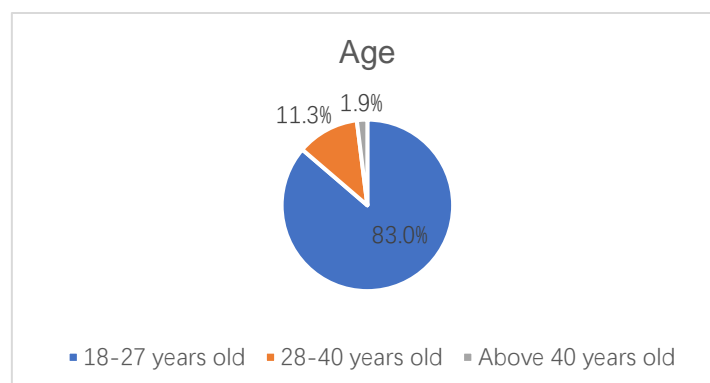


Figure 2. Respondents' Profiles based on Age

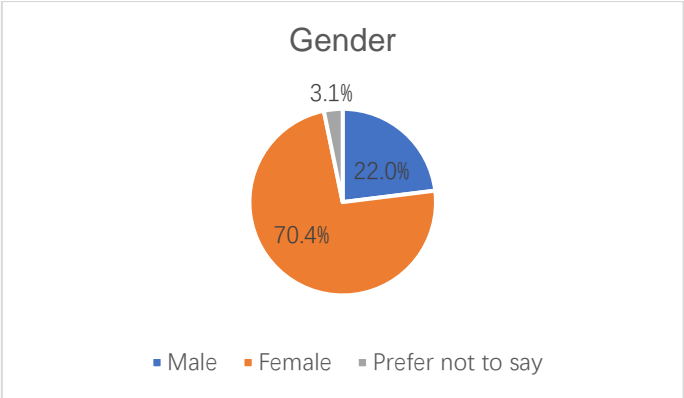


Figure 3. Respondents' Profiles based on Gender

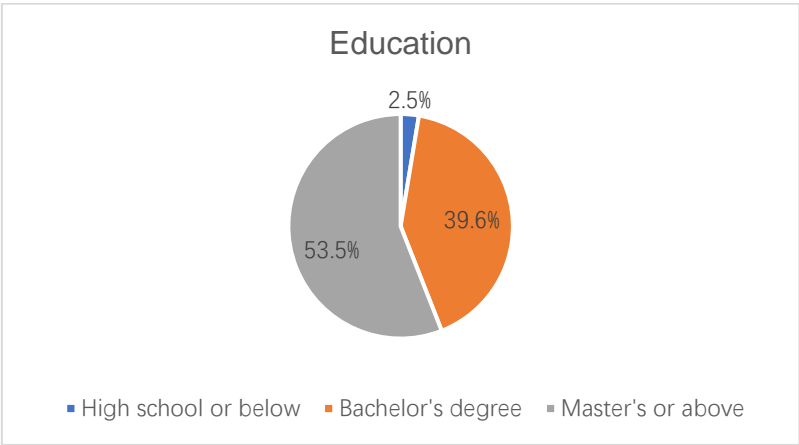


Figure 4. Respondents' Profiles based on Education

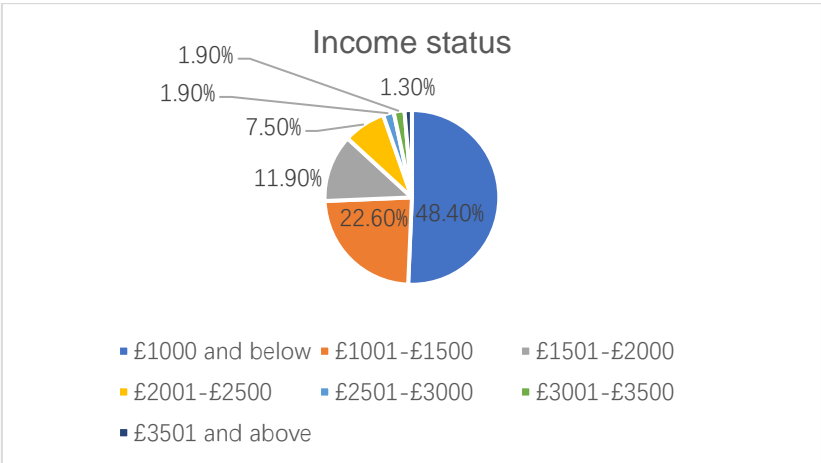


Figure 5. Respondents' Profiles based on Income

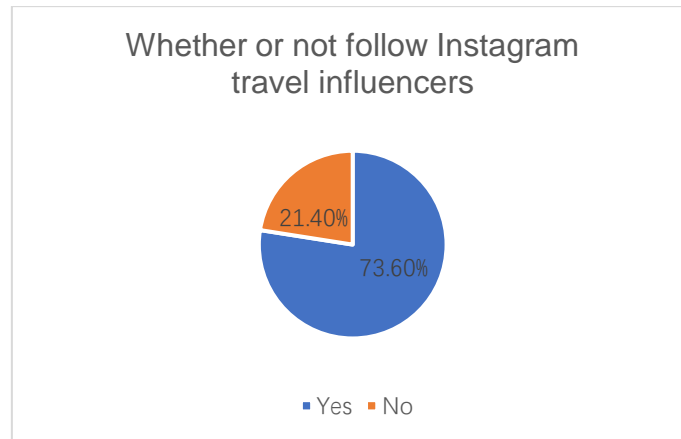


Figure 6. Respondents’ Profiles based on the Choice of Following Instagram Travel Influencers

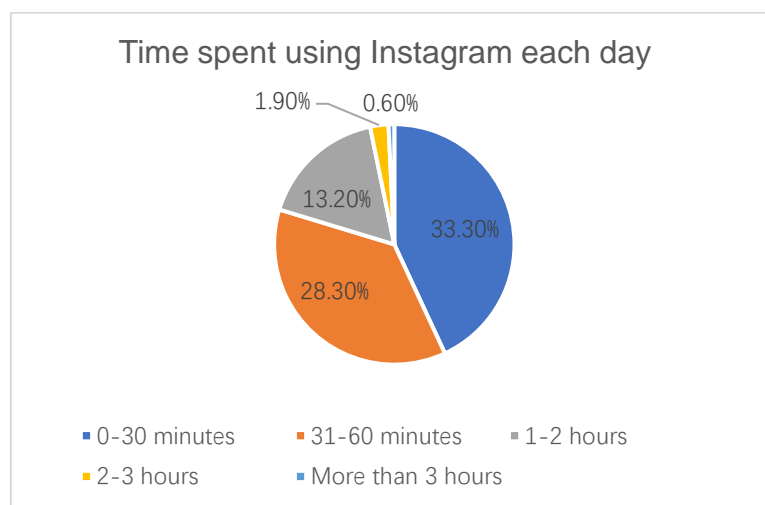


Figure 7. Respondents’ Profiles based on Instagram Using Time

As shown by the results in Table 2 and Figures 2-7, 70.4% of the participants were female and only 22% were male, with the majority of respondents being between the ages of 18 and 27, indicating that the majority of female Generation Z Chinese students studying in the UK who participated in this survey. Besides, the results show that the majority of respondents are educated to Masters level and above, and their monthly spending is mostly £1,000 and below, suggesting that the majority of respondents in this survey are Chinese students coming to the UK for postgraduate study and spending at a lower level. When asked if they follow Instagram travel influencers, 73.6% of respondents chose 'Yes' and most of them use Instagram for less than an hour a day, which shows that most of responses in this survey are valid and that these respondents not use Instagram for a very long time each day. In the next section, I will show the results of descriptive statistics.

4.2.2. Descriptive Statistics

A comparison of the mean values of the items measuring the variables revealed that respondents were most likely to consider the popularity and engagement of influencers when choosing their favourite Instagram travel influencers, and that respondents' intention to visit the destination was most likely to be influenced by the Instagram travel influencers. This is because these items have the highest mean values, indicating that more respondents support these variables. The mean is the average score for each item, with higher scores representing the stronger attitudes [109]. A summary of the descriptive statistics is given in Table 3 below. Among the independent variables, the statement 6 – “They have a large number of followers” with a mean of 4.14, statement 7 – “They regularly interact with their followers on Instagram” with a mean of 3.82 and statement 8 – “They are warm and

welcoming towards their followers” with a mean of 3.79 (which measures the popularity and engagement) had the highest mean rating. This shows that participants are likely to concur that participants' preferences for Instagram travel influencers are influenced by the influencers' popularity and engagement. Among the dependent variables, statements 13 – “Browsing the Instagram pages of travel influencers makes me want to travel” (mean 4.25) and 14 – “I would visit the destination most likely because of the travel influencers recommendation” (mean 4.19), which measures the intention to visit the destination, have the highest mean rating, indicating that the majority of respondents are likely to concur that Instagram travel influencers play a major role in generating travel intentions.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Quality of information	1. I receive detailed and accurate information about a specific destination	3.54	.910	-.959	.612
	2. I can easily access the information they provide	3.78	.814	-1.239	2.497
Credibility	3. They are experts in this field	3.60	.910	-.367	-.010
	4. They are trustworthy	3.63	.767	-.693	.755
	5. I get honest information from them	3.56	.885	-.160	-.302
Popularity and Engagement	6. They have a large number of followers	4.14	.794	-1.185	2.273
	7. They regularly interact with their followers on instagram	3.82	.809	-.359	-.240
	8. They are warm and welcoming towards their followers	3.79	.778	-.640	.948
	9. They accept constructive criticism from their followers and make improvements	3.53	.857	-.094	-.187
Trust	10. I believe the information provided by the travel influencers is true	3.64	.774	-.205	-.259
	11. I trust their recommendations are reliable	3.70	.848	-.269	-.460
	12. I trust their recommendations are trustworthy	3.70	.857	-.469	.108
Intention to Visit the Destination	13. Browsing the instagrm pages of travel influencers makes me want to travel	4.25	.790	-1.124	1.869
	14. I would visit the destination most likely because of the influencers recommendation	4.19	.768	-.926	.954
	15. When I visit the destination, I may keep in mind some tips from travel influencers	3.99	.839	-.792	.820

The Skewness and Kurtosis tests showed that the data in this survey were normally distributed and allowed for further correlation analysis and regression analysis. Before performing correlation analysis and regression analysis, it is often necessary to use the Skewness and Kurtosis tests to check whether the data are normally distributed. Kurtosis controls how heavy the distribution's tails are, whereas Skewness effectively measures the symmetry of the distribution. The data can be regarded as regularly distributed if the absolute values of the statistics for Skewness and Kurtosis fall between the range of -2 and +2. Table 3 shows that the Skewness and Kurtosis statistics for the majority of the items measuring variables lie between -2 and 2. Only statement 2 "I can easily access the information they provide" and statement 6 "They have a large number of followers" have Kurtosis statistics greater than 2 but close to 2, which does not affect the normal distribution of the data and allows for the correlation analysis and regression analysis that follows. In the next section, I will discuss the results of reliability test.

4.3. Reliability Test

The consistency and stability of variables and scales may be evaluated using reliability tests [81]. Cronbach's Alpha is frequently used to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of measurement items [83]. Many academics held the view that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.8 is good, 0.6 - 0.7 is acceptable, and that anything below 0.6 indicates that the questionnaire needs to be revised [70], [40].

The reliability of items used in this survey is good, because the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient used to measure reliability was calculated to be 0.852, indicating good reliability. Table 4 shows an overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.852 for the 17 items (including the two reverse questions) in this survey, indicating that the overall reliability of the items used in this survey is high. Therefore, these data can be used for further analysis and testing. In the next section, I will discuss the results of validity test.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Cronbach 's Alpha	No. of Items
0.852	17

4.4. Validity Test

Validity tests can be used to assess the validity and truthfulness of an item's response to a corresponding concept or variable. The structural logic between the test items and the relevant variables may also be examined using validity tests. The validity increases in direct proportion to the degree of agreement between test findings and the target measurement [40]. The validity of the items in this study will be evaluated using two criteria: content validity and structural validity. In the next section, I will show the results of content validity test.

4.4.1. Content Validity Test

Because all scales and questions for each variable in this study were obtained from previously validated studies, the content validity test of this survey scored highly. Logical or rational validity are other terms for content validity. It is used to determine whether a variable's content is acceptable and accurately reflective of the variables the study is trying to assess [79]. As shown in Table 5, all items measuring each variable were obtained from previously validated studies. In the next section, I will show the results of structural validity test.

Table 5. Source of Items Measuring Variables

Variables	Items	Source
Quality of Information	1. I receive detailed and accurate information about a specific destination 2. I can easily access the information they provide	Ahmad et al., 2016
Credibility	3. They are experts in this field 4. They are trustworthy 5. I get honest information from them	Metzger et al., 2003
Popularity and Engagement	6. They have a large number of followers 7. They regularly interact with their followers on instagram 8. They are warm and welcoming towards their followers 9. They accept constructive criticism from their followers and make improvements	De Vierman et al., 2017; Wang and Li, 2016
Trust	10. I believe the information provided by the travel influencers is true 11. I trust their recommendations are reliable 12. I trust their recommendations are trustworthy	Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Piskorski, 2016
Intention to Visit the Destination	13. Browsing the instagram pages of travel influencers makes me want to travel 14. I would visit the destination most likely because of the travel influencers recommendation 15. When I visit the destination, I may keep in mind some tips from travel influencers	Ki and Kim, 2016

4.4.2. Structural Validity Test

[79] demonstrates how structural validity, also known as construct validity, may be used to determine if a questionnaire actually captures the information it purports to. The questionnaire has strong structural validity if the results of the statistical test show that it is successful in elucidating the respondent's attributes.

The survey has good structural validity as the total explained variables reached an acceptable 66.296% by factor analysis, indicating that the items in this survey are valid in measuring their corresponding variables. Factor analysis is used in this study to assess the questionnaire's validity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests are used to determine whether the data are suitable for factor analysis before the study begins [79]. According to [48], a KMO value of 0.9 or more is very excellent, a value of 0.8 is good, and a value of less than 0.5 is not acceptable for factor analysis. A correlation between the variables and their suitability for factor analysis are shown by the Bartlett's test's Sig. value of 0.000, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05 [9]. As shown in Table 6, in this survey, the KMO value is 0.842 and the Bartlett's Test Sig. is 0.000, indicating that the data from this survey are suitable for factor analysis. Secondly, this study used factor analysis to examine 17 items from five variables measuring the characteristics of Instagram travel influencers. The results are shown in Table 7. Five principal components were extracted from the test and the total explained variables reached an acceptable 66.296%. As a consequence, the test findings show that the items in this study have strong construct validity and are well reflective of the respective variables. In the next section, I will discuss the results of correlation analysis.

Table 6. Structural Validity Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.842
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	652.022
	df	136
	Sig.	.000

Table 7. Factor Analysis

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1. receive detailed and accurate information	5.756	33.861	33.861	5.756	33.861	33.861
2.easily access the information	1.729	10.170	44.031	1.729	10.170	44.031
3.experts in this field	1.685	9.909	53.940	1.685	9.909	53.940
4. trustworthy	1.093	6.429	60.369	1.093	6.429	60.369
5. get honest information	1.008	5.927	66.296	1.008	5.927	66.296
6. have a large number of followers	.816	4.797	71.094			
7. regularly interact with their followers	.754	4.432	75.526			
8. warm and welcoming	.693	4.079	79.605			
9. accept constructive criticism and make improvements	.575	3.380	82.985			
10. believe the information is true	.519	3.052	86.037			
11. trust their recommendation are reliable	.506	2.977	89.014			
12. trust their recommendation are trustworthy	.437	2.569	91.583			
13. Browsing the instagram papes of travel influencers makes me want to travel	.349	2.053	93.636			
14. visit the destination most likely because of the recommendation	.303	1.784	95.420			
15. visit the destination, may keep in mind some tips	.298	1.756	97.175			
16. cannot easily access the information	.262	1.539	98.714			
17. mislead followers due to be paid by brands	.219	1.286	100.000			

4.5. Correlation Analysis

In order to explain the strength of the link between the variables, correlation analysis often uses Pearson's correlation coefficient. Correlation analysis is a statistical analytical method that aids in testing for potential relationships between two or more variables. According to [22], when correlation coefficients are between -1 and 1, the strength of a relationship may be stated as the correlation coefficient's absolute value (r), which is categorised as shown in Table 8. According to Objectives 3 and 4 of this study, correlation tests are required in order to determine the relationship between the three characteristics of Instagram travel influencers and trust, as well as the relationship between trust and intention to visit the destination.

Table 8. Table of Correlation Coefficients

0.1 < r < 0.29	weak association
0.3 < r < 0.49	moderate association
0.5 < r < 1	strong association

There are positive relationships between all dependent variables and independent variables in this study, as the correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r) ranging from 0.410 to 0.652 with $\text{sig.} < 0.05$, indicating that the relationships between the variables are significant and moderately and highly positive. The correlation analysis shown in Table 9 indicates that all correlations are significant at the 0.01 level ($\text{sig.} < 0.05$), demonstrating a positive correlation between all dependent and independent variables. The results show a moderate correlation between quality of information and trust ($r=0.410$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$). There is a high correlation between credibility and trust ($r=0.652$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$), popularity & engagement and trust ($r=0.633$, $\text{sig.}=0.000$). This suggests that Objective 3 can be achieved and that there is a positive relationship between all three attributes of Instagram travel influencers and the trust generated by followers. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that there is a moderate association between trust and intention to visit the destination, with $r=0.420$ and $\text{sig.}=0.000$. This suggests that Objective 4 can be achieved and that there is a positive connection between the trust generated by followers and their intention to visit the destination. In the next section, I will discuss the results of regression analysis.

Table 9. Correlation Analysis

Correlations						
		Quality of Information	Credibility	Popularity and Engagement	Trust	Intention to Visit the Destination
Quality of Information	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	122				
Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.447**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	118	118			
Popularity and Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.385**	.573**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	119	118	119		
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.410**	.652**	.633**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	117	117	117	117	
Intention to Visit the Destination	Pearson Correlation	.318**	.394**	.370**	.420**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	117	117	117	117	117

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4.6. Regression Analysis

A simple and trustworthy statistical analysis method that can offer in-depth understanding of the relationship between two or more variables is regression analysis. Finding out which independent factors actually affect the dependent variable and how they interact with one another might be helpful [70]. Based on Hypotheses 1 to 4 proposed in this study, the causal relationship between the three attributes of Instagram travel influencers and trust generated by followers and the causal relationship between trust and intention to visit the destination needs to be assessed. Therefore, in order to further investigate the relationship between the variables, a regression analysis is required. There are two stages to this procedure. The dependent variable for the first multiple linear regression analysis is trust. In the second simple linear regression analysis, the dependent variable is the intention to visit the destination.

4.6.1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

By constructing a linear equation, multiple linear regression may be used to examine associations between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable [70]. Based on Hypotheses 1 to 3, it was assumed that the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers, their credibility, popularity and engagement have an effect on the trust generated by followers. Therefore, in order to examine the relationship between three independent variables (quality of information,

credibility, popularity & engagement) and one dependent variable (trust), multiple linear regression is used.

Tables 10, 11, and 12 display the outcomes of the multiple regression analysis. The R-squared value in Table 10 is .528, which indicates that the research model fits satisfactorily. Furthermore, data suggests that when assessing the trust created by followers, the independent variables (quality of information, credibility, and popularity & engagement) account for 52.8% of the variance ($R=0.727$, $R^2=0.528$).

Table 10. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis – Model Summary

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.727 ^a	.528	.516	.505263944775238
a. Predictors: (Constant), Quality of information, Credibility, Popularity and engagement				
b. Dependent Variable: Trust				

The observed result of the F-test is 42.182, which corresponds to a Sig. value of 0.000, as shown by the ANOVA test (Table 11). The linear relationship between the variables is shown to be significant since the significance threshold is less than 0.001, and the regression linear model is shown to be an effective predictor of the test variance of trust. This suggests that trust is influenced by at least one of the independent variables.

Table 11. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis -- ANOVA

ANOVA^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.306	3	10.769	42.182	.000 ^b
	Residual	28.848	113	.255		
	Total	61.154	116			
a. Dependent Variable: Trust						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Quality of information, Credibility, Popularity and engagement						

The coefficients table show the different Standard Coefficients Beta value for each predictor on trust (see Table 12). The results show that credibility is the strongest predictor of trust (Beta = 0.399) and Sig. <0.001 is significant. At a high significance level (Sig. <0.001), popularity & engagement are tested as the second most powerful predictors of trust (Beta=0.365). In contrast, the predictor quality of information (Beta=0.091, Sig.=0.215) failed the regression test due to its low Beta value and a significance level that did not meet the significance criteria (Sig. <0.05). In summary, H2 “Credibility of Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on building trust” and H3 “Popularity of Instagram travel influencers and Engagement with their followers has a beneficial effect on building trust” are acceptable. H1 “Quality of Information provided by Instagram travel influencers has a beneficial effect on building trust” is rejected.

Table 12. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis -- Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.002	.340		.007	.995
	Quality of Information	.082	.066	.091	1.246	.215
	Credibility	.443	.092	.399	4.810	.000
	Popularity and Engagement	.467	.103	.365	4.514	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Trust						

4.6.2. Single Linear Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 4 of this study is accepted through single linear regression analysis. To examine the association between one dependent variable and one independent variable, one linear regression analysis is employed [70]. Hypothesis 4 proposed that the trust generated by followers has a beneficial effect on the intention to visit the destination. Therefore, a single linear regression analysis is used to examine the association between trust and intention to visit the destination.

The summary table (Table 13) shows an R-squared value of .176, indicating that the research model fits well. This also means that the independent variable trust explains 17.6% of the variance when testing followers' intention to visit the destination ($R=0.420$, $R^2=0.176$).

Table 13. Single Linear Regression Analysis – Model Summary

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.420 ^a	.176	.169	.547454301659620
a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust				
b. Dependent Variable: Intention to visit the destination				

The observed value of the F-test is 24.630, which corresponds to a Sig. value of 0.000, as shown by the ANOVA findings in Table 14. The regression linear model is a good predictor of the test variance of intention to visit the destination since the significance level is below 0.001, which shows that there is a substantial linear relationship between the variables. This implies that trust affects the intention to visit the destination.

Table 14. Single Linear Regression Analysis -- ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.382	1	7.382	24.630	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.466	115	.300		
	Total	41.848	116			
a. Dependent Variable: Intention to visit the destination						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust						

As shown in Table 15, trust significantly predicts intention to visit the destination (Beta=0.420, Sig.<0.001) at a high degree of significance. H4 is therefore approved.

Table 15. Single Linear Regression Analysis -- Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.862	.263		10.887	.000
	Trust	.347	.070	.420	4.963	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to visit the destination

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the primary data collected was analysed through SPSS. According to the results of reliability test and validity test, all items can measure their corresponding variables reliably and validly. Based on the results of the correlation analysis, all the independent and dependent variables in this study have a positive relationship with each other. In addition, the results of the regression analysis concluded that Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 of this study were accepted, while Hypothesis 1 was rejected. In the next chapter, I will provide a discussion for the findings of this study and consider the implications of this study.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will compare the results of this study with the arguments of literature review to discuss their similarities and differences as a way of verifying whether the proposed hypotheses are accepted or rejected based on the research aim and objectives, and consider the contribution of this study to existing academic theory and practice. The role of this chapter throughout the study is to provide a discussion of the findings and to clarify the implications of the study.

5.2. Discussion

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel intentions of Chinese students studying in the UK. To achieve the aim of this study, four objectives are formulated. The results of this study demonstrate that all four objectives were achieved. As the results of descriptive analysis and regression analysis, the majority of Generation Y and Z Chinese student respondents studying in the UK followed Instagram travel influencers and believed that the credibility and popularity & engagement of these influencers could influence their intention to visit the destination, which achieved Objective 1 “To analyse the perceptions of Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK on social media marketing and Instagram travel influencers”. And, the results are consistent with [85] research that Gen Y and Z tend to be inspired by the reliable travel material Instagram travel influencers share because they frequently identify with the influencers' lifestyle, which allows the influencers to have an impact on their travel choices. Gen Y and Gen Z view Instagram influencers with a sizable following, solid connections with their audience, and engaging posts as dependable and trustworthy sources who may sway their travel decisions.

Based on the S-O-R theoretical model and the existing literature, four hypotheses are proposed in this study. It is assumed that three attributes of Instagram travel influencers, namely the quality of the information they generate, their credibility, popularity & engagement have positive effects on followers' trust and that followers' trust also has a positive effect on their intention to visit the

destination. Firstly, a significant positive relationship between all dependent variables and independent variables can be demonstrated through correlation analysis, which implies that Objective 3 “To determine the connection between the attributes of Instagram travel influencers and the emotional reaction of followers to those attributes” and Objective 4 “To investigate the connection between the followers' emotional reaction to such attributes and their travel intention” can be achieved. Furthermore, the results of the correlation analysis indicate a highly positive association between the credibility and popularity & engagement of Instagram travel influencers and the trust generated by followers. In contrast, there is a moderate association between the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers and followers' trust, and between followers' trust and their intention to visit the destination.

Then, the causal relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables can be verified by regression analysis. Among the factors influencing trust, the results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the credibility was the strongest predictor of trust, which suggests that credibility of Instagram travel influencers has a positive effect on trust generated by followers and proves that H2 is accepted. This is in line with the research of [59] that credibility of SMIs is a prerequisite for followers' trust in influential posts. The results are also consistent with the studies of [111] and [66]. Source credibility in the context of social media refers to the degree to which content creators are regarded as knowledgeable and trustworthy. Being perceived as an expert in a specific field and a trusted influencer has a greater impact on followers' trust.

In addition, the results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the popularity & engagement were the second most powerful predictors of trust, suggesting that popularity and engagement of Instagram travel influencers can also positively influence trust generated by followers, which validates that H3 is accepted. This coincides with previous findings on the popularity of influencers [26], [18]. Followers tend to trust highly popular travel influencers on Instagram, who have a large number of followers. Influencers with more followers have more opportunities to learn about different topics and perspectives, and their ideas spread wider and faster, resulting in a greater ability to transcend their social environment and therefore increased interpersonal influence and opinion leadership. The results also coincide with [30] research that Instagram travel micro-influencers with fewer followers are also popular with followers, who prefer to trust these micro-influencers. Again, the results are consistent with previous researches on engagement [36], [75]. Trust develops between influencers and their followers when there is a high amount of connection or engagement between them. The results are also consistent with [100] study that positive or negative comments and opinions are offered by followers, and when they perceive that the influencers will appreciate their constructive criticism and make adjustments, the relationship between them strengthens and helps build greater trust in the influencer from their followers.

However, the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers was demonstrated through multiple linear regression analysis to be unable to influence trust generated by followers, which suggests that H1 is rejected. This is inconsistent with [59] study that quality of information generated by SMIs is a prerequisite for followers' trust in influential posts. And this is inconsistent with [96] research that Instagram travel influencers generate honest, valuable and satisfying content, which helps to build followers' trust in them. The reason for the inconsistency with previous studies may be that the sample in this study is different from that of previous studies, which is a sample of Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK. This group is more likely to be receptive to the opinions and recommendations of SMIs they can contact with or admire. Gen Y and Z are constantly surrounded by a range of moving images, videos and messages, as long as they identify with the travel influencer's lifestyle, their travel decisions can be strongly influenced, and are therefore less concerned about the quality of information provided by the influencer. Besides, the results of multiple linear regression analysis shows that Objective 2 “To investigate the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that affect followers travel intention” can be achieved.

Finally, according to the single linear regression results, trust generated by followers significantly influenced their intention to visit the destination, which proves that H4 is accepted. This is in line with the results of previous researches [19], [60]. The intention of followers to accept Instagram travel influencers' suggestions and generate travel is largely based on trust in Instagram travel influencers. In the next section, I will discuss the theoretical implications of this research.

5.3. Theoretical Implications

This research mainly contributes to the literature about the impacts of SMIs on the travel intentions of international student social media users by assessing the antecedent variables of the quality of information provided by Instagram travel influencers, their credibility and popularity & engagement on trust generated by Chinese students studying in the UK, and evaluating the antecedent variables of the trust generated by these students on their travel intentions. The findings of this study are valuable, as it filled the gap by testing whether the quality of information generated by Instagram travel influencers, their credibility and popularity & engagement that influence the travel intentions of their followers based on the S-O-R theory are applicable to the case of Chinese Generation Y and Z studying in the UK. In summary, the theoretical implications of this study are that it confirms that the credibility and popularity & engagement of Instagram travel influencers have strong antecedents on the trust of Chinese students studying in the UK, and that the trust of these students can also significantly influence their travel intentions. However, the quality of information provided by Instagram travel influencers does not act as an antecedent of trust for these international students. In the next section, I will discuss the managerial implications of this research.

5.4. Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide practical implications for travel agencies, hotels and restaurants in tourist locations in the UK who can develop specific marketing strategies to gain the trust as well as travel intentions of a rapidly growing travellers group of Chinese students studying in the UK. Besides, this study provides practical implications for travel influencers to reap more benefits from the travel industry.

The results of this study show that the majority of Chinese students studying in the UK have a monthly disposable income of £1,000 or less. This finding could provide clues for travel agencies in the UK to develop their marketing strategies. For instance, travel agencies could work with hotels and restaurants in the destination to offer discounted packages to these target customers by influencer marketing to promote the discounted travel packages, which will both attract customers to buy and allow these companies to reap benefits through partnerships. Besides, this study found that the credibility of Instagram travel influencers most impacted followers' trust. This finding could provide travel agencies in the UK with ideas for selecting SMIs. For example, travel agencies could choose professional and trustworthy Instagram travel influencers to work with to promote their travel products, which can help to increase the trust of their target customers and thus increase their travel intentions. For travel influencers, they could receive promoting benefits from travel agencies, hotels or restaurants by promoting the destination and destination-related services through partnerships with travel agencies.

5.5. Conclusion

In summary, the results of this study demonstrated that Objectives 1 to 4 can be achieved, H2, H3, H4 were accepted, which is consistent with the studies in the literature review. Whereas H1 was rejected, which is different from the views in the literature review. Furthermore, this study provides theoretical implications for the existing literature and provides practical implications for travel agencies, hotels and restaurants in tourist locations in the UK and travel influencers. In the next chapter, I will make a conclusion to the study.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will address the answers to the research questions, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research, and reflections on this study. The role of this chapter is to provide a final summary of this study.

6.2. Answers to Research Questions

The aim of this study is to understand the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel intention of Chinese students studying in the UK. To achieve the aim, four research questions have been proposed. The findings of this study can answer all the research questions. For research question 1 “What are the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that influence followers?”, this study found that the attributes of Instagram travel influencers that influence the travel intentions of Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK are their credibility and popularity & engagement. For research question 2 “To what extent attributes elicit a favourable emotional reaction in followers, i.e. trust generated by followers?” and research question 3 “How these attributes affect the trust between Instagram travel influencers and their followers?”, this research showed that Instagram travel influencers’ credibility and popularity & engagement had a significant positive effect on trust generated by Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK. And for research question 4 “How do followers’ emotional reactions affect their intention to visit the destinations Instagram travel influencers promote?”, this research found that trust generated by Chinese Gen Y and Z students studying in the UK had a significant positive effect on their intention to visit the destination. In the next section, I will discuss the limitations and recommendations for future research.

6.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

However, there are also some limitations in the study. Firstly, voluntary response sampling in non-probability sampling was used in this study due to budgetary resources and time constraints. Non-probability sampling is subject to a greater risk of sampling bias. This means that the method draws weaker inferences about the aggregate than probability samples and may lead to more limited conclusions. As a result, the sample characteristics are unevenly distributed in terms of age, gender and educational attainment, meaning that they are not representative of all Chinese students studying in the UK. Further researches could therefore use random sampling method in probability sampling to try to generalise the findings. Additionally, the low sample size taken in this study due to time constraints may lead to less accurate results and inability to generalise to all target populations, thus reducing the generalizability of the results. Therefore, future studies could derive accurate sample sizes by using sample size calculations to obtain more accurate and generalizable data. In the next section, I will discuss the reflections on this study.

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