

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER'S CREDIBILITY ON THE TRAVEL INTENTIONS OF THE EGYPTIAN MILLENNIALS: APPLIED TO DOMESTIC TOURISM

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Abstract: This study aims to fill the gap in the current influencer marketing literature by analyzing the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) credibility on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials. An online questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of 581 Egyptian millennials to collect primary data. The results indicate that the three dimensions of a SMI's credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise) have a positive impact on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials. Moreover, the findings point out that all of SMI's credibility elements have a significant effect on domestic travel intentions except for SMI's expertise, which is considered the credibility dimension least affecting the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials. The findings of this study enrich the influencer marketing field in the context of tourism as well as help the destination management organizations (DMOs) and travel agencies select the most persuasive SMIs that can positively influence millennials' travel intentions, specifically in light of the current emphasis on integrating SMIs as one of their marketing techniques.

Key words: social media, influencers, credibility, travel intentions, millennials, Egypt, domestic tourism

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of the popularity of social media platforms among internet users, social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged and started to be considered an effective marketing tool (Xu and Pratt, 2018). SMIs refer to the daily internet users who can gain a large base of followers on blogs and social media by presenting their personal lives and engaging with their followers, which can lead them to be able to display paid advertisements alongside their content (Ye et al., 2021). SMIs have become significantly involved in the tourism sector and play a vital role in connecting with potential tourists (Mokhare et al., 2021). Millennials, individuals born between 1980 and 2000, are regarded as one of the most significant sectors for the tourism industry (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). Moreover, millennials are considered the generation most exposed to SMIs (Grafström et al., 2018). The power of SMIs as well as the attractiveness of the millennial generation in the tourism industry forms a research interest in investigating the effectiveness of SMIs on Egyptian millennials' travel intentions. Tourism-related studies of SMI's credibility are currently limited.

Further research is needed to determine how the credibility of SMIs may affect the attitudes and travel intentions of social media users (Han and Chen, 2022). Consequently, this study will build upon the minor studies previously conducted in order to measure the influence of SMIs credibility on the travel intentions of Egyptian millennials, specifically in light of Egypt's current emphasis on integrating SMIs as one of its marketing techniques (Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2021). The authors formulated three research in order to guide the data collection and analysis process, as follows: Q1: To what extent can the perceived trustworthiness of a SMI affect the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials? Q2: To what extent can the perceived attractiveness of a SMI affect the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials? Q3: To what extent can the perceived expertise of a SMI affect the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials? The findings of this study will help the marketers of DMOs and travel agencies in Egypt select the most persuasive SMIs that can positively influence Egyptian millennials' travel intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

Globally, both social media and SMIs play significant roles in people's daily lives (Fayez et al., 2022). SMIs are defined

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as "online personalities with large numbers of followers, across one or more social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, or personal blogs), who have an influence on their followers" (Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 58). SMIs can be known by different names, such as social media stars, creators, micro-celebrities, and online stars (Gaenssle and Budzinski, 2020). Scholars arranged SMIs into various categories and groupings based on audience size (WOMMA, 2017; Ge and Gretzel, 2018; Kostic et al., 2018; Wielki, 2020); content (WOMMA, 2017; Wielki, 2020); used-platform (Wielki, 2020); activity type (Wielki, 2020); and professional experience level (Ge and Gretzel, 2018). SMIs have been widely utilised in the travel and tourism sectors, especially by international hotel chains (Mokhare et al., 2021), as well as various destination management organizations (Ong and Ito, 2019). SMIs can positively enhance the image of a tourist destination. Thus, tourist satisfaction will rise, leading to an increase in repeat visits and word-of-mouth advertising (Jaya and Prianthara, 2020).

SMIs' Credibility

The term "credibility" is described as a perceiver's judgment of the communicator's believability (Kwiatek et al., 2021). The persuasiveness of a communication message is greater when it originates from a source with high credibility as opposed to a low-credibility source (Sundermann and Raabe, 2019). A tri-component scale, known as the source credibility model, is developed by Ohanian (1990) in order to investigate the credibility of celebrity endorsers through assessing their perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Recent studies have started to employ the components of the source credibility model to measure the credibility of SMIs (Fred, 2015; Lou and Yuan, 2019; Nascimento, 2019; Saima and Khan, 2020; Kalu, 2021). Credibility is essential for SMIs as it helps them be more effective, specifically in promoting brands, and helps build a stronger media image (Kwiatek et al., 2021). SMIs' credibility is one of the most important factors for followers (Fayez et al., 2022). The perceived credibility of SMIs positively influences their followers' purchase intentions, attitudes towards the recommended brand, and loyalty (Hussain and Ali, 2021).

Trustworthiness is one of the elements of the source credibility model, which is referred to as the perceived honesty, sincerity, or truthfulness of a source by its receiver (Lou and Yuan, 2019). The more trustworthy a communicator is, the more persuasive their message will be to their recipient (Fred, 2015). SMIs typically invest effort into building and maintaining favorable relationships with their followers in order to obtain high levels of trustworthiness in their followers' perceptions (Al Qatamai, 2019). SMIs who share content entirely about one main topic are perceived as more trustworthy by their followers than those who share content on various different topics (Rahmah and Ren, 2019). Also, the ethnicity of an endorser has an impact on SMIs' trustworthiness (Nascimento, 2019). Consumers' attitudes towards blogger recommendations are significantly influenced by their trustworthiness, which in turn affects consumers' intention to purchase the recommended products (Grace and Ming, 2018). Attractiveness is another element of the source credibility model. It encompasses all of a person's positive characteristics, whether physical, personal, or athletic (Al-Qatami, 2019). It is believed that attractiveness plays a significant role in determining an endorser's effectiveness (Van der Walldt et al., 2009). Being real and posting high-frequency content with followers are two tactics that SMIs can follow to gain more attraction (Håkansson et al., 2020). SMI's attractiveness plays a vital role in stimulating consumers' positive attitude (Lim et al., 2017). The perceived attractiveness of SMIs positively impacts the audience's word-of-mouth, purchasing intention, and attitude towards influencers (Taillon et al., 2020). Instagram influencers who are viewed as attractive have a great impact on their followers' online impulsive purchasing (Koay et al., 2021). Another component of the source credibility model is expertise. It refers to the communicator's ability to make truthful claims in a certain field of knowledge based on their gained familiarity, comprehension, and experience through ongoing work in that field of knowledge (Saima and Khan, 2020). A more influential endorser is determined to have a higher degree of expertise and would influence greater buying intentions (Chekima et al., 2020). Influencers on social media who are perceived as having a high level of expertise are viewed as having a greater effect on their followers' behaviors (Lim et al., 2017). Both brand attitudes and buying intentions are positively influenced by SMI's expertise (Lim et al., 2017; Hussain and Ali, 2021).

Travel Intentions

Numerous academic definitions were proposed to accurately describe the term "travel intentions." Luo and Lam (2020) proposed a simple definition referring to "travel intentions" as an individual's desire to travel. Furthermore, Makhdoomi and Baba (2019) described the intention to travel as the outcome of a mental process that result in an action and translates motivation into behavior, emphasizing that it is a key intermediary between motivation and future travel behavior. Badreldin and Elbaza (2016) stated that the desire to travel (travel intention) is regarded as the initial phase in the travel decision-making process, confirming that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is considered a major factor in influencing travel intentions to Egypt. In the same context, Hung and Khoa (2022) indicated that eWOM has a positive effect on travellers' perceptions, attitudes, and travel intentions towards destinations. Moreover, Caraka et al. (2022) mentioned that the travel intentions of potential tourists could be influenced by the social media accounts of SMIs, confirming that SMIs can have a significant influence on travel intentions.

The Impact of SMIs' Credibility on Travel Intentions

The credibility of SMIs is positively correlated with the social media users' travel intentions to the recommended destination (Han and Chen, 2022). The attractiveness and trustworthiness of SMIs are proved by Negm and El Halawany (2020) to have an effect on consumers' intentions to plan a vacation. The attractiveness of vloggers has a significant positive effect on the viewers' travel intentions (Chen et al., 2021). The perceived trustworthiness and quality of the information shared by a blogger are two factors that can highly influence their followers' intention to accept a travel recommendation (Magno and Cassia, 2018). Followers' travel intentions are influenced by the SMI's trustworthiness and

content quality (McNair, 2021). SMI's trustworthiness positively influences decision-making while selecting a tourist destination (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). According to Grafström et al. (2018), the age range of "1980-2000" is the most commonly observed period for individuals known as millennials. Léa et al. (2018) pointed out that millennials comprise around 25 percent of the global population. Locally, with a population consisting of 43%, millennials are playing a crucial role in the revitalization of the travel industry in Egypt (El-Demerdash, 2019).

Dabija et al. (2018) clarified that there is a significant influence of social media on millennials' selection of tourist services. Similarly, Kasim et al. (2019) stated that social media has a crucial role in influencing millennials' destination choice. In the same context, The American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt (AmCham Egypt) (2018) stated that millennials are not likely to be influenced by travel brochures in making their travel decisions, but rather by their online friends and SMIs. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The perceived trustworthiness of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials

H2: The perceived attractiveness of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials

H3: The perceived expertise of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials

As shown in Figure 1, a theoretical framework is presented in order to clarify the variables of the study and their interconnections.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study aims to identify the impact of the SMI's credibility on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials. In order to achieve this aim, a series of procedures were implemented, as illustrated in Figure 2. This study employs a quantitative methodology that comprises the usage and analysis of numerical data utilizing specialized statistical approaches to answer questions such as who, how much, what, when, where, and how (Apuke, 2017). The study population is Egyptian millennials. The current study uses a convenience sampling technique, also called "haphazard sampling" or "accidental sampling", which is identified as a type of non-probability or non-random sampling in which

members of the target population who meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan et al., 2016).

During the month of December 2022, a Google Form questionnaire was shared on different social media sites in Egypt, such as Facebook groups and WhatsApp chat groups relating to tourism in Egypt which include Egyptian millennials members, named "Traveller Experience," "4Travellers Club," "TravellerAdvisor," and "Nomads." In order to proceed with the shared questionnaire, participants were required to indicate their nationality, age range, whether they have a social media account or not, and whether they follow social media influencers or not.

The collected surveys were 581, and out of them, 150 questionnaires didn't meet the sample's criteria, and another 30 questionnaires were classified as outliers. All these respondents (180 questionnaires) were excluded from the study.

The questionnaire used included four parts. The first part of the questionnaire included demographic questions about the participants. The demographic questions included gender, age, education (highest degree completed), marital status, and employment status. The second part of the questionnaire included questions about the participants' social media usage. The respondents were asked about the average time they spend daily on social media, the social media platforms they mostly use, the number of influencers they follow on social media, and the time that they started following their favorite influencer on social media. The third part of the questionnaire measured the participants' perceptions of SMI's credibility. This part had three different constructs; the first, titled "SMI's trustworthiness," included five questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of the SMI's trustworthiness. The second construct, titled "SMI's attractiveness," included five questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of the SMI's attractiveness. The third and final construct, titled "SMI's expertise," included five questions concerning the respondents' perceptions of SMI's expertise.

The fourth and final part of the questionnaire measured the impact of SMI's credibility on the domestic travel intentions of the Egyptian millennials, and it included three questions focusing on the intention to travel.

The statements included in the questionnaire were adapted from Shan et al. (2018), Caraka et al. (2022), Tille (2020), and Hsieh et al. (2016). The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale of agreement, and the results were analyzed using version 20.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows.

Before performing the fundamental analysis, it was important to decide on a checklist for screening the data to find out what effect the characteristics of the data may have on the results. The treatment of outliers was an important step in the data

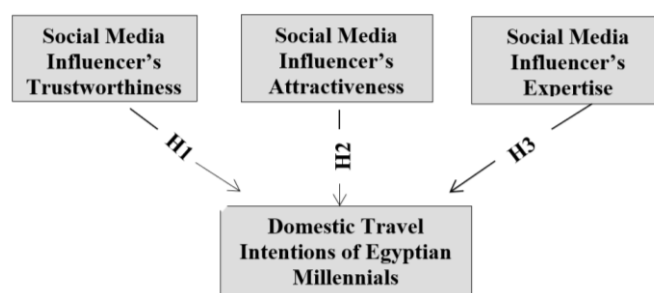


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

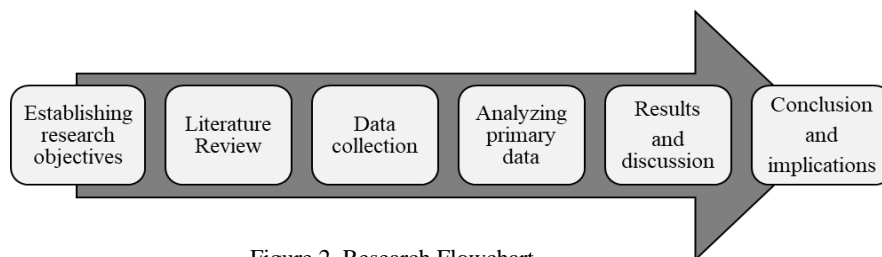


Figure 2. Research Flowchart

screening process. Outliers are defined as observations that deviate significantly from the norm and often result in significant changes to the findings' substance. The Mahalanobis distance is one of several techniques for identifying outliers (Aguinis et al., 2013). The criterion for identifying multivariate outliers is the Mahalanobis distance with a p-value greater than 0.001. In this study, Mahalanobi distance is evaluated with a degree of freedom of 27 items. Any case with a Mahalanobis distance higher than 55.476 is considered a multivariate outlier and is subsequently removed from the database. 30 cases having a Mahalanobis distance greater than 55,476 were excluded from the database before the analysis was conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants were female, accounting for 79.6%, while only 20.4% were male. Millennials’ age segments between 22 and 31 years had the highest proportion of responders (67.8%), followed by millennials between 32 and 42 years (32.8%). Half of the respondents (50.4%) had a post-graduate degree, while the other half (50.6%) held less than a post-graduate degree; 44.1% obtained a university degree, 5.2% got a high school or equivalent degree, and only.2% had less than a high school degree. In terms of the respondents’ marital status, 57.4% were single, 39.7% were married, and 3% were divorced. The employment status among the respondents was as follows: 46.4% had full-time jobs, 31.7% were unemployed, 20.4% had part-time jobs, and 1.5% were self-employed.

Regarding the sample’s average daily time spent on social media, the greatest number of respondents (44.4%) spends between 1 and 3 hours, followed by (32.4%) who spend between 4 and 6 hours, followed by (18.0%) who spend more than 6 hours, and only (5.2%) who spend less than one hour. In terms of the most-used social media platforms, Facebook was selected by the majority of the respondents (89.3%), followed by Instagram, which was chosen by 38.7%, then YouTube, which was selected by 34.8%, then Tik-Tok, which was selected by 19.7%, and Twitter, which was selected by the least number of the respondents (8.4%). Concerning the number of influencers followed by the participants, 46.6% followed fewer than 5 influencers, 33.2% followed between 5 and 10 influencers, 11.2% followed more than 20 influencers, and 9.0% followed between 11 and 20 influencers. With regard to the period of time that the respondents have been following their favorite influencer on social media, 36.4% indicated between 6 months and 1 year, 25.4% stated for less than 6 months, 24.2% said between 2 years and 4 years, and 14.0% have been followed longer than 4 years.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	82	20.4
Female	319	79.6
Total	401	100.0
Age		
From 22 to 31	272	67.8
From 32 to 42	129	32.2
Total	401	100.0
Educational Level (Highest degree completed)		
Less than High school	1	.2
High school or equivalent	21	5.2
University degree	177	44.1
Post-graduate degree	202	50.4
Total	401	100.0
Marital status		
Single	230	57.4
Married	159	39.7
Divorced	12	3.0
Total	401	100.0
Employment Status		
Unemployed	127	31.7
Part-time	82	20.4
Full-time	186	46.4
Freelance	6	1.5
Total	401	100.0

Table 2. Construct Measurements and Reliability (n=401) α : Cronbach alpha - SD: standard deviation

Items	Mean	SD	attitude	(α)
Social Media Influencer’s Trustworthiness	4.10	0.747	Agree	.939
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a trustworthy person.	4.11	0.850	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a reliable person.	4.10	0.856	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as an honest person	4.12	0.805	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a dependable person.	3.94	0.905	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a believable person.	4.28	0.739	Strongly agree	
Social Media Influencer’s Attractiveness	4.00	0.708	Agree	.874
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as an attractive person.	4.14	0.789	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a classy person.	4.31	0.731	Strongly Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a beautiful/handsome person.	3.94	0.880	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as an elegant person	4.10	0.784	Agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a sexy person.	3.55	1.108	Agree	
Social Media Influencer’s Expertise	4.40	0.624	Strongly agree	.929
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as an expert person.	4.42	0.692	Strongly agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as an experienced person	4.36	0.743	Strongly agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a knowledgeable person.	4.40	0.708	Strongly agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a qualified person.	4.38	0.725	Strongly agree	
I perceive the social media influencer that I follow as a skilled person.	4.47	0.667	Strongly agree	
Travel Intentions	3.60	0.971	Agree	.896
Within 24 months, I intend to make time and save money to travel to the Egyptian tourist destinations recommended by the social media influencer that I follow.	3.63	1.058	Agree	
Within 24 months, I will travel to the Egyptian tourist destinations recommended by the social media influencer that I follow with my friends/family.	3.56	1.062	Agree	
The tourist destinations recommended by the social media influencer that I follow are my first choices for traveling inside Egypt in the future.	3.62	1.085	Agree	

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most commonly used technique to evaluate the reliability and stability of the scale (Chen et al., 2021). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a numerical value that ranges from 0 to 1. A reliability score that meets the acceptable criterion is one that is equal to or greater than 0.7 (Heale and Twycross, 2015). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for this study, and results showed that all constructs had reliability coefficients greater than 0.7, indicating that all constructs used in this study are all sufficiently reliable, as shown in Table 2.

Pearson's Correlation

Table 3 shows that the sig. value for SMI's trustworthiness is less than .05, indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between SMI's trustworthiness and travel intentions. The table also showed that the correlation between SMI's trustworthiness and travel intentions was positive, with a correlation coefficient value of .113.

The results show that the sig. value for SMI's attractiveness is less than .05, indicating that there is a statistically significant correlation between SMI's attractiveness and travel intentions. The table also showed that the correlation between SMI's attractiveness and travel intentions was positive, with a correlation coefficient value of .267.

The results highlight that the sig. value for SMI's expertise is greater than .05, which means there is not a statistically significant correlation between SMI's expertise and travel intentions. The table also showed that the correlation between SMI's expertise and travel intentions was positive, with a correlation coefficient value of .096.

Table 3. Pearson's Correlation (n=401)

		Travel intentions
SMI's trustworthiness	Correlation Coefficient	.113*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024
SMI's attractiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.267**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
SMI's expertise	Correlation Coefficient	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056

Hypotheses Test

The current study utilized a simple linear regression in order to analyze the impact of the independent variables (the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of a SMI) on the dependent variable (domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials), as presented in the study model in Figure 3.

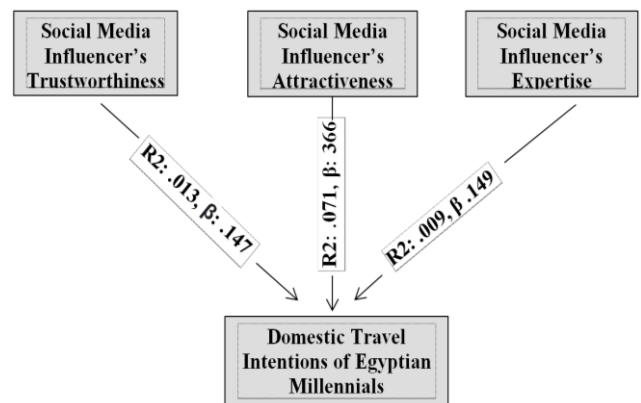


Figure 3. The Study Model (Source: Authors)

Table 4. The Result of Hypotheses Test (* P-value < 0.05)

Variables	Coefficients (B)	t	Sig.	R ²	F	Sig	result
SMI's Trustworthiness → Domestic Travel Intentions of Egyptian Millennials	.147	2.268	.024	.013	5.143	.024*	Supported
SMI's Attractiveness → Domestic Travel Intentions of Egyptian Millennials	.366	5.527	.000	.071	30.546	.000*	Supported
SMI's Expertise → Domestic Travel Intentions of Egyptian Millennials	.149	1.920	.056	.009	3.687	.056	Supported

Regarding the effect of SMI's trustworthiness on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials, Table 4 shows that R2 was 0.013, indicating that SMI's trustworthiness affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials by 1%. Accordingly, H1: "The perceived trustworthiness of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials" is verified. This finding agrees with the findings of McNair (2021), who identified that followers' travel intentions are influenced by the SMI's trustworthiness. In addition, the above finding aligns with the findings of Chatzigeorgiou (2017), who stated that SMI's trustworthiness positively influences decision-making while selecting a tourist destination. Also, the above findings support the findings of Negm and El Halawany (2020), who stated that the consumer's vacation-planning intentions can be influenced by the SMI's trustworthiness. Moreover, the above finding agrees with the findings of Magno and Cassia (2018), who pointed out that the trustworthiness of Italian bloggers is positively correlated with the travel intentions of their followers. In addition, the finding is consistent with the study results of Grace and Ming (2018), who affirmed that consumers' attitudes towards blogger recommendations are significantly influenced by their trustworthiness, which in turn affects consumers' intentions to purchase the recommended products.

Regarding the effect of SMI's attractiveness on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials, Table 4 shows that R2 was .071, which means that SMI's attractiveness affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials by 7%. Accordingly, H2: "The perceived attractiveness of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials" is verified. This finding supports the findings of Ragab (2022), who highlighted that attractiveness is one of the major factors influencing Digital Natives 2.0's attitude towards travel influencers on social media. Furthermore, the above finding is in line with the findings of Kalu (2021), who demonstrated that an influencer's physical attractiveness is one of the most significant elements influencing consumer purchasing behavior.

Moreover, the above finding asserts the findings of Chen et al. (2021), who stated that attractiveness of the vlogger is one of the characteristics that can have a substantial positive effect on potential tourist's travel intentions, indicating that a good vlogger's image and personal charisma are more likely to influence the audience. In contrast, the above finding disagrees with Lim et al. (2017) and Håkansson et al. (2020), who noted that SMI's attractiveness can't have an impact on the purchasing intentions of consumers.

Regarding the effect of SMI's expertise on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials, Table 4 shows that R^2 was 0.009, which means that SMI's expertise affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials by 0.09%. Accordingly, H3: "*The perceived expertise of a SMI positively affects the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials*" is verified. The above finding aligns with the findings of Lim et al. (2017), who confirmed that influencers on social media who are perceived as having a high level of expertise are viewed as having a greater effect on their followers' behaviors. The above finding disagrees with the findings of Negm and El Halawany (2020), who stated that there is no correlation between the expertise of social media influencers and an individual's travel intentions. Moreover, it differs with the findings of Lee and Eastin (2021), who clarified that SMI's expertise doesn't have an effect on buying intentions. Additionally, it contradicts the findings of Gong and Li (2017), who pointed out that there isn't a correlation between expertise and individuals' intentions to buy clothes and mobile phones endorsed by microbloggers.

CONCLUSION

Currently, social media platforms are inundated with SMIs, who are considered traditional users possessing significant influence over the user base on social media, particularly among the millennial generation. The characteristics of SMIs have been demonstrated to play an essential role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of their audience. Academic researchers consider SMIs' credibility as a noteworthy attribute that calls for further investigation. The evaluation of SMIs' credibility can be conducted using the source credibility model, which comprises three fundamental elements, namely trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise.

Accordingly, the current study expands the source credibility model to the tourism context in order to fill the gap in the existing literature by examining the influence of SMIs' credibility on travel intentions among Egyptian millennials. The study adds to the current knowledge of SMI marketing by proposing the significance of credibility as one of the characteristics a SMI should possess. Additionally, the study indicates that the three dimensions of a SMI's credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise) have a positive impact on the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials. Moreover, the study points out that all the SMI's credibility elements have a significant effect on the domestic travel intentions except the SMI's expertise; the SMI's expertise is the least significant credibility dimension affecting the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials, while in contrast, a SMI's attractiveness is the most significant credibility dimension affecting the domestic travel intentions of Egyptian millennials.

Implications

The findings of this study can help the marketers of DMOs and travel agencies in Egypt select the most persuasive SMIs that can positively influence Egyptian millennials' travel intentions. Marketers ought to prioritize the selection of SMIs who possess characteristics such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise.

SMIs who exhibit physical attractiveness, stylishness, and high standards of personal conduct are often regarded as great examples of attractive influencers. Moreover, SMIs that transparently disclose their sponsored content on social media and also provide genuine feedback (both positive and negative) regarding the products and services they endorse in the tourism industry provide great examples of trustworthiness. Additionally, SMIs who have completed their education at tourism-related colleges and have gained over five years of work experience in the tourism sector, along with extensive travel within Egypt, are considered to possess a significant level of expertise.

In the selection process of SMIs targeting Egyptian millennials, attractive influencers are the most effective influencers that should be considered by the travel marketers. While, expertise is the least element that SMIs should be selected upon.

Limitations and Future Study

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations, as the data are limited to only one generation (millennials, who are born between 1980 and 2000) as well as one nationality (Egyptian). Therefore, future researchers are recommended to analyze the same topic for other generations and nationalities. Additionally, this study is focusing on credibility as one of the SMIs' characteristics that can impact travel intentions. Future researchers are advised to investigate the impact of other SMIs' characteristics on travel intentions, such as authenticity and similarity.

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