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User-Generated Content Strategy & Millennials' Travel Intentions

Millennials, Tech, and Travel

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Dissertation written under the supervision of
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Abstract

Title: User-Generated Content Strategy & Millennials' Travel Intentions

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Keywords: User-Generated Content, Marketing-Generated Content, Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making Process, Customer Experience, Millennials, Travel

Instagram has created new exciting ways for millennials to connect, interact and contribute to a pool of online content by taking on the role of content creators. Hence, millennials' experiences are being shaped by information obtained and created online in the form of User-Generated Content (UGC). However, recent tactics to integrate UGC within brands' content strategies raised questions about the effects of 'pure' UGC compared to other UGC tactics (e.g. paid partnership or sponsored content).

The main goal of the study was to understand how exposure to different User-Generated Content Strategies influence millennials' decisions in the context of Instagram and Travel. In order to achieve these goals, a cross-sectional online survey with a built-in experiment was conducted.

Findings from the quantitative data analysis indicated that travel-related UGC created on Instagram shapes every stage of Millennials' Travel Journeys. In addition, results showed significant differences in the degree of Millennials' Online Engagement, Perceived Trustworthiness, and Travel Intentions, when exposed to different strategies of UGC. Moreover, UGC created by an independent Instagram user showed the most significant results in terms of Engagement. However, when it came to Trustworthiness, UGC #reposted on a Brand Official Account turned out to be the best strategy to gain Millennials' Trust.

This study further emphasizes the valuable potential of UGC for businesses and contributes to relevant insights and practical recommendations on how marketers can take advantage of UGC as a marketing tool and develop an effective UGC Strategy to target Millennials.

Sumário

Título: User-Generated Content Strategy & Millennials' Travel Intentions

Autor: Constança Garcez Palha Moitinho de Almeida

Palavras-Chave: User-Generated Content, Marketing-Generated Content, Comportamento do Consumidor, Processo de Tomada de Decisão, Experiência do Consumidor, Millennials, Viajar

O Instagram criou novas formas para a geração Millennial interagir e contribuir com conteúdo *online*, ao tomarem a posição de criadores de conteúdo. Consequentemente, as experiências desta geração estão a ser influenciadas por informação obtida e criada *online* na forma de *user-generated-content (UGC)*. No entanto, recentes táticas para integrar UGC nas estratégias das marcas levantaram questões no que diz respeito ao efeito de 'puro' UGC comparado com outras tácticas de UGC (ex. parcerias pagas ou conteúdo patrocinado).

O presente estudo tem como principal propósito compreender o impacto de diferentes estratégias de User-Generated Content nos Millennials, no contexto do Instagram e Viagens. Para tal, um questionário transversal foi realizado.

Os resultados obtidos indicam que UGC, relacionado com viagens partilhado no Instagram, está presente em todas as etapas da experiência dos Millennials. Para além disso, os resultados estatísticos indicam diferenças significativas no que diz respeito ao nível de envolvimento *online*, percepção de confiança do conteúdo, e intenções de viajar, quando expostos a diferentes estratégias de UGC. A estratégia que demonstrou resultados mais significativos, em termos de envolvimento *online*, foi o cenário em que estava presente conteúdo publicado por um *Instagrammer* na sua própria conta. No entanto, relativamente à percepção de confiança, o conteúdo re-partilhado na conta oficial da marca indica ser a melhor estratégia para ganhar a confiança desta geração.

Este estudo reforça o valor de UGC para as marcas e contribui ainda com informação relevante, propondo recomendações práticas sobre como desenvolver uma estratégia de UGC eficaz para influenciar Millennials.

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I feel proud, blessed, and truly grateful for this journey.

"Everyone has oceans to fly, if they have the heart to do it. Is it reckless? Maybe. But what do dreams know of boundaries?"

— Amelia Earhart

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Acronyms List

CE	Customer Engagement
CX	Customer Experience
COE	Customer Online Engagement
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
FTC	Federal Trade Commission
MGC	Marketing-Generated Content
PT	Perceived Trustworthiness
RQ	Research Question
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TI	Travel Intention
UGC	User-Generated Content
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WOM	Word-of-Mouth

I Introduction

1.1 Background

Social Media came to revolutionize the Travel Industry and, in recent years, it has become an essential component to both travelers as well as travel-related businesses, at a global level (Leung, Law, van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013). Allowing immediate access and exchange of travel information from anywhere to everywhere in the world (Buhalis & Law, 2008), Social Media is shaping travelers' experiences as a whole (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

This is especially true when it comes to Millennials, the first generation to have spent their lives in a digital environment. Constantly connected online, this young yet highly influential group of travelers is interested in immersive travel experiences, to 'live like a local', and continuously searches for enriching and unique experiences to grow and connect with others (United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2016). A shift in generational dominance is purported as underway, as Millennials gradually outnumber the Baby Boomers and Generation X, and become the primary source of visitors for destinations and tourism attractions (Pendergast, 2010). It is forecasted that, by 2020, Millennials will have a record-breaking purchasing power of $1.4 trillion US dollars (Social Influence, 2014), becoming the most important tourism consumption cohort economically (Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014). For marketers, in general, this suggests the rise of a significant segment, with substantial purchasing power that needs to be catered for. Hence, as understanding their behaviors and perceptions is the cornerstone of marketing success (Cohen *et al.*, 2014), this dissertation will focus solely on Millennials.

From the moment before take-off to the post-travel experience, Social Media is present in every step of a traveler's Journey and it is used for a variety of tasks, depending on the stage of the travel (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2006). More specifically, a significant part of a customers' travel experience is being shaped by information obtained and created online in the form of User-Generated Content (UGC) (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto & Buultjens, 2009), referring to own media content, added by consumers in the form of text comments, posts, travel reviews or recommendations, pictures and/ or videos (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

The Social Networking Application - Instagram - perfectly embodies this travel-related UGC phenomenon. In recent years, along with other Social Networking Sites, Instagram has grown immensely and gained popularity, especially among young Millennials – 41% of its 300 million daily active users are 24 years of age or younger at a global level (Statista, 2018a; WIRED, 2016). As of June 2018, Instagram reached 1 billion monthly active users, becoming one of the most popular social networks worldwide (Statista, 2018b), with a user base that uploads on average 95 million photos daily, hits 4.2 billion likes per day, and mentions the hashtag #travel in 346,453,219 posts to date (Instagram, 2018). Thus, Instagram provides Millennials with potentially unlimited opportunities to, instantly or later, share with others what they experience during a trip, as well as access travel-related content at the touch of a finger.

Being easily shared with millions of other potential travelers, and knowing the tremendous impact UGC might have on a business, both in positive and negative ways, brands increasingly see a need to actively engage, manage, and monitor Millennials' conversations about their products or services that happen online (Gretzel *et al.*, 2006).

1.2 Problem Statement

The aim of this thesis is to understand how UGC, created through the photo-sharing Social Networking Application - Instagram, impacts millennials' travel decisions and intentions, by analyzing the effects of their engagement and perceived trustworthiness, when exposed to different strategies of UGC. Also, explore the extent to which this generation uses Instagram as part of their Travel Experience and, ultimately, contribute with innovative insights into how to develop an effective User-Generated Content Strategy to target Millennials.

The problem statement can be summarized as follows:

> How does the type of travel-related UGC Millennials are exposed to on Instagram influence their degree of Perceived Trustworthiness, Online Customer Engagement, and Travel Intentions?

This problem statement can be expressed through the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the role of Instagrams' travel-related UGC on Millennials Travel Experiences?

RQ2. What is the most effective way to create a Content Strategy, fueled by User-Generated Content on Instagram?

RQ3. What are the main insights to develop an effective User-Generated Content Strategy to target Millennials?

1.3 Scope of Analysis

For the purpose of this dissertation, and for the reasons mentioned above, the scope of analysis was limited to the Millennial Generation, focusing exclusively on UGC created and shared through the Instagram platform, within the Travel Industry. Furthermore, in order to clarify the term *Travel*, the definition proposed by Tourism Society in 1976, which can still be valid on the present day, will be used to delimit the scope for the research, as "the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes." (Robinson, 2012).

1.4 Relevance

Although traditional media is nowhere near extinction, it is indisputable that the rise of digital technologies is transforming customer experience as a whole (Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013). Such that customers are now empowered to create and share content online, about nearly everything related to their lives, and are in greater control of their media consumption (Perry, 2002, as cited in Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008). However, as mentioned in the Forbes Communications Council article:

> Because brands don't control the messaging of earned media content marketers rarely consider it as part of the interactions detailed in customer journeys. Instead, they focus on a delivery cadence of their display ads, emails, website, and mobile app messaging to customers. Since it is easier to see how those messages drive revenue, brand investment in earned media has been dwarfed next to paid and owned media. — Lynch (2018)

By understanding the extent to which UGC can impact customers' high involvement decisions, such as the ones involved in travel planning, as well as uncover the most effective content strategies to target Millennials, companies may rethink their marketing strategies and budgets by investing in customer experience, that translates into positive eWOM in the form of UGC, and incorporate UGC into their content strategies more effectively, in a way that ultimately leads to higher return on investments.

Academically, even though there has been past research about the impact of UGC on traveler's decisions (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Cox *et al*., 2009; Daugherty *et al.*, 2008; Yoo, Lee, Gretzel, & Fesenmaier, 2009), most literature reviewed is limited to the impact of UGC in the form of travel reviews or blog posts. Therefore, this study will prove to be relevant by uncovering the need to explore the influence of UGC in the specific context of Instagram and Travel.

1.5 Research Methods

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, both primary and secondary data were used. Based on the variety of existing academic articles related to this research topic, secondary data delivered a solid basis for further primary data investigations. Primary data was collected through an online survey questionnaire, in order to investigate the impact of travel-related UGC on the Travelers' Experiences. The survey was structured and divided into three main sections: (1) firstly it addressed general Social Media usage and Travel behavior questions; (2) the questionnaire further query for, a) *use* and *creation* of travel-related UGC, and b) degree of Engagement, Perceived Trustworthiness and Travel Intentions for different UGC scenarios; (3) finally, a set of questions regarding socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were included. The results presented below were obtained using descriptive analyses of the data, as well as repeated measures ANOVA and Linear Regression Models.

1.6 Dissertation Outline

The next chapter presents a literature review as well as the development of the hypotheses that guide the present study. The literature review describes and provides insights regarding the relevance of the several concepts addressed throughout this study, in order to investigate the phenomenon of travel-related UGC created through Instagram, and how it may influence Millennial Travel Experiences. The third chapter explains the methodology followed in order to test the proposed hypotheses and answer the research questions. The constructs, and procedures, on how each statistical test was applied to the data obtained, were detailed in this chapter. The fourth chapter contains the results obtained through the analysis of the data, and, finally, the fifth chapter states the main conclusions, both its academic and managerial implications, as well as the dissertation limitations and indications for future research in this area of study.

II Literature Review

The following chapter builds up a theoretical framework (Figure 4) for the research questions and hypotheses to be tested for this thesis. It sums up, contrasts and critically reviews existing literature from related topics, that are relevant for understanding the background of the study's purpose. In the first part of the literature review, the Millennial Generation is characterized in terms of motivations to create and share travel experiences, followed by literature that carefully explains the context of Millennials travel decision-making process, along with the impact and role of UGC on this journey. Furthermore, the distinction and implications between UGC and MGC on Travel Intentions are reviewed, as well as the fundamental role of both Trustworthiness and Online Engagement.

2.1 Millennials, Technology & Travel

Every generation comes to challenge the *status quo*, and Millennials are no different. The label *Millennials* (or also referred to as Generation Y) refers to the first generation to come to age in the new millennium, consisting of individuals born between 1982 and 2004 (Howe & Strauss, 1991). In recent years, this generation has been gaining extraordinary amounts of attention due to their: confident, self-expressive, and open to change personality (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Growing up pace-to-pace with continuous advancements in technology, Millennials were, from an early age, highly exposed to and shaped by new technologies, as well as by the developments of Web 2.0. Pendergast (2010) states that "Generation Y is the first generation born into society that features international interdependence and global engagement" (p.9), with the combined forces of globalisation and the Information Age contributing to a larger generation gap between Millennials and Generation X than would typically be found in subsequent generations (Pendergast, 2010; Leask, Fyall, & Barron, 2013). Millennials' technological exceptionalism is therefore considered to be the generation's biggest source of distinctiveness (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Additionally, Eventbrite's research of Millennials conducted by Harris (2014) reveals:

> This generation not only highly values experiences, but they are increasingly spending time and money on them (...) For this group, happiness isn't as focused on possessions or career status. Living a meaningful, happy life is about creating, sharing and capturing memories earned through experiences that span the spectrum of life's opportunities.

According to Harris Study (2014), more than three in four Millennials (78%) would choose to spend money on an experience or event over buying something desirable. And sixty-nine percent of respondents said they believe attending live experiences helps them connect better with their friends, their community, and people around the world. Thus, as noticed in earlier research by Richards and Wilson (2003), Millennials are traveling more than any other age range, because they are eager to gain the experience that traveling to a new destination gives them. Based on UNWTO forecasts for global tourism growth, this claim appears to be supported, as the organization estimates that by 2020 almost 370 million Millennial travelers will account for a total spend of over USD 400 billion (UNWTO, 2016), an approximate 40% increase since 2014.

Data retrieved from Pew Research Center report 'MILLENNIALS Confident. Connected. Open to Change.' (2010), which looks at the values, attitudes, and experiences of America's Millennial Generation, indicates 75% of Millennials created a profile on a Social Networking Site, compared to only half of Generation X (50%), and 30% of Boomers. Moreover, the report indicates that the same *ratio* applies in terms of using wireless technology and posting self-created content online, highlighting that "it's not just their gadgets — it's the way they've fused their social lives into them." In contrast to previous generations, Millennials are bound to technology on an emotional basis (Bolton *et al.*, 2013), which clearly explains their everyday usage of smartphones and social media, to constantly share experiences and stay connected.

Also, additional research from the field of Psychological Science and Consumer Research, focuses on the evidence that experiences make people happier because they are more open to positive reinterpretations, are a more meaningful part of one's identity, and contributes to more successful social relationships (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Research further presents convergent evidence that experiences have higher conversational value than material purchases, and that talking about one's experiences increases the happiness gained from that experimental purchase (Kumar, Killingsworth & Gilovich, 2014; Bastos & Brucks, 2017). Which helps explain why experiences are preferred as a topic of conversation over objects, and suggests a social motivation for talking more about experiences (Bastos & Brucks, 2017).

Once Social Networking Applications, such as Instagram, allow Millennials to connect, self-express and collaborate in creating, consuming and sharing travel-related information (Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). These platforms play an important role not only as a ground for consumer and brands interactivity but also a significant role in terms of the influence on the decision-making process, as it will be discussed next.

2.2 Travel Decision-Making Process & Experience

Travel planning is considered a "temporal, dynamic, successive, and multistage contingent decision process" (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002), during which travelers go through numerous decisions in each stage. Initial theories in marketing focused on customer decision-making processes and experience, that date back to the 1960s, developed integrated models explaining the buying process in which customers move from need recognition to purchase to evaluation of the purchased product (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Howard & Sheth, 1969, as cited in Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The contribution of these early theories have strongly influenced customer experience (CX) research, and, more importantly, provided the foundation for thinking holistically about the CX, as the process a customer goes through, across all stages and touch points, which makes up the CX (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Accordingly, previous research conducted by Cox *et al.* (2009), on the process of selecting a travel destination and travel plans, identified that in the travel context, travelers' decision-making process tends to follow the general five key stages of the consumer decision-making model (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1990; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1999). When adapted to the travel context, the five stages of the consumer decision-making model— Need Recognition; Information Search; Evaluation of Alternatives; Purchase Decision; and Post-Purchase Evaluation — comprise of three stages — Pre-Trip; During Trip; and Post-Trip — as illustrated in Figure 1.

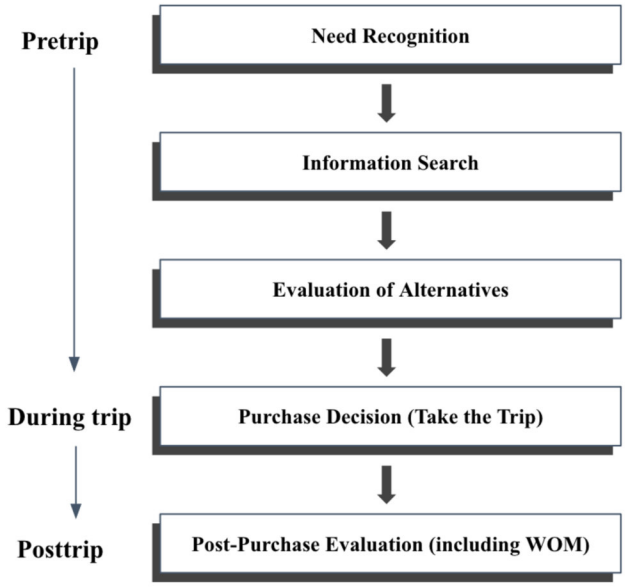

FIGURE 1 The Travel Planning Process

Note. Adapted from Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1990) and Woodside and Lyonski (1989), as cited in Cox *et al*. (2009).

Viewing this process through the lens of the CX, it is possible to make the connection between the above-presented model and the Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience proposed in recent literature by Lemon & Verhoef (2016), as well as adapt it to the travel context, to map out the travelers' journey (Figure 2).

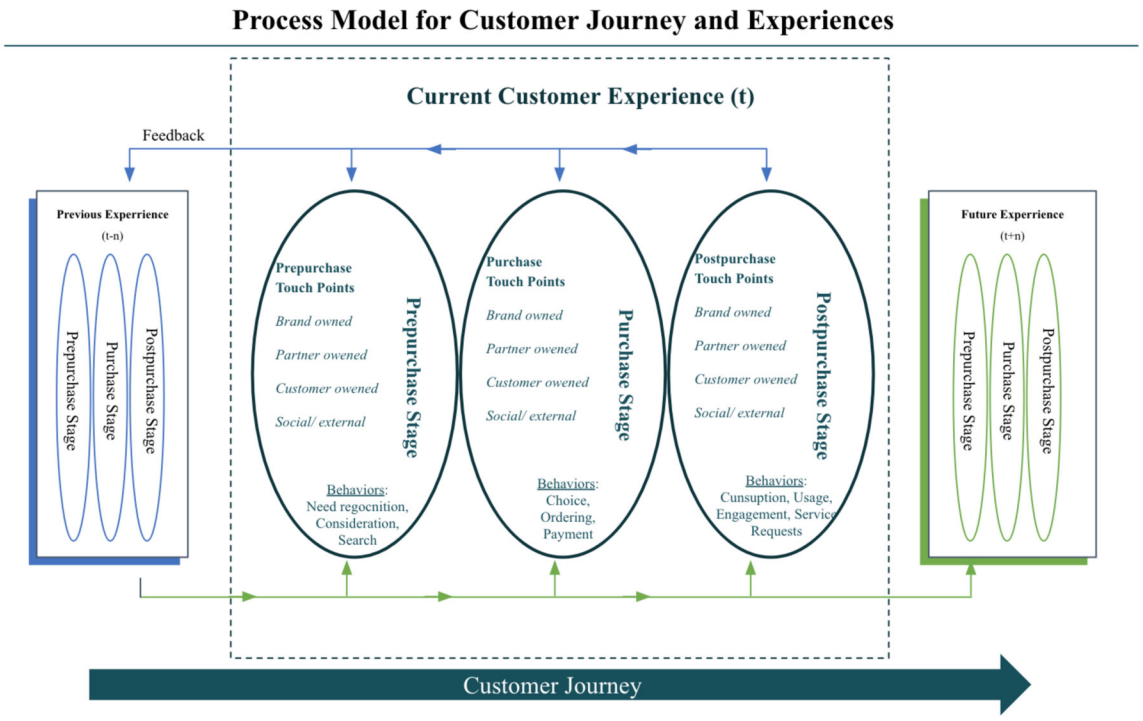

FIGURE 2 Process Model for Customer Journey and Experiences.

Note. Lemon & Verhoef (2016)

As explained by the authors, the model conceptualizes CX as a dynamic process of the customer's journey with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touch points— brand, partner, and customer owned. The interactive and dynamic process, as shown in Figure 2, consistent with prior research (Howard & Sheth 1969; Neslin, *et al.*, 2006; Puccinelli *et al.,* 2009), flows from pre-trip (pre-purchase), to during trip (purchase), to post-trip (post-purchase) stage, and incorporates previous experiences as well as external factors (e.g., other customers, peer influences, independent information sources) (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Each of the mentioned stages will receive further attention later on this research, but, before reviewing literature referent to how UGC is consumed, created, as well as how it influences Millennials decisions throughout this dynamic journey process, first the concepts of WOM and UGC as sources of travel information will be further clarified.

2.3 WOM & UGC as a Source of Travel Information

The significance of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communications[1] and its subsequent influence in consumers decision-making, has been well illustrated in previous literature (Engel, Blackwell, & Kegerreis, 1969; Gilly *et al.,* 1998, as cited in Chu & Kim, 2011), as it plays an essential part in changing consumer attitudes and behavior towards products and especially towards services (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Murray, 1991; Murray & Schlacter, 1990). Thus, due to intangibility of most travel-related products and services, WOM has long been recognized as one of the most important and influential information sources for travel planning (Cetinkaya, 2010, p.36). Consumers tend to rely heavily on WOM, from experienced sources as well as on advice from friends, family, and peers, to lower perceived risk and uncertainty, and inform their travel decisions (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Murray, 1991).

In an online context, WOM occurs when consumers create their own information online to share their experiences and views (Hyung-Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Chen, Nguyen, Klaus & Wu, 2015). Online WOM, or also referred to as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004, p.39).

eWOM is closely related to the concept of User-Generated Content (UGC), which refers to media content also created by the general public rather than by brands or paid professionals, and primarily distributed online (Daugherty *et al.*, 2008). Involving a variety of online channels such as social network posts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), YouTube videos, or review websites (TripAdvisor). Tabbane and Debabi (2015) define it as "any form of original content, available online and published by users whose motivations are devoid of commercial purposes." Therefore, before moving to the formulation of hypotheses, is it important to further discuss the role and value of UGC as a source of eWOM in the Travel Decision-Making Process.

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[1] Word-of-Mouth (WOM) communications refers to interpersonal communications among consumers concerning their personal experiences with a company, product or service provider (Richins, 1983).

[2] The concept of customer engagement behavior is defined as *"the customer's behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers."* (Van Doorn *et al.*, (2010), cited in Lemon and Verhoef, 2016)

2.3.1 UGC in the Travel Decision-Making Process

Research to date has demonstrated that customers' communication and information needs, as well as the use of different types of online information sources, can vary for different stages in the travel decision-making process as shown in Figure 3 (Gretzel, Fesenmaier & O'Leary, 2006; Choi *et al.*, 2007; Seabra, Abrantes, & Lages, 2007).

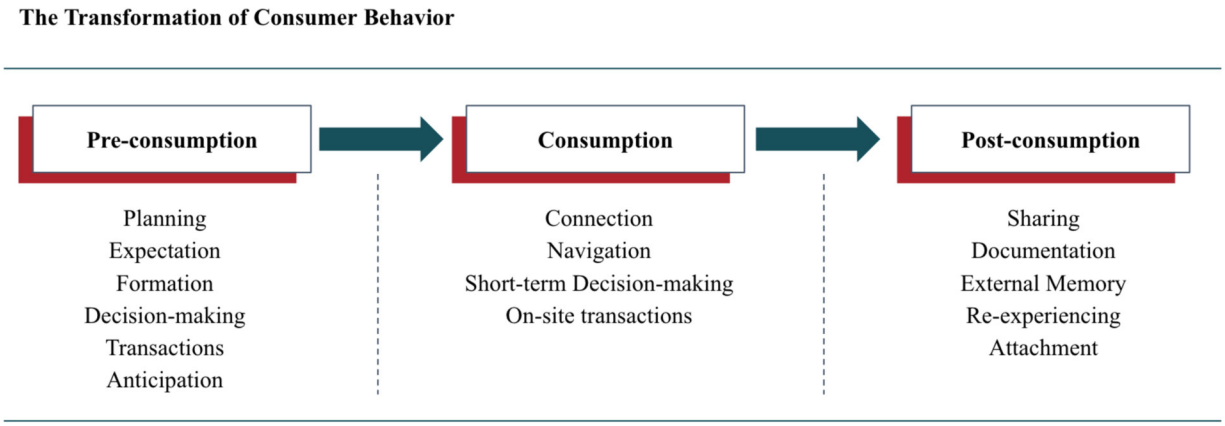

FIGURE 3 Communication and information needs in the Three Stages of Tourism

Note. Adapted from Gretzel, Fesenmaier & O'Leary, 2006.

Thus, at the beginning of the Travelers' Journey, Millennials may specifically use UGC to learn about potential travel destinations, create expectations, inform the purchase decisions of airline tickets or hotel reservations, or even dream about upcoming vacations (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Lee & Tussyadiah, 2010). At these initial stages, UGC facilitates the online travel information search, by providing first-hand feedback, comments, and recommendations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), in an incredibly user-friendly and even entertaining way (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015).

In literature, Cox *et al.* (2009) found that most travelers considered UGC only after making a decision on the destination, for choosing accommodation. However, it has been argued by Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002) that travelers generally collect and review various sources of travel information early at the beginning of the travel decision-making process, in order to minimize the risk of making wrong decisions.

Accordingly, recent studies (e.g. Lo *et al.*, 2011) conclude that UGC, especially travels blogs and reviews, influence destination related decision-making (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Jacobsen & Munnar, 2012). Further support for the use of UGC, in searching for information about destinations, is found within studies investigating users of the well-known travel review site TripAdvisor (Gretzel, 2007; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). These studies show that reviews are used to obtain destination knowledge and to generate ideas, while triggering an additional search of other travel-related products or services.

Even though, as demonstrated above, in past literature there has been a great effort to understand the role of UGC in the first stages of the travel decision-making process, most of the research found is somewhat limited to UGC of travel-specific platforms, in the form of reviews and blog posts. Leaving, therefore, the opportunity to understand if the same insights cross to Instagrams' UGC, seeing that the photo-sharing application is an indirect but highly influential and visual platform to search and share travel-related UGC, be it in the form of posts— photos and/ or videos— but, also, caption recommendations and comments.

2.4 User-Generated Content Strategy

Instagram has created new exciting ways for millennials to connect, interact, and contribute to a pool of online content by taking on the role of content creators. Besides just absorbing the information they get in contact with, consumers are now being empowered to actively express their opinions online, about products, services, and other travel-related experiences, in the form of UGC (O'Hern & Kahle, 2013; Cox *et al*., 2009; Murphy, 2014). Therefore, as discussed above, UGC is considered a powerful source of travel information with the potential to influence millennials' behaviors throughout the entire decision-making process (Cox *et al*., 2009; Xiang, & Gretzel, 2010).

Additionally, once UGC provides new opportunities for brands to spread their message and engage with audiences (Fader & Winer, 2012), marketers were quick to recognize its inherent value, and soon found ways to incorporate UGC as a key element to their marketing strategies (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). On Instagram, particularly, marketers seek to influence this content by joining the conversation and empowering users to create content about their own experiences (Forbes, 2017), common tactics being: reposts, contests, collaborations, featured or sponsored content, and partnerships with Instagram users.

One of the simplest ways for brands to integrate UGC within their content strategy is to feature and give credit to users who organically create positive UGC about the brand, by #reposting the content on the Official Brand Account. By doing so, brands not only tap into people's inherent desire to be recognized and appreciated, but that external recognition also strengthens the customer relationship with the brand and encourages others to contribute with UGC as well (Agius, 2017). In addition, reposting UGC fills the brand's account with authentic content that resonates with customers and gives credibility to the brand, the Consumer Content Report: Influence in the Digital Age (2017) indicates that 86% of millennials consider UGC to be a key indicator of the quality of a brand.

Yet another way businesses found to make meaningful connections was by partnering with users that have loyal follower bases, referred to as micro and macro Influencers or Instagrammers. Once eWOM peer-generated messages are perceived as more trustworthy and credible than traditional marketing advertising (Bickart and Schindler, 2001, cited by Ozuem, Pinho & Azemi, 2018), these Instagram users are attractive to advertisers and often approached for collaborations. Through these partnerships, consumers are able to learn about products and services from the voices of content creators they follow (Instagram Business, n.d.).

It can be argued, however, that the downside of this UGC strategy is that, while this content is still often created by Instagram users, once a business pays or rewards an Instagrammer for their content, the underlying principle of UGC, as a source of eWOM independent of commercial influence, (Litvin *et al.*, 2008) no longer holds. Moreover, in case the information about the

partnership is not disclosed, consumers might find it difficult to differentiate between Instagram content created by users for their own creative purposes and content requested, paid, or directly sponsored by businesses. This puts in question the Instagrammer's ulterior motives to produce the content, compromising both the fundamental reason that makes UGC so compelling for millennials, and creating an ethical dilemma regarding the credibility of the content (Leung *et al.*, 2013).

Recently, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) took new measures to track down influencers and businesses that violate its requirements, to comply with its Endorsement Policy, Instagram launched the new 'Paid Partnership' feature to eliminate some of the risks associated with creating sponsored posts, and to bring greater transparency and consistency to sponsored content on Instagram (Instagram Business, 2017). For influencers, the 'Paid Partnership' feature allows them to "clearly" disclose (via an Instagram tag) that they are posting sponsored content. When a post is tagged, people will see "Paid partnership with [business partner]" in the post's header (Chacon, 2017). This feature intends to help creators to more clearly communicate to their followers when they are working in a paid partnership with a business (Instagram Business, n.d.).

In sum, Social Networking Applications, such as Instagram, are generally perceived by users as prominent platforms that display UGC (Luca, 2016). However, as above-described, advertisers are increasingly leveraging user Instagram accounts to communicate their messages. Consequently, the essence of UGC as unpaid content created by independent consumers or end-users previously reviewed in the literature, is not consistent with some of the content strategies discussed. In turn, Marketing-Generated Content (MGC) in the form of Paid Partnerships between brands and Instagrammers is a more suitable definition for such content (Tsiakali, 2018). Despite Instagram's efforts to bring transparency to sponsored content on the platform, the line between paid and unpaid UGC, and subsequent outcome of such strategies for businesses to engage with millennials, is still unclear.

2.4.1 Millennials' Engagement with User-Generated Content

Specifically in terms of engagement,[2] the users deal with UGC in three ways: by consuming, by participating, or by producing.[3] On Instagram, an important measure to analyze the performance and impact of travel-related UGC posts is the engagement rate associated with that post, usually translated in terms of the number of likes, comments, and shares, in proportion to the number of followers (Voorveld, van Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018).

Previous research found that both interpersonal trust and source credibility— concepts closely related with UGC— enhance users' engagement in online activities and intentions to act on other consumers' recommendations (Hung, Li & Tse, 2011). Furthermore, recent results from Facebook's UGC Benchmark Report (2017) reinforce these findings, by showing that effective UGC can generate 6.9x higher engagement than brand-generated content. Confirming the value of UGC strategies to generate higher engagement rates, and suggesting that the most trusted and credible sources of UGC that usually come from friends, family, and peers, lead to higher participation, when compared to sources that clearly have a vested commercial interest.

Moreover, an online experiment conducted by Edelman and Gilchrist (2012), that measured user interactions with search engines, both in standard configurations and in modified versions with clearer labels identifying search engine advertisements, revealed that relative to users receiving the "Sponsored link" or "Ad" labels, users receiving the "Paid Advertisement" label clicked in 25% and 27% fewer advertisements, respectively. Although not directly related with UGC, the mentioned study is still relevant for the purpose once it compares scenarios of transparency of information, and reveals that the disclosure of the "Paid Advertisement" label, similar to the new "Paid Partnership" Instagram feature, can significantly affect consumers' interactivity levels. Thus, leading to the formulation of the first hypothesis:

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[2] The concept of customer engagement behavior is defined as *"the customer's behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers."* (Van Doorn *et al.*, (2010), cited in Lemon and Verhoef, 2016)

[3] Consuming refers to the individuals who only view or read. Participating includes both user-to-user interaction and user-to-content interaction (e.g. liking the content, sharing with others, and posting comments). Producing encompasses the creation and publication of one's personal contents (Shao, 2009, as cited in Ribeiro *et al*, 2014).

Hypothesis #1: The level of **Customer Online Engagement**, invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User, is significantly higher than the levels of Customer Online Engagement invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC, as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

2.4.2 Millennials Perceived Trustworthiness of User-Generated Content

Another fundamental and recurring issue, that arises both in industry reports as well as academic research, surrounding the impact of travel-related UGC, is the extent to which millennials actually perceive the content posted online as trustworthy (Gretzel, 2006; Cox *et al.*, 2009). According to the Global Trust in Advertising Report by Nielsen (2015), both Earned and Owned Media remain the most trusted ad formats:

> The most credible advertising comes straight from the people we know and trust. More than eight-in-ten global respondents (83%) say they completely or somewhat trust the recommendations of friends and family. But trust isn't confined only to those in our inner circle. In fact, two-thirds (66%) say they trust consumer opinions posted online. (Global Trust in Advertising, 2015)

The study emphasizes that recommendations from people who are known to the consumer remain the most trusted source of information, but adds that two-thirds of consumers also trust content posted online. Accordingly, MacKinnon (2012) found 66.3% of consumers rely heavily on UGC when attempting to make purchasing decisions and 65% of consumers trust WOM on the Internet more than content produced by advertisers. Due to the lack of commercial self-interest associated with eWOM recommendations, consumers tend to trust and be more influenced by this type of information than by commercial sources. This is because the provider of the information is not generally aiming to make a financial gain from sharing their experiences and views with others (Litvin *et al*., 2008). The perceived trustworthiness of third-party information is a core reason why people use UGC in their decision making process (Akehurst, 2008; Page & Pitt, 2011, as cited in Rushton & Kennell, 2015).

Research posited that compared to MGC, UGC is perceived by customers as more trustworthy, useful and unbiased (Buttle, 1998; Mir & Rehman, 2013; Jonas, 2010; Verhellen, Dens, & Pelsmacker, 2013, as cited in Bahtar & Muda, 2016), presumingly because UGC is created based on consumers' own experiences independent of any commercial interest (Mir & Rehman, 2013). These findings are also supported by previous research on other types of UGC (e.g. travel blogs and online reviews), which indicate that independent third-party type sites tend to be considered preferable to consumers compared to those which are clearly operated by a business with a vested interest (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Once more, assumedly because consumers are considered to provide more trustworthy, credible, and honest information (Hyung-Park *et al*., 2007). Ultimately, this suggests that the potential for UGC to have a strong and credible influence on consumers' decision-making behavior will depend on how transparent the information within it is actually perceived. Potential consumers not only seem to trust more content generated by other users in regards to brands and products, but also consider independent accounts as preferable compared to channels owned by businesses. Given the above discussion, the second hypothesis is presented as follows:

Hypothesis #2: The level of **Perceived Trustworthiness** invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of Perceived Trustworthiness invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

2.4.3 User-Generated Content & Travel Intention

In addition, a number of academic research studies have confirmed the impact of both eWOM and UGC on consumers' purchase intentions (e.g. Wan, 2015; Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Sethna, Hazari & Bergiel, 2017). See-To and Ho (2014), used theories in trust and value co-creation to analyze how eWOM affected purchase intention in social network sites (SNSs), also concluded that eWOM has a direct impact on purchase intention. Accordingly, research on UGC, in the form of online reviews, suggested that online consumers rely on the content generated by other users to assist them in making a purchase decision (Bae & Lee, 2011).

Specifically, in the Traveling Industry, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) found that UGC on social media had increasingly influenced destination awareness and subsequent decisions on destination selection. Moreover, in a study conducted by comScore (2007), 84% of travelers reported that travel reviews had a significant influence on their purchase decisions. Clearly indicating the preference for content generated by other users, and the subsequent influence of such content on purchase intention, in this specific case, on travel intentions.

Hypothesis #3: The level of **Travel Intention** invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of Travel Intention invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

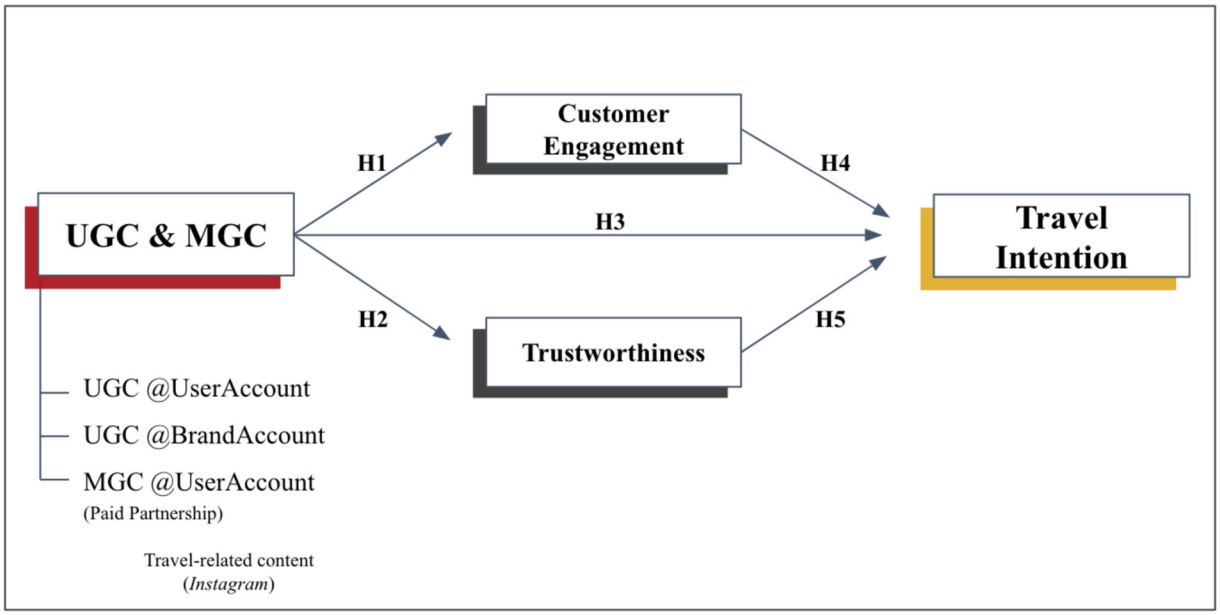
2.4.4 Online Engagement & Perceived Trustworthiness impacts on Travel Intention

Finally, research which specifically explores the impact of both online engagement and perceived trustworthiness of travel-related UGC on Millennial Travel Intentions is somewhat limited and will, therefore, be explored through the last theorized hypotheses. Nonetheless, several previous studies from other areas indicate that social media brand-related content from both consumers and brands positively influences consumers' mindsets and, thus, behavior (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2014, as cited in Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016), and, that Earned Social Media engagement volume also affects purchase intent (Colicev, Malshe, Pauwels & O'Connor, 2018). Regarding trustworthiness, research suggests that if the consumers positively perceive and trust the information, regardless of who the sources are, they can easily be persuaded to purchase (Waldt, Loggerenberg & Wehmeyer, 2009). Thus, this line of reasoning leads to the formulation of the fourth and fifth hypotheses:

Hypothesis #4: Customer Engagement has a significant positive impact on Travel Intention.

Hypothesis #5: Perceived Trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on Travel Intentions.

2.5 Conceptual Framework



Explanatory Research

FIGURE 4 Conceptual Framework

III Methodology

The following chapter intents to present and explain the methodology used to study the research questions of this thesis, as well as show how the hypotheses were tested. Firstly, the research approach will be defined, followed by a detailed explanation of primary data collection, sampling technique, measurements, and data analysis. Finally, ethical considerations will be presented.

3.1 Research Approach

In order to understand the reasoning behind the research strategy and methods undertaken throughout this research, first and foremost it is fundamental to discuss the philosophy of research adopted in this thesis.

Due to the nature of the study at hand, existing literature on travel-related UGC formed a starting point and paved the way for the theoretical framework of the thesis, therefore a positivist philosophy of research to the development of knowledge was adopted (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, since the focus was not on the development of new theory, but rather building on existing theory of knowledge to develop hypotheses to be tested, and, as positivist paradigm is closely associated with a deductive approach, which depends on quantifiable observations that lead to statistical analyses (Saunders *et al.*, 2009), a deductive approach was taken up and quantitative data collected through a cross-sectional survey with a built-in experimental design of repeated measures, also known as within groups experiment, where the participants took part in each condition of the independent variables to test the hypothesis.

In sum, to achieve the proposed objectives, and reach conclusions that provide evidence to confirm or reject the above-formulated hypotheses, while possibly providing a basis for future research, an explanatory approach based on the collection of quantitative data was used on this research process.

3.2 Data Collection & Sample

As mentioned before, an increasing number of travel-related UGC is being shared on Instagram every minute, turning the photo-sharing app into one of the most relevant online platforms for sharing UGC and influencing travel decisions among Millennials. Thus, as the focus and target for this research were Instagram users who travel regularly, the online survey questionnaire was mainly distributed through Instagram, during a 1 week period, between November 9th and November 16th, 2018.

Regarding the sample size, as it was the case of an unknown population proportion, assuming a 95% confidence level (Z Score = 1.96), .5 standard deviation, and a margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 5%, calculations yielded a necessary sample size of 385 (Qualtrics, n.d.). However, due to resource and time constraints, data was collected through non-probability sampling techniques - convenience sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

The survey, comprised of a total of 23 questions, was structured and divided into three main sections (See Appendix 1). In order to ensure that all respondents complied with the conditions to be eligible for the study, a set of control questions at the beginning of the survey excluded participants who were not Instagram users nor had traveled in the previous year, as well as respondents that did not rely on Instagram for travel-related reasons. Also, due to the fact that the questionnaire was designed to determine the respondents' usage and perceptions of UGC in their travel planning process, a brief explanation was added so that respondents clearly understood the concept of UGC. Further, since the target population was not restricted by nationality, to make sure it was accessible to as many people as possible, the survey was launched in English.

In total, a recorded number of 532 completed responses to the online Survey were collected, of those, 126 were excluded from the analysis due to not meeting one or more of the necessary criteria mentioned before. Finally, as the present study focuses solely on Millennials, only responses collected from participants within the age groups of 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 were considered for the analysis, resulting in a total number of 383 valid responses.

3.3 Experiment

As above mentioned, the participants took part in a within groups experiment, where they were exposed to all three different scenarios of UGC Instagram posts (See Appendix 2) and answered the same set of questions for each of the scenarios.

The stimulus was a manipulation from an actual Instagram post, the first created by the Instagram user @aleksikylmalahti and shared on his own Instagram account; the second scenario features the exact same post, this time reposted on the Hotel's official Instagram account @leviniglut. Thirdly, as it is mentioned on the top of the post, the scenario represents the MGC as a result of the Paid Partnership between the Hotel Brand and the Instagram user, shared on the user's own account.

This post, user account and brand were selected due to the small follower base of the user and somewhat unknown Hotel Brand, and for fact that, although the photo features people on the post, they are not easily recognized, which ensured that familiarity with the user and/ or brand would not affect the experiment results. In addition, the number of followers and likes of both accounts were manipulated to present as equal, further ensuring the validity of results. Lastly, the three scenarios appeared one-by-one on a randomized order on the online survey to avoid bias.

3.4 Measurements and Scales

Measured variables included self-reported Instagram usage, travel behavior, and the role of UGC on the different stages of the Travel Experience. Further, three constructs— engagement, perceived trustworthiness, and travel intention towards the different scenarios of UGC— were measured (Table 1). Lastly, basic demographic variables were included. All measurements were derived from previous literature and multi-measurement items for each construct were adopted to overcome the limitations of a single item, which could have been too specific to capture all the attributes of a construct and to likely have a high rate of measurement error.

Instagram usage (i.e., consuming, contributing and/ or creating content) was recorded via a self-reported 'average time spent per week on Instagram' item, adapted from Narangajavana *et al.*, (2017), as well as frequency 'how often post on Instagram' item, adapted from Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece (2003). In addition, Instagram usage while Traveling was also recorded via a comparison to the previous question regarding the posting frequency item. For Travel Behavior, both travel frequency and companionship were recorded via 'how many times do you travel per year', as well as 'with whom do you usually travel' item.

In order to determine the stage of the travel process in which UGC is mostly used by travelers, the respondents were asked to select all statements that accurately described their Instagram activity during their travel experiences. The statements were adopted from Cox *et al.* (2009).

To assess the level and type of Online Customer Engagement experienced, categories previously identified were selected and adapted to Instagram's reality (i.e., 'Like', Comment, Tag, Share, Save, and Follow), (Schivinski, *et. al.,* 2016). Three Trust-related items were adapted from a study conducted by Ayeh, Au & Law (2013), to access the perceived trustworthiness of each scenario of UGC. Lastly, Travel Intention was assessed with two items adapted from Erkan and Evans (2016), for each of the presented scenarios.

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree/ extremely unlikely to 5 = strongly agree/ extremely likely. Some constructs here adapted from a 7-point Likert scale to a 5-point Likert scale. Control variables like demographics (i.e. gender, age, and Nationality) were collected along with the questions related to Instagram Usage and Travel Behavior mentioned above.

TABLE 1 Measurement Model

Construct	**Scale**	**# of Items**	**Literature**
Customer Engagement	5-point Likert scale	6	Adapted from Schivinski *et al*. (2016)
Perceived Trustworthiness	5-point Likert scale	3	Adapted from Ayeh *et al.* (2013)
Travel Intentions	5-point Likert scale	2	Adapted from Erkan and Evans (2016)

3.5 Data Analysis

All quantitative data was collected through Qualtrics and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistical Software. Firstly, both Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics were performed for sample characterization in terms of Demographics, as well as regarding Instagram Usage and Travel Behavior. Followed by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess the reliability of the constructs. Concerning the research questions and hypotheses testing, Repeated Measures ANOVA were performed in order to statistically assess the differences in the mean values between the types of UGC. Furthermore, Linear Regression Models were run over the different variables to analyze the data and produce the main results and conclusions of the present study. A level of significance of .05 was used for each statistical analysis (Cohen, 1990).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the planning and implementation of this research, ethical considerations such as anonymity, reliability, and validity of all aspects involved in the research were considered, as well as ensured practical and realistic approaches (Coles, Duval & Shaw, 2013). Regarding the data collected through the Survey, on the front page of the Qualtrics online Survey, participants were informed that the data collected would be strictly used for academic purposes and would remain confidential. Also, only responses from participants of 18 years of age and older were considered, as participation from consenting adults ensured that the study was ethical and allowed data to be used with consent.

IV Results

The following chapter presents the main results from the data analysis based on the quantitative data collected. First, the sample of the research will be characterized, followed by validity and measured reliability of the study. The subsequent section of this chapter will comprise the description and analysis of the results obtained from the statistical testing of the previously proposed hypotheses, as well as their resulting acceptance or rejection.

4.1 Sample Characterization

- **Demographics**

In terms of the demographic characteristics of the 383 respondents, gender-wise, as expected, and consistent with both previous research (e.g. Ayeh *et al.*, 2013; Tsai & Men, 2013; Chung & Koo, 2015), and Instagram User Profiles (Pew Research Center, 2010; Statista, 2018c), about 3 out of 4 participants were female (74,67%). Furthermore, the majority of Millennial participants were aged between 18 to 24 (71%) and the remaining 29% between 25 to 34 years of age. Regarding Nationality, although a total of 24 different nationalities were recorded, the great majority of respondents were Portuguese (78.9%), as presented in the table below.

TABLE 2 Sample Characterization – *Demographics*
Sample Characteristics (n = 383)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	286	74.7%
Male	97	25.3%
Age		
18 - 24 years old	272	71.0%
25 - 34 years old	111	29.0%
Nationality		
Portugal	302	78.9%
Germany	20	5.2%
Philippines	17	4.4%
Italy	5	1.3%
Spain	4	1.0%
Other	35	9.2%
Total	383	100%

- **Travel Behavior & Instagram Usage**

When it comes to Instagram and Travel, only 2.09% of participants spend less than 1 hour per week on average on the social networking app, while most of the respondents (42%) spend between 1 to 5 hours, and about 35% spend up to 6h to 10 hours, or more than 10 hours a week using Instagram (20.9%). Translated into hours per day, it means that more than 20% of the Millennials self-report spending at least 1 hour and 25 minutes per day on Instagram.

Additionally, 98.7% of respondents self-reported actively posting own content on Instagram (daily (4.7%), weekly (31.9%), or occasionally (62.1%)), and, 79.9% report posting on Instagram even more often while traveling. For traveling habits, 48.3% of respondents travel between 3 to 4 times a year, mostly with friends (74.2%), family (64%) and partner (50.7%), but 21.9% also report to travel solo (*Note.* This is a multiple response question; totals do not add to 100%).

TABLE 3 Sample Characterization - *Instagram Usage*
(Hours per week)

Hours per week	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1h	8	2.1%
1 - 5h	161	42%
6 - 10h	134	35%
More than 10h	80	20.9%

TABLE 4 Sample Characterization - *Instagram Usage*
(Posting Activity)

Posting Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Never	5	1.3%
Occasionally	238	62.1%
Weekly	122	31.9%
Daily	18	4.7%

TABLE 5 Sample Characterization - *Travel Behavior*

Travel Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 2x Year	125	32.6%
3 - 4x Year	185	48.3%
More than 5x Year	73	19.1%

4.2 Reliability and Validity

- **Reliability**

Even though all items used in the survey were adapted from previously approved literature, a Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to measures the internal consistency of the set of items, providing a measure of the scales reliability used among this sample. The test of reliability of scales presented a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of more than .70 for all constructs used for the hypotheses testing, making them acceptable to continue the investigation, with some constructs presenting a Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.9 making them very reliable measures to predict the actual variable (Hair *et al.,* 2010; Malhotra, 2010). Table 6 sums up the Cronbach's Alphas for the constructs used for each scenario.

TABLE 6 Cronbach's Alphas for Constructs used

		Cronbach's Alpha		
Construct	**#Items**	**User-Generated Content** *@UserAccount*	**User-Generated Content** *@BrandAccount*	**Marketing-Generated Content** *@UserAccount*
Customer Engagement	6	.714	.713	.743
Trustworthiness	3	.830	.913	.917
Travel Intention	2	.775	.824	.853

- **Internal & External Validity**

Validity refers to the link between individual questions and the concepts they seek to measure, as well as to how statements or questions combine to measure multidimensional concepts (Sue & Ritter, 2012). In order to ensure the study has internal validity, approved scales from previous studies were used as mentioned above. Also, as described in the methodology chapter, to reduce issues with validity, the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality at the beginning of the survey. As noted, there were also screening and filter questions which removed any participants who do not Travel nor use Instagram, which ensured that participants had the background knowledge they need to assess the posts presented.

As for external validity, due to non-probability sampling techniques, the majority of respondents were Portuguese (78.9%), therefore, the results obtained from the surveys have limited generalizability and thus limited external validity. However, as the population represented by the sample was restricted by demographics and psychographics, the population sampled provided some external validity, as the screening and filter questions removed participants to ensure that those who participated were part of the universe of all Instagram users who Travel, which helped improve external validity.

- **Ecological Validity**

Unlike internal and external validity, ecological validity is not necessary for the overall validity of a study However, in research, the ecological validity of a study means that the methods, materials, and setting of the study approximate the real-world that is being examined, a measure of how test performance predicts behaviors in real-world settings. In order to ensure the study has ecological validity, the researcher manipulated an actual Instagram post to display to participants and shared it through Instagram. However, because participants viewed this post within a survey, not as part of a full Instagram feed, ecological validity is limited. Also, each condition differed by only one element to ascertain the cause of the experimental results.

4.3 Results from Research & Hypothesis Testing

The Role of Instagram's UGC on the different Stages of Travelers' Experiences

Based on the literature review, it was discussed that Instagram's UGC, contrary to other forms of UGC, is mostly used during the first stage of the decision-making process rather than during other travel stages, being predominantly created during the trip stage as a post-purchase behavior to share experiences with others. To further explore this topic, the participants were asked to indicate in what occasions they use UGC Instagram posts for travel-related reasons.

Regarding the usage of Instagram's UGC for travel-related reasons, even though 55.6% of respondents report using UGC prior to the travel decision, 'to discover new travel destinations and/ or experiences', which corresponds to the need recognition stage, results were coherent with previous literature on other types of UGC (namely, reviews, recommendations and travel-related blogs). This shows that the content is predominantly used 'at the beginning of travel planning, to get inspired and search for ideas on where to go' (59.5%) as well as when a destination has already been chosen and the traveler is seeking further information (58%), both of which relate to the information search stage of the travel process.

The results further indicate that Instagram's UGC is created both during and after the trip, 'to share experiences with other travelers', as a post-purchase behavior that, in the case of Instagram, happens almost as frequently during the actual trip (71.8%) as well as after the trip (70.5%). However, for the post-purchase behavior stage, only 9.4% of respondents use Instagram's UGC to 'compare experiences with those of other travelers'. When it comes to evaluation of alternatives, only 17.2% use UGC 'When trying to narrow down choices' and as for the purchase decision stage only 21.4% of respondents report using UGC to confirm a decision. However, interestingly enough, 44.4% of respondents state to actually rely on Instagram's UGC 'during the actual trip to inform decisions'.

In sum, the results shown in Table 7 indicate that Instagram UGC appears to be used mainly during pre-trip information search stage of the process and predominantly created both during and after the trip as a post-purchase behavior.

TABLE 7 Stages of Travel Planning Process When Instagram's UGC is Used

STAGES	***Statement***	**% Respondents**
Travel Planning **Need Recognition**	Before I even decide to travel, to discover new travel destinations and/ or experiences.	55.6%
Travel Planning **Information Search**	At the beginning of travel planning, to get inspired and search for ideas on where to go.	59.5%
Travel Planning **Information Search**	When I have already chosen a destination but was seeking information on accommodation/ places to visit/ activities/ places to eat.	58%
Travel Planning **Evaluation of Alternatives**	When trying to narrow down my choices.	17.2%
Travel Planning **Purchase Decisions**	When I was looking to confirm I had made a good destination choice.	21.4%
Travel Planning **Purchase Decisions (during trip)**	During my actual trip to inform decisions (trying to find out about specific attractions, places or things to do).	44.4%
Travel Planning **Post-Purchase Behaviour (during trip)**	During my trip to allow me to share my experiences with other travelers.	71.8%
Travel Planning **Post-Purchase Behaviour**	After my trip to allow me to share my experiences with other travelers.	70.5%
Travel Planning **Post-Purchase Evaluations**	After my trip to compare my experiences with those of other travelers	9.4%

Note. This is a multiple response question; totals do not add to 100%.

Travel-related User-Generated Content Strategy

In order to analyze and better understand the impact that different types of travel-related UGC had on Customer Engagement, Trustworthiness, and ultimately, Travel Intention, the data collected was subject to repeated measures ANOVA statistical analysis. The main goal of this procedure was to assess the existence of significant statistical differences in the mean values of the three scenarios of UGC. The selection of this statistical analysis was due to the need to test the comparison of three means, each correspondent to the exposure to three different UGC scenarios. Besides, as all the participants were exposed to all three scenarios, a within-subject repeated measures ANOVA was the appropriate statistical test. Pairwise comparison *post-hoc* tests were also included in the analysis in order to further understand and validate the results.

The following, (1) independence and identically distributed variables, (2) that follow a multivariate approximately normal distribution in the population, and (3) sphericity— population variances of all possible difference scores among the test variables that must be equal in the population, guarantee that the relevant assumptions for repeated measures ANOVA were met. In order to test sphericity, Mauchly's Test was selected, and sphericity was assumed if sig. > 0.05. For the constructs that did not meet the assumption of sphericity, proposed Greenhouse-Geisser and Huynh-Feldt Epsilon corrections were adopted (Howell, 2002; Field, 2013) (Appendix 3).

- **Statistical Analysis**

Hypothesis #1: The level of **Customer Online Engagement** invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of Customer Online Engagement invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

The first construct to be analyzed was, therefore, Customer Engagement (See Tabel 8). Turning to Mauchly's test for the sphericity assumption, $\chi 2(2) = 3.86$, $p = .145$, results did not indicate any violation of sphericity, so sphericity was assumed (Appendix 4).

Results, from the conducted repeated measures ANOVA, indicated a statistically significant effect of type of UGC on Online Customer Engagement ($F(2,764) = 77.94$; $p = 0.000$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis of equal means and accept the alternative hypothesis. The UGC type most likely to reveal higher levels of customer engagement is UGC created by an independent Instagram User on its own Account (mean = 2.50), followed by UGC created by an independent user but reposted on a Brand Official Instagram Account (mean = 2.33); and, lastly, MGC, as a result of a Paid Partnership between the Instagram User and the Hotel Brand (mean = 2.13). According to the pairwise comparison *post-hoc* test, the three scenarios were statistically different (See Appendix 4).

TABLE 8 Customer Engagement by UGC Strategy. Output from SPSS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
CE_UGC_UserAccount	2.4959	.73893	77.942	.000
CE_UGC_BrandAccount	2.3333	.74995		
CE_MGC_UserAccount	2.1329	.76530		

Hence, Hypothesis #1 is confirmed.

Hypothesis #2: The level of **Perceived Trustworthiness** invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of Perceived Trustworthiness invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

Secondly, the Perceived Trustworthiness construct was analyzed. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated, $\chi2(2) = 14.646$, $p = .001$, and showed a Greenhouse-Geisser = .964, therefore, a Huynh-Feldt correction was used (See Appendix 5).

The results, obtained from the ANOVA repeated measures analysis (See Table 9), reject the null hypothesis of equal means (F(1.937, 739) = 95,98; p = 0.00), as there was a significant effect of type of UGC on Perceived Trustworthiness. However, unlike expected, results show that the mean of UGC reposted on the Brand Official Instagram Account (mean = 3.81) is slightly higher than the mean of the UGC Independent Instagram User (mean = 3.58), as well as the mean for the MGC paid partnership between the Instagram User and the Hotel Brand scenario (mean = 3.15). Again, according to the pairwise comparison *post-hoc* test, the three scenarios were statistically different (See Appendix 5). Thus, although results reject the null hypothesis for equal means, the results did not confirm the theorized alternative hypothesis.

TABLE 9 Perceived Trustworthiness by UGC Strategy. Output from SPSS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
TRUST_UGC_UserAccount	3.5762	.80280	95.980	.000
TRUST_UGC_BrandAccount	3.8059	.86546		
TRUST_MGC_UserAccount	3.1506	.99867		

Consequently, although the null-hypothesis has to be refuted, Hypothesis 2 cannot be accepted.

Hypothesis #3: The level of **Travel Intention** invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of Travel Intention invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.

Lastly, Travel Intention was thoroughly analyzed. Hypothesis #3 implied that UGC created by an independent Instagram User would have a higher impact on Travel Intention than the two other types of UGC. Mauchly's test for the sphericity assumption, $\chi 2(2) = .765$, $p = .682$, indicated that sphericity was assumed (See Appendix 6).

The results, obtained via the ANOVA repeated measures analysis (See Table 10), were similar to the ones obtained when analysing Perceived Trustworthiness as the results rejected the null hypothesis of equal means (F(2,764) = 22,12; p=0.00). Comparably to what happened before, the reposted UGC on the Brand Official Instagram Account (mean = 3.47) was the type of content most likely to influence Travel Intentions, followed by UGC from the independent User (mean = 3.38). However, according to the *post-hoc* tests, means between this two scenarios were not statistically different (p=.065) (See Appendix 6). Lastly, the MGC scenario resulted in the lowest mean (mean = 3.17). Hypothesis #3, is therefore not fully supported, confirming however that the two types of UGC Instagram posts are more likely to have a greater and equal effect on Millennials' Travel Intentions when compared to the scenario of MGC.

TABLE 10 Travel Intention by UGC Strategy. Output from SPSS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
TI_UGC_UserAccount	3.3799	.99669	28.121	.000
TI_UGC_BrandAccount	3.4739	.95821		
TI_MGC_UserAccount	3.1723	1.01446		

Hypothesis #3, is therefore not fully supported.

The impact of Engagement and Perceived Trustworthiness on Travel Intention

In order to assess the direction and intensity of the effect of both, Customer Engagement and Perceived Trustworthiness on Travel Intentions, a set of Simple and Multiple Linear Regressions were performed. Before proceeding with the analysis, it was necessary to compute variables and consequent test reliability to measure the internal consistency of the set of items, as well as ensure all assumptions, to run the Linear Regression Models were met.

Hypothesis #4: Customer Engagement has a significant positive impact on Travel Intention.

As represented in Appendix 7, all the assumptions to run the Linear Regression Model— (1) independence of observations (Durbin-Watson statistical test), (2) linearity (scatter graph), (3) homoscedasticity (scatterplot), and (4) normality (normal P-P plot)— were met. Moreover, both variables were normally distributed, and the Pearson correlation coefficient (0.474) indicated a moderate linear relationship between the two.

A Simple Linear Regression was then run to predict Travel Intention based on Customer Engagement. Following the results provided by the ANOVA table (Appendix 7), the regression model was found to be statistically significant ($F(1,381) = 110.407$; $p < .001$). Regarding the model's fit, it was observed an R^2 value of .225, which explain 22.5% of the variation in the outcome variable. Accordingly, in terms of direction and intensity of the proposed impact, the Coefficients table revealed that the effect of Customer Engagement is positive since the regression coefficient was +0.613 ($\beta = 0.613$) with $p < .001$. In other words, this specific coefficient indicates that for every unit increase in the Customer Engagement variable, the Travel Intention will register an increase of 0.613 units.

Thus, confirming Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis #5: Perceived Trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on Travel Intentions.

Similar to the testing of Hypothesis 4, a simple linear regression model was performed in order to predict the existence and degree of impact of Perceived Trustworthiness on Travel Intentions. Based on the statistical analysis results, included in Appendix 8, there was no evidence of any transgression of the assumptions to run the regression model. Furthermore, both variables were normally distributed and the Pearson correlation coefficient (0.383) revealed a close-to-medium strength of association between both variables.

According to the SPSS output tables, presented in Appendix 8, the regression proved to be statistically significant ($F(1;381) = 187.836$; $p < .001$) with an R^2 value of .330. The regression coefficient was +0.708 ($\beta = 0.708$) with $p < .001$, therefore indicating a positive effect of Perceived Trustworthiness on the Travel Intention. In practical terms, a B value of .708 indicates an increase of the value by .708 scale points if the independent variable increases in one scale point, i.e. the higher the level of Perceived Trustworthiness, the higher Millennials' Travel Intentions.

Consequently, Hypothesis 5 is validated.

Finally, both the impacts of Customer Engagement and Perceived Trustworthiness on Travel Intentions were tested in a multiple regression. The main purpose of this particular test was to simultaneously assess the effects of both explanatory variables when put together in the same model, as well as to determine the existence of any possible differences in their impacts, relative to the simple linear regressions previously tested.

In accordance with the output included in Appendix 9, the statistical results show a compliance with the before-mentioned assumptions to run the multiple linear regression model. The tested regression model was identified as being statistically significant ($F(2;380) = 130.582$; $p < .001$), with an R^2 value of 40.7%. As indicated in the variable relationships, as well as in the Coefficients table of Appendix 9, while the regression coefficient associated with the Customer Engagement variable was +0.388 ($\beta = 0.388$) with $p < .001$, the Perceived Trustworthiness coefficient was also statistically significant ($\beta=0.569$) with $p < .001$. By interpreting the mentioned results, one concludes that, when having both of its effect simultaneously assessed in the same regression model, CE and PT still produce a positive impact on the outcome variable. While in the first regression presented (H4), CE had a corresponding regression coefficient of +0.613, with the introduction of the PT variable in the regression model its impact in the dependent variable registered a slight reduction. More specifically, for each unit increase in this explanatory variable, Travel Intention will register an increase of only 0.388 units.

The same is true for PT, which had a statistically significant positive impact on the dependent variable (H5) with a regression coefficient of +0.708, with the introduction of the PT variable in the regression model its impact in the dependent variable also registered a slight reduction, thus for each unit increased in this explanatory variable, Travel Intention will register an increase of 0.569 units. In sum, the multiple regression ran to predict Travel Intention from CE and Perceived Trustworthiness, indicated that these statistical variables significantly predicted Travel Intention, ($F(2;380) = 130.582$; $p < .001$), $R^2 = .407$, and both variables added statistically significance to the prediction, $p < .001$.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing Overview

TABLE 11 Results from Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1	The level of CE invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of CE invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.	Significant, and validated.
H2	The level of PT invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of PT invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.	Reject H0, but H2 not accepted.
H3	The level of TI invoked by travel-related UGC created by an independent Instagram User is significantly higher than the levels of TI invoked by UGC reposted on a Branded Instagram Account or MGC as a result of a Paid Partnership in an Instagram post.	H3 not fully supported.
H4	Customer Online Engagement has a significant positive impact on Travel Intention.	Significant, and validated.
H5	Perceived Trustworthiness has a significant positive impact on Travel Intentions.	Significant, and validated.

V Conclusions and Limitations

As it has been noted, the aim of this study was to provide an understanding of the role of Instagrams' travel-related UGC and its subsequent impact on Millennials Travel Intentions, as well as assess the effect of different types of Instagrams' User-Generated Content Strategies on Customer Online Engagement, Perceived Trustworthiness, and, ultimately, Travel Intention. A cross-sectional quantitative online survey was conducted to analyze the study's research problem and generate insights for future research. The following chapter presents and discusses the main findings of the study and draws final conclusions, followed by academic and managerial implications. Lastly, the limitations to the present research will be outlined and recommendations for future research will be proposed.

5.1 Main Findings & Conclusions

The scope of this research focused on the influence of UGC on millennials' behavior, specifically in the context of Instagram and Travel. Therefore, the first research question aimed at understanding the role of Instagrams' travel-related UGC on Millennials' Travel Experiences.

Although largely descriptives, the findings derived from the initial part of the analyses provided important insights regarding the value and role of travel-related UGC as part of Millennials' Travel Experiences. Consistent with existing literature on this topic (Chapter 2.3.1 UGC in the Travel Decision-Making Process), the study found that users are consuming UGC even prior to the actual decision to travel, meaning UGC Instagram posts work as a trigger for the need recognition stage at the beginning of the decision-making process. In addition, the study indicates millennials heavily rely on UGC, especially during the information search stage to get inspired, search for ideas on where to go or seek further information. But that is not all, interestingly enough, millennials also rely on Instagram's UGC 'during the actual trip to inform decisions'. This emphasizes the crucial role of UGC as a source of trusted travel information which assists the millennial decision-making process.

For the purpose of creating UGC as a post-purchase behavior (eWOM), the study found that UGC is created both during and after the trip 'to share experiences with other travelers'. This behavior typically occurs in the last stage of the process, which involves creating UGC with the purpose of documentation, recollection, restructuring, reliving and sharing of experiences (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2006; Kusumasondjaja, Shanka & Marchegiani, 2012). However, several authors suggested that in-trip digital information searches are becoming more common, with consumers using and creating UGC to address a variety of immediate travel tasks such as finding a particular restaurant or place to visit, taking photographs and sharing particular experiences (Gretzel *et al.*, 2010; Gretzel, Yoo & Purifoy, 2007; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Therefore, with increased accessibility to mobile online services, there is more real-time sharing and search of these travel experiences, thus shaping the en route travel experience as well.

The second research question focused on uncovering the most effective ways for brands to create a content strategy fueled by UGC on Instagram to target Millennials. Results from the linear regression analyses, in line with previous literature (Chapter 2.4.4 Online Engagement & Perceived Trustworthiness impacts on Travel Intention), showed the significant positive effect of both engagement and perceived trust related to UGC on the millennials' travel intentions. Regarding the level of engagement with each of the three scenarios, literature (Chapter 2.4.1 Millennials' Engagement with User-Generated Content) suggested that UGC strategies independent from commercial interests generate higher engagement rates. In fact, the results from the within-subject repeated measure ANOVA indicated that engagement rates are significantly higher when millennials are exposed to UGC posts created by an independent Instagram user and shared on their own Instagram account, when compared to UGC reposted by a brand or created in the form of a Paid Partnership.

The study also concluded that, in general, Millennials place more trust in UGC than in MGC. However, contrary to the theorized hypothesis, once the UGC is reposted by the brand (instead of on the independent Instagram User Account), the content is perceived as even more trustworthy, presumingly because of the fact that reposting authentic UGC on the brand's Official Instagram Account gives credibility to the content. This leads to the main conclusion

that, organic generation of UGC by independent customers based on their personal experiences is extremely valuable, not only because it invokes higher levels of engagement online when compared to the repost by a brand, but also because only through customers creating and sharing their own experiences, can brands then use that content for their own official accounts to invoke higher levels of credibility and trust.

Furthermore, the repeated measure ANOVA for Travel Intentions indicated that UGC Instagram posts, regardless of being shared on a user or brand account, have a greater but equal effect on the Millennials' Travel Intentions when compared to the scenario of MGC. Therefore, results clearly indicate that Millennials notice when MGC is disguised as UGC in the form of a Paid Partnership, since it significantly influences their engagement levels, perceived trust, and ultimately, Travel Intentions rates. In reality, once the content comprises a commercial message disguised into content generated by users, it jeopardizes the perception Millennials have about UGC as an independent and valuable source of authentic information. Due to millennials' high digital literacy, this generation easily recognizes when other users are sharing something beyond their own personal experiences and instead promoting, due to a sponsorship, collaboration or partnership, with a commercial purpose. Thus, once the motivation and persuasion attempt behind the creation of UGC shifts from purely independent to a vested commercial interest, it significantly affects the Millennials' behavior and perceptions. Nonetheless, this tactic could possibly prove extremely effective for other non-observable behaviors such as catching the millennials' attention and interest, which were not tested in this study.

Conclusively, it is evident from this study that UGC Instagram posts influence the Millennials' decision-making behavior and experiences, when it comes to travel decisions and intentions. Findings have been predominantly consistent with that of literature reviewed, and new insights potentially set the foundation for future research for the topic at hand, as it will be further discussed below. Ultimately, Instagrams' UGC has proven to have significant relevance for businesses in order to influence millennials; and integrating UGC into the brands' Instagram Content Strategy means taking advantage of the valuable power of UGC as a source of authentic eWOM.

5.2 Academic Implications

After extensively reviewing previous literature in all topics related to the study at hand, it was noted that, although in past literature there has been a great effort to understand the impact of UGC on travelers' decisions, most literature reviewed was limited to the impact of UGC in the first stages of the travel decision-making process, and to UGC of travel-specific platforms, in the form of online reviews and blog posts.

There was also a lack of literature validating the importance of emerging Social Networking Applications, such as Instagram, as well as how current User-Generated Content Strategies are actually perceived by the Millennial Generation, and how it influences their Travel Intentions.

Therefore, this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge, by filling the gaps of previous research, acknowledging the rise of new forms of visual UGC and emphasizing its importance as valuable and powerful sources of travel information that are shaping Millennials' Travel Experiences as a whole. Focused on what is forecasted to be the generation with a record-breaking purchasing power, this dissertation expands the concept of UGC, by uncovering Millennials' behaviors, perceptions, and intentions towards different tactics undertaken by companies to incorporate UGC as part of their marketing strategies.

5.3 Managerial Implications

The conclusions from the present study provide practitioners with recommendations and relevant insights that intend to be valuable for organizations and lead to more effective marketing strategic decisions to target the Millennial Generation, in the context of Instagram and Travel. Firstly, brands must recognize the importance of UGC and the fundamental role it plays throughout the customers' journey, both as a way for Millennials to self-express and share the experiences they had with a product, service, or brand, with their network of family, friends, peers, and followers, but also as the key value UGC holds in influencing Millennials' behavior, perceptions, and intentions. Further, after acknowledging the relevance of UGC, businesses should consider how to effectively take advantage of this powerful source of eWOM.

Therefore, in case a brand intends to incorporate UGC into their Social Media Marketing Strategy, first and foremost, it is extremely important to be aware of possible changes in consumers' behavior when exposed to different types of visual UGC. Also important is to consider variables such as engagement and perceived trustworthiness that ultimately influence millennials' intentions. According to the results, both higher levels of customer engagement and perceived trustworthiness have a significant positive impact on millennials' travel intentions. Moreover, UGC created by an independent Instagram user showed the most significant results in terms of Engagement. In response, marketers should definitely tap and implement UGC tactics into their strategies, and encourage these conversations by inspiring customers to create content and share their own story.

On the other hand, when it came to Trustworthiness, UGC created by an independent Instagram user but #reposted on a Brand Official Account turned out to be the best strategy to gain millennials' trust. Therefore, by enhancing official brand accounts with authentic content created by the customers themselves, brands will be able to develop higher levels of credibility and trust.

Finally, compared to the other scenarios, MGC in the form of a Paid Partnership presented the lowest levels of both engagement and trustworthiness, but still showed significant results. This suggests that solely relying on the MGC tactics may not be the most effective way to drive millennials' travel intentions. However, MGC could prove effective to gain non-observable engagement such as attention and interest, thus contingent to the actual aim of the brand, the ideal strategy should always consider the right combination of both UGC and MGC.

5.4 Limitations and Further Research

Despite the valuable findings and insights highlighted above, as the present research was part of a Master Dissertation, some limitations were encountered, especially in terms of timeframe and resources. Due to the nature of the research, and in order to guarantee that the goals set were accomplished by providing meaningful information, the scope of analysis was limited to the Social Networking Platform Instagram— and focused solely on the Millennial Generation.

Hence, only UGC in the form of Instagram Posts was considered, and comparisons between generations where behaviors may differ were not included in the study.

The second limitation encountered refers back to the Literature Review chapter, once the literature that suggests Millennials are unique compared to its preceding generations is still mostly based on studies of the US population, and, although suggestions that the concept of Millennials is applicable at a worldwide level, on the premise that much of society is now globalized, and thus increasingly mono-cultural (Leask *et al.*, 2013), generalizations were made.

Lastly, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it was not possible to assess how the Millennials' travel intentions translate into actual behavior. To try and overcome this limitation, once purchase intentions are commonly used as a basis to forecast purchase behavior (Hill, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Morrison, 1979), the study at hand used travel intention as a proxy for the millennials' travel decisions. However, and although both are correlated, as mentioned above, travel intention might be an imperfect predictor of future consumer behavior.

In sum, as User-Generated Content Strategy is a relatively new field of study, and to overcome some of the above-mentioned limitations, as well as generate new insights about the topic at hand, future research should be conducted. This study emphasized the significant impact UGC has over Millennials, however, investigations about what motivates Millennials to create UGC on Instagram, are yet to be conducted. In addition, hence the Instagram posts manipulated for the experiment were collected from a somewhat unknown Instagram User and Brand Account, it would be interesting to further investigate the moderation effect of attitude and/ or familiarity towards the account, destination, brand in question. As well as conduct research to assess the possibility to further generalize these investigation findings to other distinct industries. Furthermore, other Instagram Content Strategies carried over by Brands (e.g. sponsored content, collaborations, ambassador programs), should be considered in order to guarantee a more complete overview of the issue related to Millennials' Perceived Trustworthiness and Level of Online Engagement to various forms of UGC.

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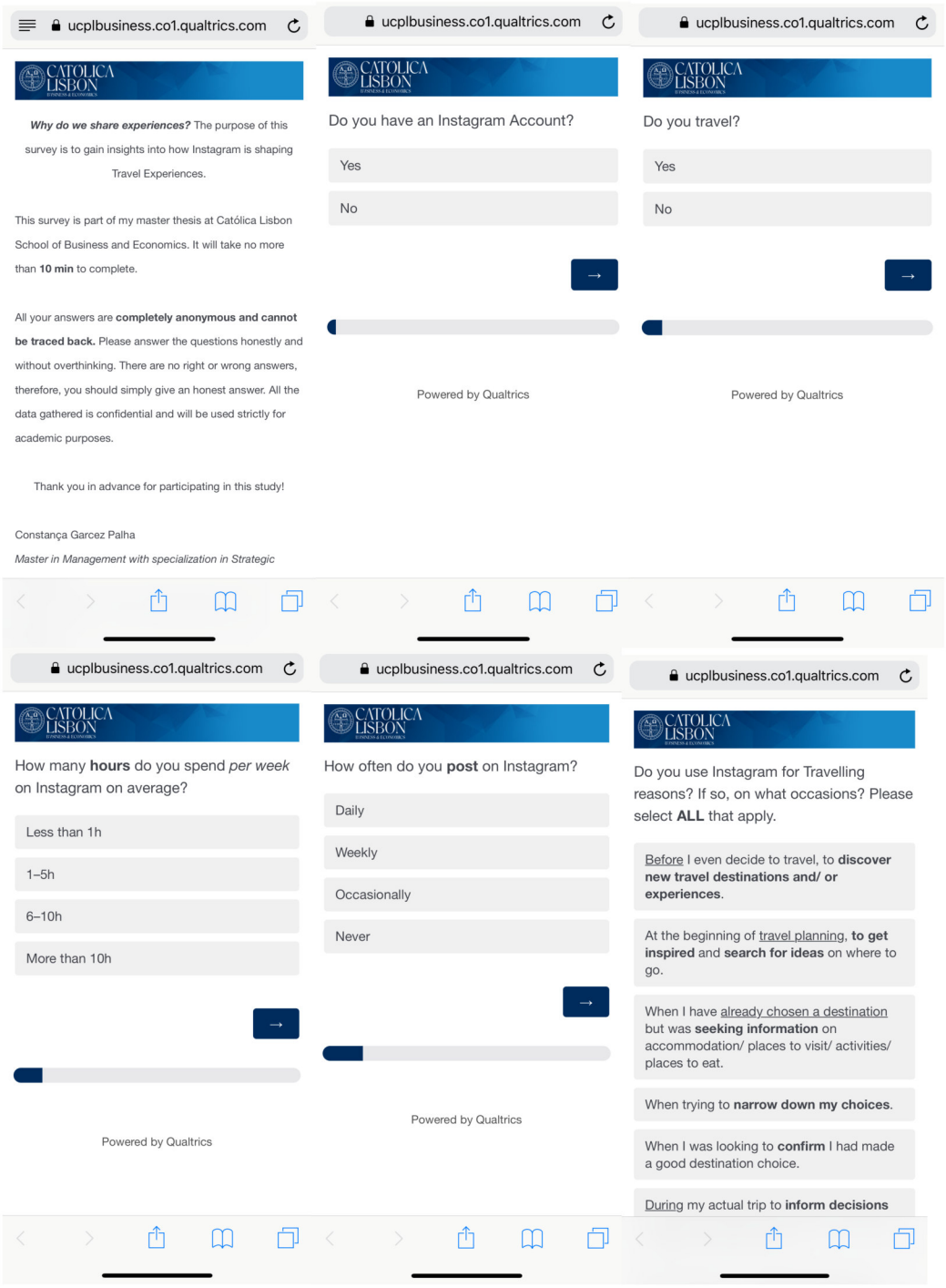
VII Appendix

Appendix 1 - Survey Questionnaire



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accommodation/ places to visit/ activities/ places to eat.

When trying to **narrow down my choices**.

When I was looking to **confirm** I had made a good destination choice.

During my actual trip to **inform decisions** (trying to find out about specific attractions, places or things to do).

During my trip to allow me to **share my experiences** with other travelers.

After my trip to allow me to **share my experiences** with other travelers.

After my trip to **compare my experiences** with those of other travelers

I don't use Instagram for Travelling reasons.

→

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Considering the post you just saw, please indicate your likelihood to...

Extremely Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Likely

'**LIKE**' this Instagram post

Leave a **COMMENT** on this post

@TAG a friend in this Instagram post

SHARE/ forward/ repost this Instagram post

SAVE this Instagram post

FOLLOW this account

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Let's continue! In the next block, we want to understand your **perception towards User & Marketing Generated Content** posted on Instagram.

User-generated content (UGC) refers to "media content that is created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and is primarily distributed on the Internet. This includes such online content as digital video, blogging, podcasting, mobile phone photography, posts, among others."

IMPORTANT: You will be presented with **3 scenarios** (one at a time), each with the **same exact photo posted in different ways**, followed by a short set of questions. Take some time to **carefully see each post**, to facilitate answering the questions.

→

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What do you think of this travel experience?

Unappealing	○	○	○	○	○	Appealing
Uninteresting	○	○	○	○	○	Interesting
Non Enjoyable	○	○	○	○	○	Enjoyable

In light of the post you just saw, please indicate your **level of agreement** with the following statements:

This Instagram post seems **reliable** to me

This Instagram post is **trustworthy**

I think that this Instagram Account/ User is **honest** and **sincere**

Please indicate the **likelihood** of your **travel intentions** to the following questions:

How likely would it be that you would **consider traveling** to the destination based on the post you just saw?

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SCENARIO ***UGC @UserAccount***

Let's imagine you are scrolling down your Instagram feed and you see this photo posted by an **Instagram User** on his **own account** about his stay in a Hotel Resort. Take a look!

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Please indicate the **likelihood** of your **travel intentions** to the following questions:

How likely would it be that you would **consider traveling** to the destination based on the post you just saw?

- ○ Extremely likely
- ○ Somewhat likely
- ○ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ○ Somewhat unlikely
- ○ Extremely unlikely

How likely would it be that you would **actually travel** to this destination based on the post you just saw?

→

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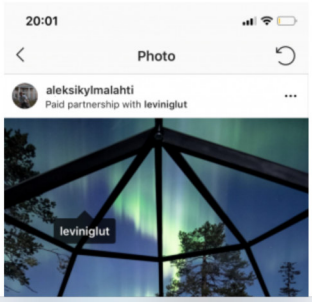
CATOLICA LISBON

SCENARIO **MGC - *Paid Partnership @UserAccount***

Now imagine you are scrolling down your Instagram feed and you see this photo posted by an **Instagram User** about his **Paid Partnership** with a Hotel Resort on his **own Instagram Account**. Take a close look!



ucplbusiness.co1.qualtrics.com

Please indicate the **likelihood** of your **travel intentions** to the following questions:

How likely would it be that you would **consider traveling** to the destination based on the post you just saw?

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

How likely would it be that you would **actually travel** to this destination based on the post you just saw?

→

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Considering the post you just saw, please indicate your likelihood to...

Extremely Unlikely 1	2	3	4	Extremely Likely 5

'**LIKE**' this Instagram post

Leave a **COMMENT** on this post

@TAG a friend in this Instagram post

SHARE/ forward/ repost this Instagram post

SAVE this Instagram post

FOLLOW this account

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CATOLICA LISBON

SCENARIO ***UGC @BrandAccount***

Imagine you are scrolling down your Instagram feed and you see this photo of an Instagram User **#reposted** by a **Hotel Resort Brand** on their **Official Instagram Account**. Check the post and account bellow!

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What do you think of this travel experience?

Unappealing	○	○	○	○	○	Appealing
Uninteresting	○	○	○	○	○	Interesting
Non Enjoyable	○	○	○	○	○	Enjoyable

In light of the post you just saw, please indicate your **level of agreement** with the following statements:

This Instagram post seems **reliable** to me

This Instagram post is **trustworthy**

I think that this Instagram Account/ User is **honest** and **sincere**

Please indicate the **likelihood** of your **travel intentions** to the following questions:

How likely would it be that you would **consider traveling** to the destination based on the post you just saw?

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Considering the post you just saw, please indicate your likelihood to...

Extremely Unlikely 1	2	3	4	Extremely Likely 5

'**LIKE**' this Instagram post

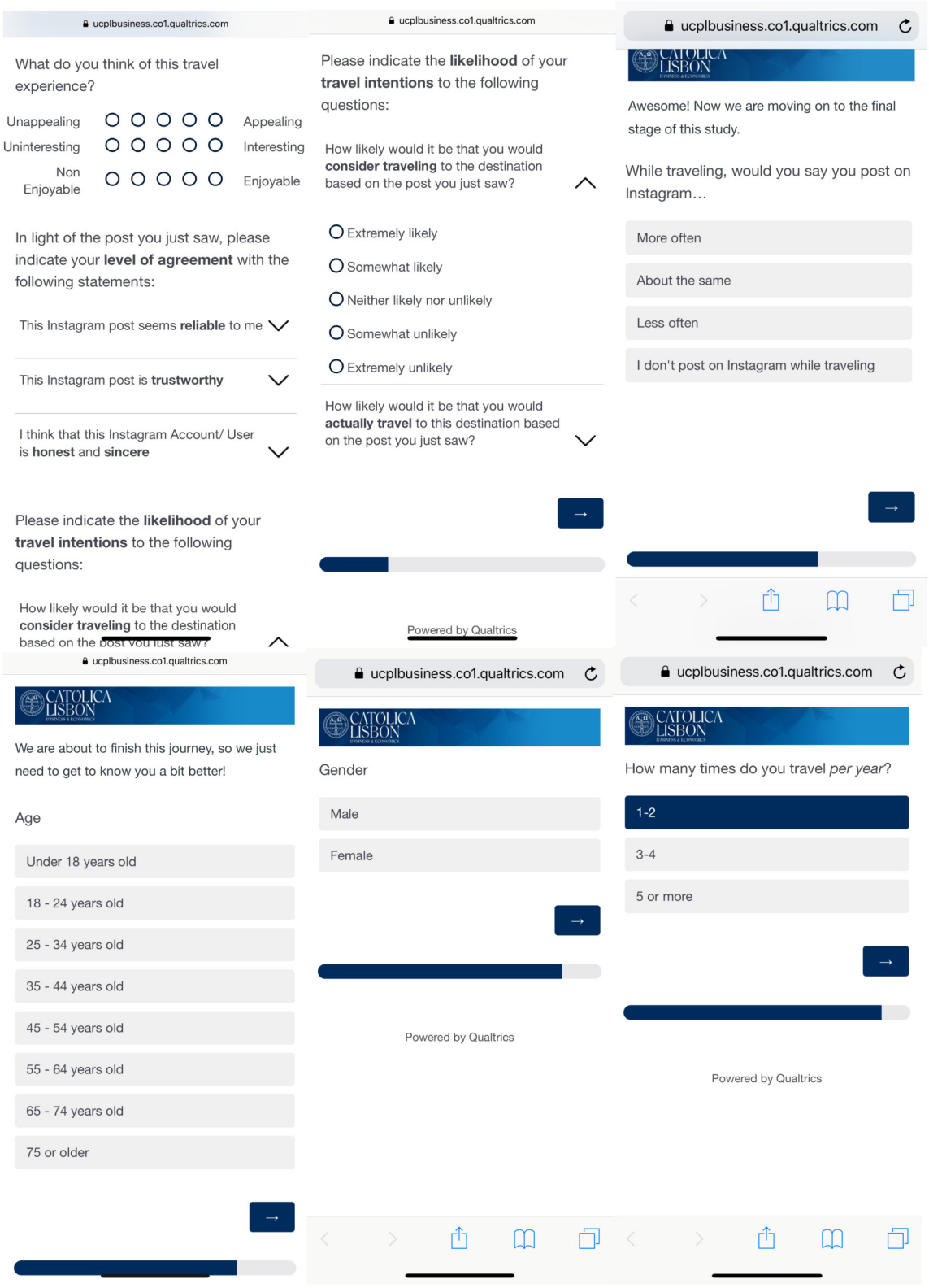
Leave a **COMMENT** on this post

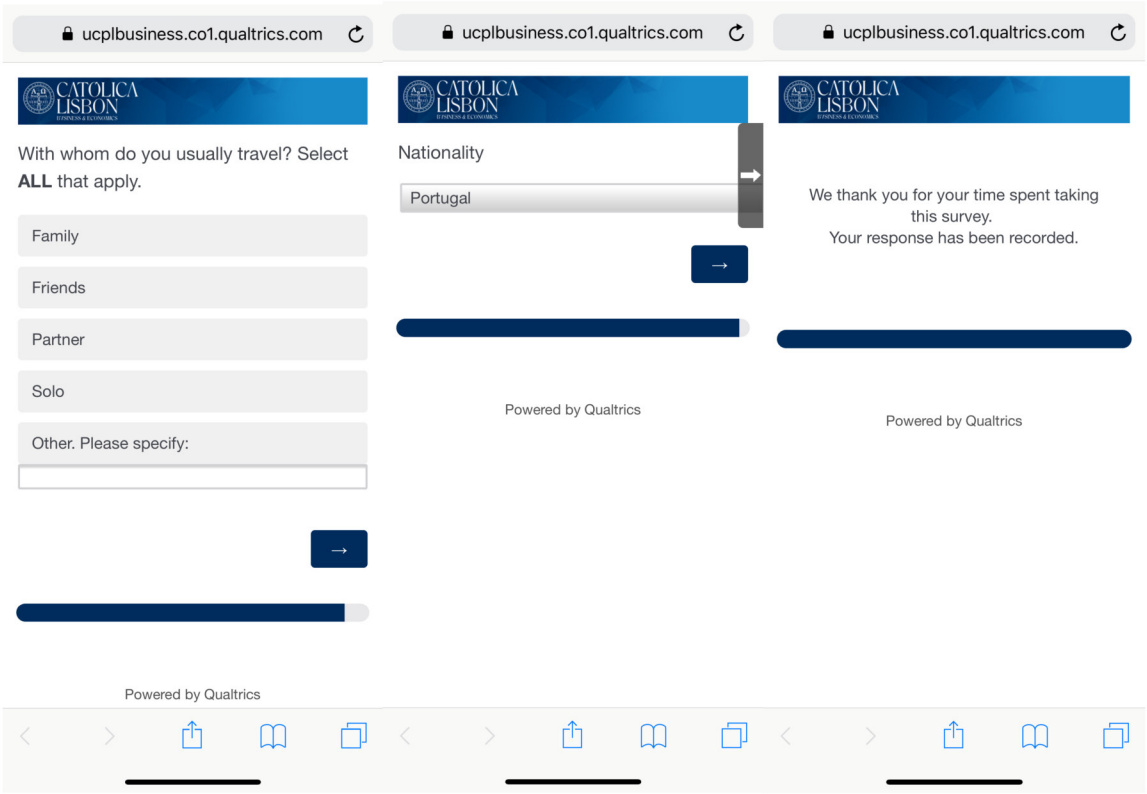
@TAG a friend in this Instagram post

SHARE/ forward/ repost this Instagram post

SAVE this Instagram post

FOLLOW this account


ucplbusiness.co1.qualtrics.com
What do you think of this travel experience?
Unappealing
Appealing
Uninteresting
Interesting
Non Enjoyable
Enjoyable
In light of the post you just saw, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
This Instagram post seems reliable to me
This Instagram post is trustworthy
I think that this Instagram Account/ User is honest and sincere
Please indicate the likelihood of your travel intentions to the following questions:
How likely would it be that you would consider traveling to the destination based on the post you just saw?
Extremely likely
Somewhat likely
Neither likely nor unlikely
Somewhat unlikely
Extremely unlikely
How likely would it be that you would actually travel to this destination based on the post you just saw?
Powered by Qualtrics
Awesome! Now we are moving on to the final stage of this study.
While traveling, would you say you post on Instagram…
More often
About the same
Less often
I don't post on Instagram while traveling
We are about to finish this journey, so we just need to get to know you a bit better!
Age
Under 18 years old
18 - 24 years old
25 - 34 years old
35 - 44 years old
45 - 54 years old
55 - 64 years old
65 - 74 years old
75 or older
Gender
Male
Female
How many times do you travel per year?
1-2
3-4
5 or more


ucplbusiness.co1.qualtrics.com
CATÓLICA LISBON
With whom do you usually travel? Select **ALL** that apply.
Family
Friends
Partner
Solo
Other. Please specify:
→
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CATÓLICA LISBON
Nationality
Portugal
→
Powered by Qualtrics
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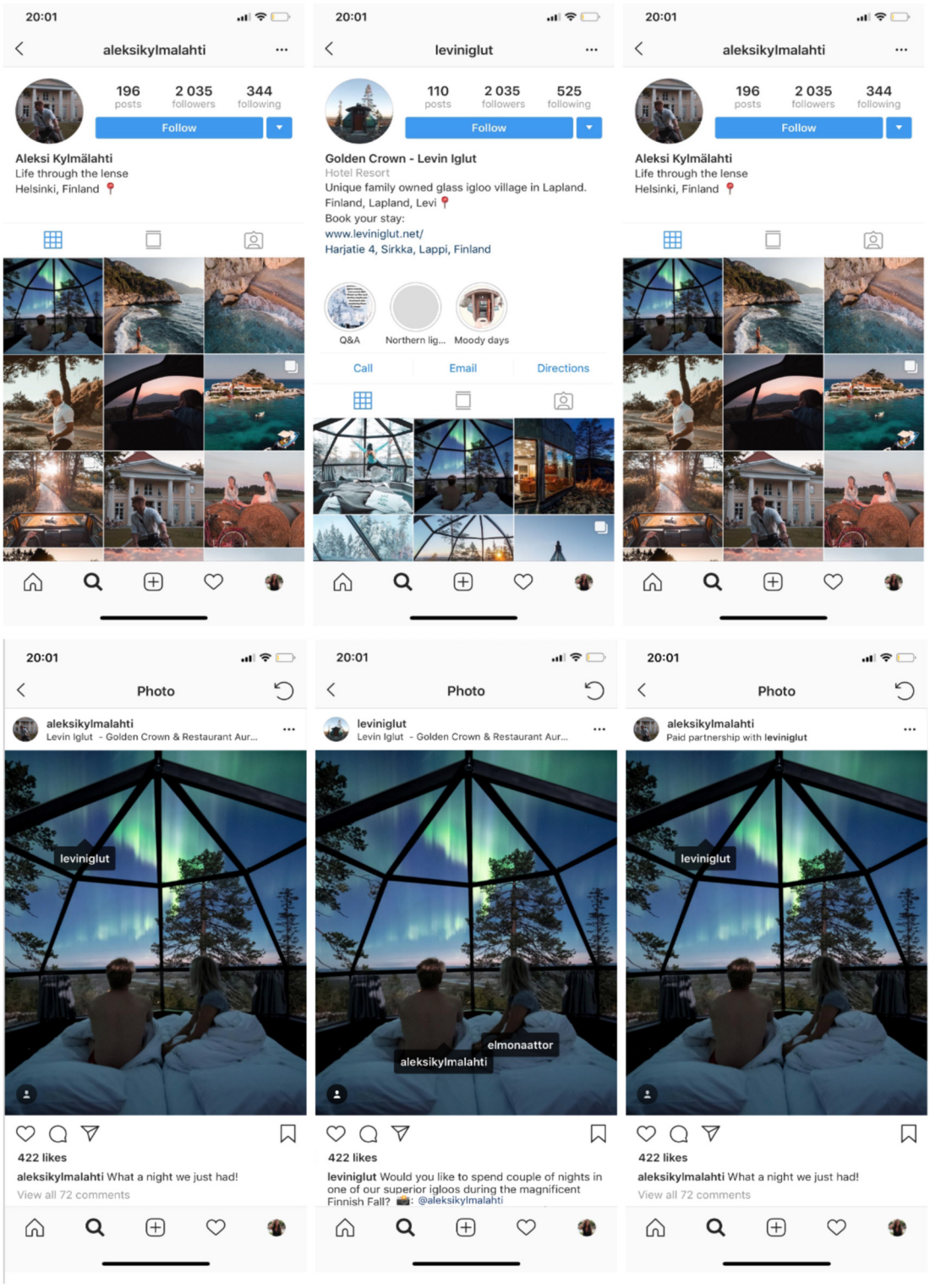
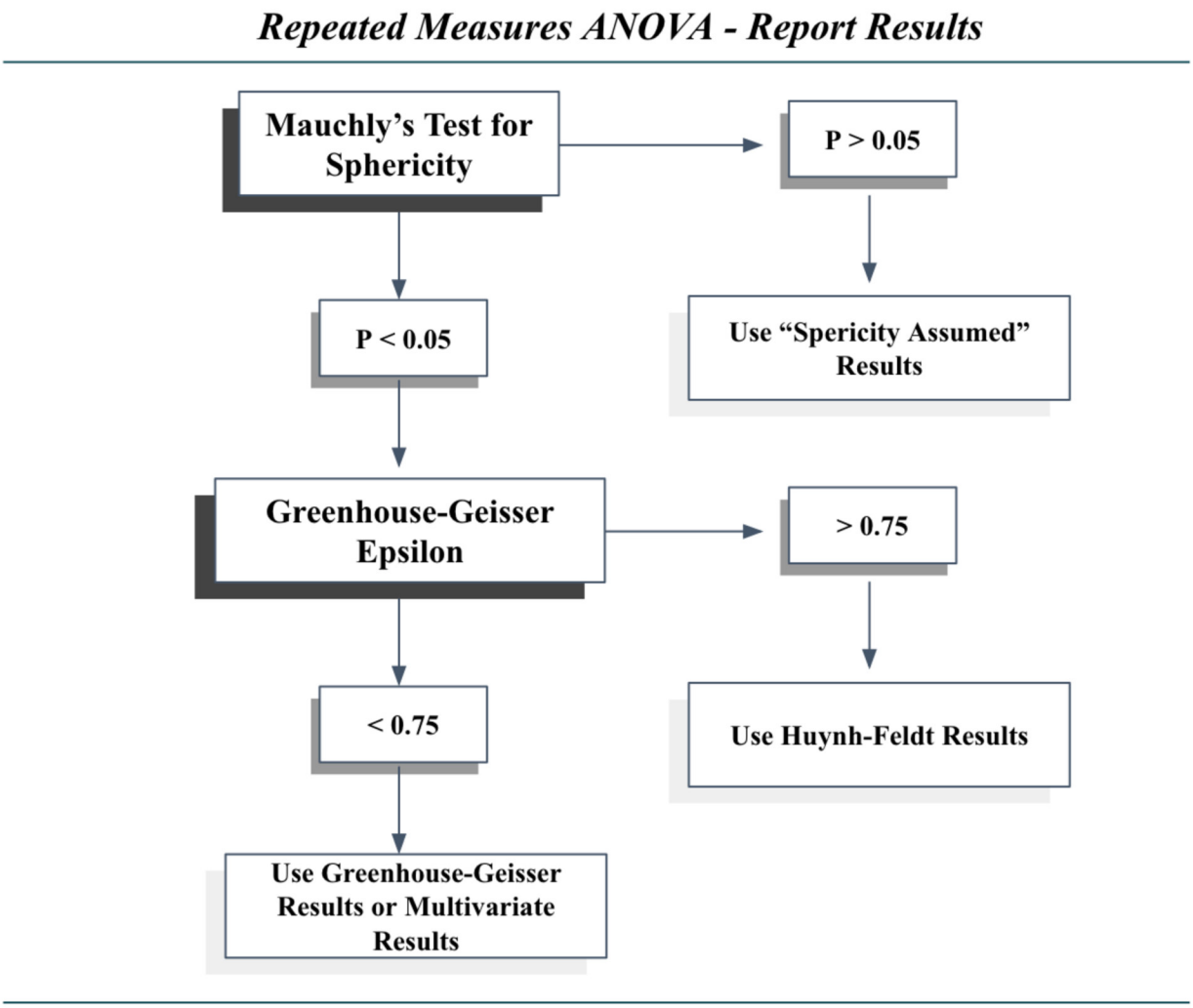
CATÓLICA LISBON
We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.
Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix 2 - Experiment *Stimulus*



Appendix 3 - Repeated Measures ANOVA - Report Results



Note. Howell (2002) and Field (2013).

Appendix 4 - Repeated Measures ANOVA - Hypothesis #1 Customer Online Engagement

Within-Subjects Factors

Measure: MEASURE_1

CE_NEWW	Dependent Variable
1	CE_UGC_UserAccount
2	CE_UGC_BrandAccount
3	CE_MGC_UserAccount

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CE_UGC_UserAccount	2.4959	.73893	383
CE_UGC_BrandAccount	2.3333	.74995	383
CE_MGC_UserAccount	2.1329	.76530	383

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]

Measure: MEASURE_1

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon[b] Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
CE_NEWW	.990	3.859	2	.145	.990	.995	.500

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

a. Design: Intercept
Within Subjects Design: CE_NEWW

b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
CE_NEWW	Sphericity Assumed	25.321	2	12.660	77.942	.000	.169	155.883	1.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	25.321	1.980	12.788	77.942	.000	.169	154.328	1.000
	Huynh-Feldt	25.321	1.990	12.722	77.942	.000	.169	155.128	1.000
	Lower-bound	25.321	1.000	25.321	77.942	.000	.169	77.942	1.000
Error(CE_NEWW)	Sphericity Assumed	124.100	764	.162					
	Greenhouse-Geisser	124.100	756.377	.164					
	Huynh-Feldt	124.100	760.298	.163					
	Lower-bound	124.100	382.000	.325					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: MEASURE_1

(I) CE_NEWW	(J) CE_NEWW	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.163*	.028	.000	.095	.230
	3	.363*	.029	.000	.294	.432
2	1	-.163*	.028	.000	-.230	-.095
	3	.200*	.031	.000	.127	.274
3	1	-.363*	.029	.000	-.432	-.294
	2	-.200*	.031	.000	-.274	-.127

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Appendix 5 - Repeated Measures ANOVA - Hypothesis #2 Perceived Trustworthiness

Within-Subjects Factors

Measure: MEASURE_1

TRUST_NEW	Dependent Variable
1	TRUST_UGC_UserAccount
2	TRUST_UGC_BrandAccount
3	TRUST_MGC_UserAccount

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRUST_UGC_UserAccount	3.5762	.80280	383
TRUST_UGC_BrandAccount	3.8059	.86546	383
TRUST_MGC_UserAccount	3.1506	.99867	383

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]

Measure: MEASURE_1

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon[b]		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
TRUST_NEW	.962	14.646	2	.001	.964	.968	.500

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

a. Design: Intercept
Within Subjects Design: TRUST_NEW

b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
TRUST_NEW	Sphericity Assumed	84.695	2	42.347	95.980	.000	.201	191.960	1.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	84.695	1.927	43.944	95.980	.000	.201	184.984	1.000
	Huynh-Feldt	84.695	1.937	43.727	95.980	.000	.201	185.904	1.000
	Lower-bound	84.695	1.000	84.695	95.980	.000	.201	95.980	1.000
Error(TRUST_NEW)	Sphericity Assumed	337.083	764	.441					
	Greenhouse-Geisser	337.083	736.235	.458					
	Huynh-Feldt	337.083	739.896	.456					
	Lower-bound	337.083	382.000	.882					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: MEASURE_1

(I) TRUST_NEW	(J) TRUST_NEW	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-.230*	.043	.000	-.334	-.126
	3	.426*	.049	.000	.307	.545
2	1	.230*	.043	.000	.126	.334
	3	.655*	.051	.000	.533	.778
3	1	-.426*	.049	.000	-.545	-.307
	2	-.655*	.051	.000	-.778	-.533

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Appendix 6 - Repeated Measures ANOVA - Hypothesis #3 Travel Intention

Within-Subjects Factors

Measure: MEASURE_1

TRAVEL	Dependent Variable
1	TRAVEL_UGC_UserAccount
2	TRAVEL_UGC_BrandAccount
3	TRAVEL_MGC_UserAccount

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRAVEL_UGC_UserAccount	3.3799	.99669	383
TRAVEL_UGC_BrandAccount	3.4739	.95821	383
TRAVEL_MGC_UserAccount	3.1723	1.01446	383

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]

Measure: MEASURE_1

Within Subjects Effect	Mauchly's W	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Epsilon[b]		
					Greenhouse-Geisser	Huynh-Feldt	Lower-bound
TRAVEL	.998	.765	2	.682	.998	1.000	.500

Tests the null hypothesis that the error covariance matrix of the orthonormalized transformed dependent variables is proportional to an identity matrix.

a. Design: Intercept
Within Subjects Design: TRAVEL

b. May be used to adjust the degrees of freedom for the averaged tests of significance. Corrected tests are displayed in the Tests of Within-Subjects Effects table.

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
TRAVEL	Sphericity Assumed	18.239	2	9.119	28.121	.000	.069	56.242	1.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	18.239	1.996	9.138	28.121	.000	.069	56.129	1.000
	Huynh-Feldt	18.239	2.000	9.119	28.121	.000	.069	56.242	1.000
	Lower-bound	18.239	1.000	18.239	28.121	.000	.069	28.121	1.000
Error(TRAVEL)	Sphericity Assumed	247.761	764	.324					
	Greenhouse-Geisser	247.761	762.471	.325					
	Huynh-Feldt	247.761	764.000	.324					
	Lower-bound	247.761	382.000	.649					

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Pairwise Comparisons

Measure: MEASURE_1

(I) TRAVEL	(J) TRAVEL	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]	95% Confidence Interval for Difference[b]	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-.094	.041	.065	-.192	.004
	3	.208*	.042	.000	.106	.309
2	1	.094	.041	.065	-.004	.192
	3	.302*	.041	.000	.204	.399
3	1	-.208*	.042	.000	-.309	-.106
	2	-.302*	.041	.000	-.399	-.204

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Appendix 7 - Linear Regression - Hypothesis #4 CE → TI

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRAVEL	3.3420	.87409	383
CE	2.3207	.67559	383

Correlations

		TRAVEL	CE
Pearson Correlation	TRAVEL	1.000	.474
	CE	.474	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	TRAVEL	.	.000
	CE	.000	.
N	TRAVEL	383	383
	CE	383	383

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.474[a]	.225	.223	.77067	1.846

a. Predictors: (Constant), CE

b. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.574	1	65.574	110.407	.000[b]
	Residual	226.286	381	.594		
	Total	291.860	382			

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

b. Predictors: (Constant), CE

Coefficients[a]

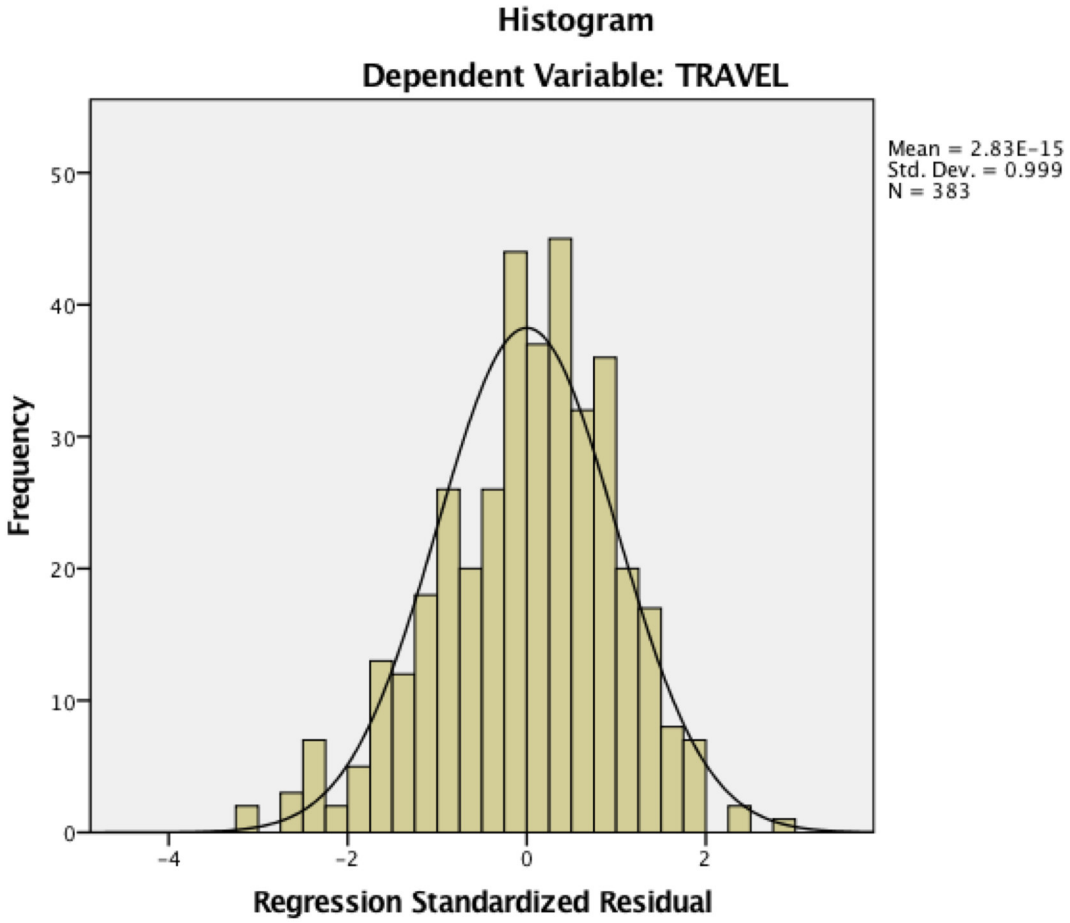
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.919	.141		13.603	.000	1.641	2.196		
	CE	.613	.058	.474	10.507	.000	.499	.728	1.000	1.000

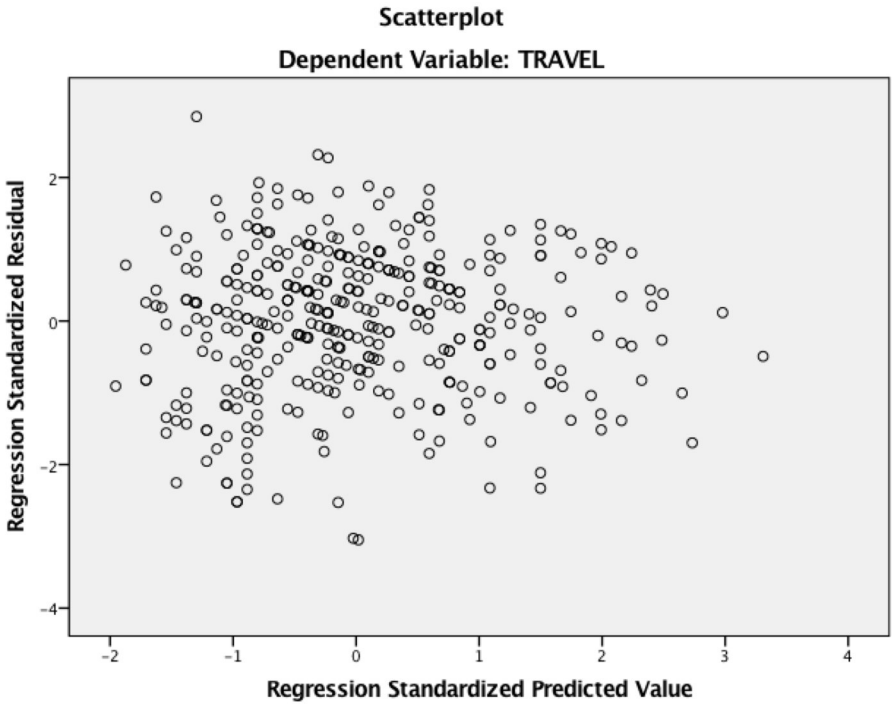
a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

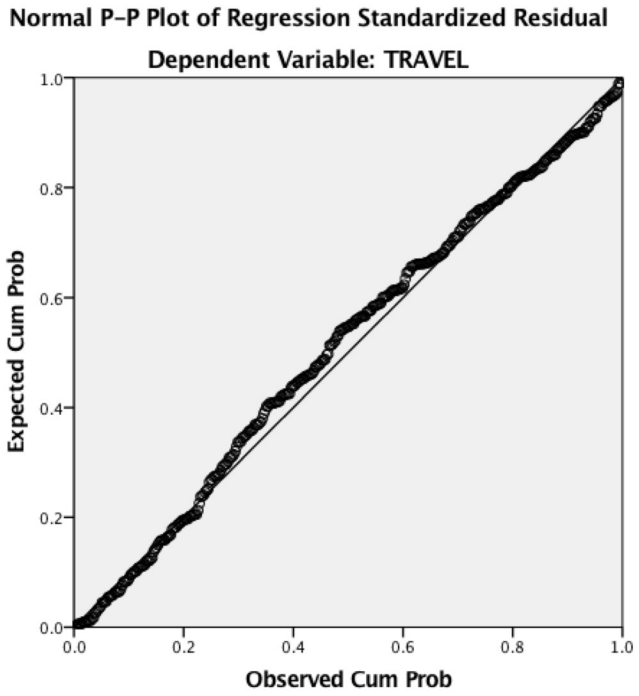
Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions	
				(Constant)	CE
1	1	1.960	1.000	.02	.02
	2	.040	7.022	.98	.98

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL


Histogram
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Mean = 2.83E-15
Std. Dev. = 0.999
N = 383
Frequency
50
40
30
20
10
0
-4
-2
0
2
Regression Standardized Residual


Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Regression Standardized Residual
Regression Standardized Predicted Value
2
0
-2
-4
-2
-1
0
1
2
3
4


Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0

Appendix 8 - Linear Regression - Hypothesis #5 PT → TI

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRAVEL	3.3420	.87409	383
TRUST	3.5109	.70909	383

Correlations

		TRAVEL	TRUST
Pearson Correlation	TRAVEL	1.000	.575
	TRUST	.575	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	TRAVEL	.	.000
	TRUST	.000	.
N	TRAVEL	383	383
	TRUST	383	383

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.575[a]	.330	.328	.71630	1.953

a. Predictors: (Constant), TRUST

b. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	96.375	1	96.375	187.836	.000[b]
	Residual	195.484	381	.513		
	Total	291.860	382			

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

b. Predictors: (Constant), TRUST

Coefficients[a]

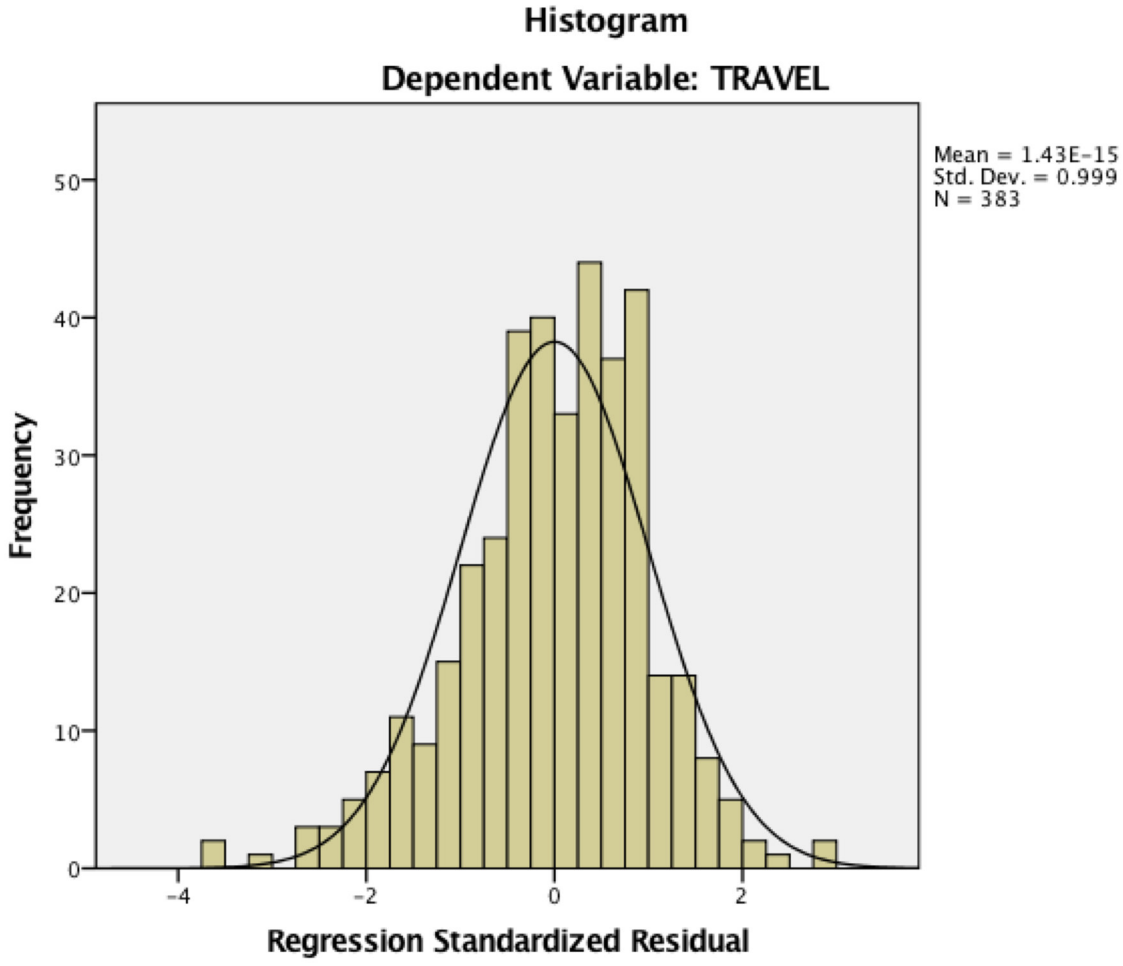
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.855	.185		4.619	.000	.491	1.219		
	TRUST	.708	.052	.575	13.705	.000	.607	.810	1.000	1.000

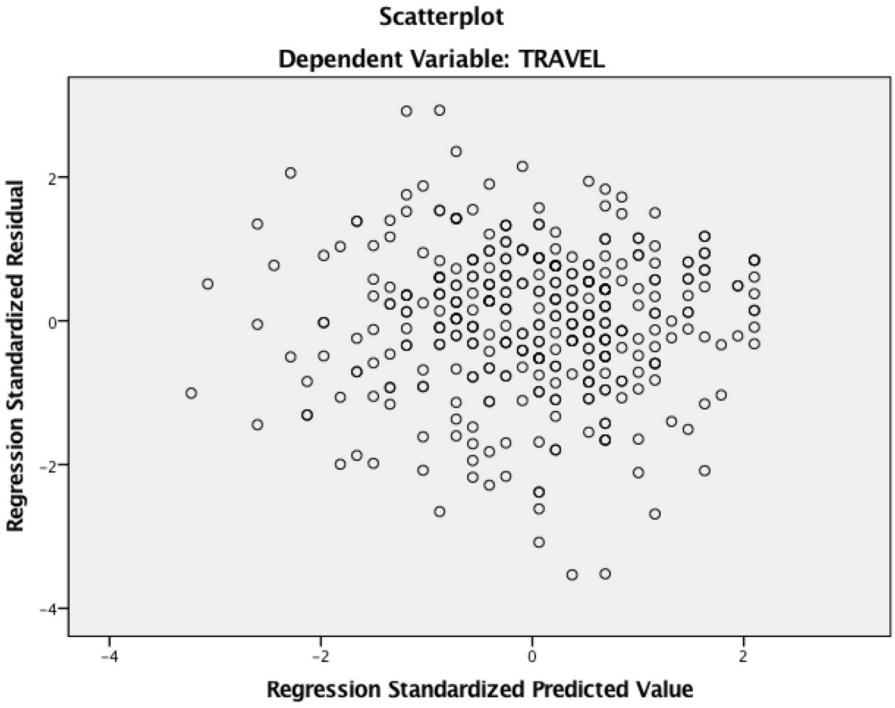
a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

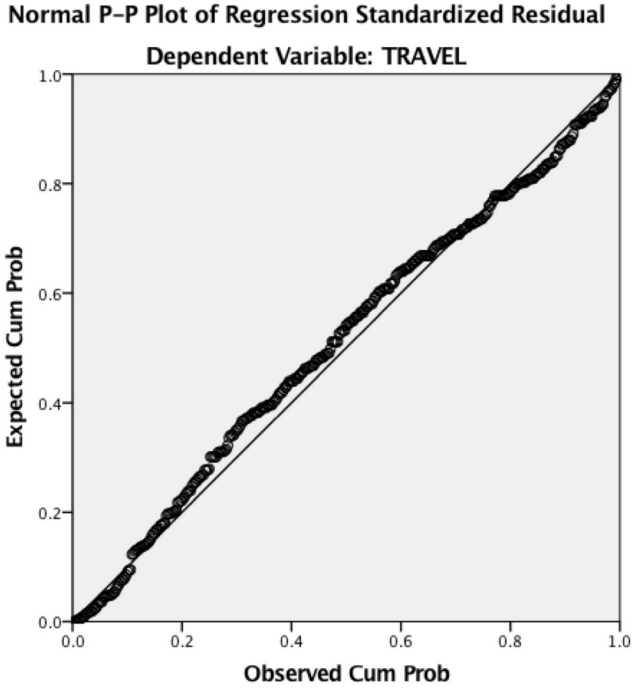
Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions	
				(Constant)	TRUST
1	1	1.980	1.000	.01	.01
	2	.020	10.015	.99	.99

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL




Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Regression Standardized Residual
Regression Standardized Predicted Value
2
0
-2
-4
-4
-2
0
2


Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0

XXX

Appendix 9 - Multiple Linear Regression

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRAVEL	3.3420	.87409	383
CE	2.3207	.67559	383
TRUST	3.5109	.70909	383

Correlations

		TRAVEL	CE	TRUST
Pearson Correlation	TRAVEL	1.000	.474	.575
	CE	.474	1.000	.377
	TRUST	.575	.377	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	TRAVEL	.	.000	.000
	CE	.000	.	.000
	TRUST	.000	.000	.
N	TRAVEL	383	383	383
	CE	383	383	383
	TRUST	383	383	383

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.638[a]	.407	.404	.67469	1.945

a. Predictors: (Constant), TRUST, CE

b. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	118.883	2	59.441	130.582	.000[b]
	Residual	172.977	380	.455		
	Total	291.860	382			

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

b. Predictors: (Constant), TRUST, CE

Coefficients[a]

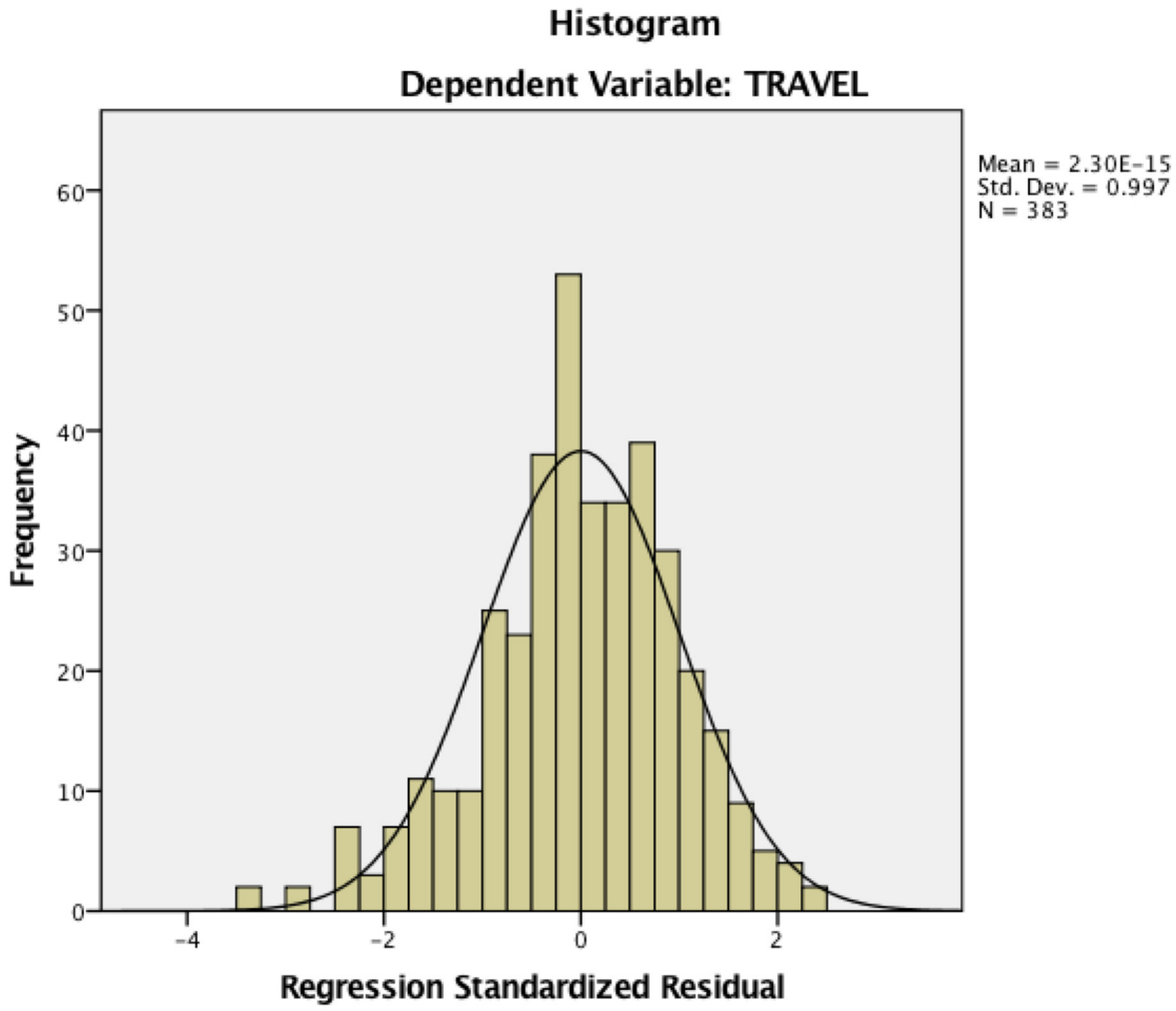
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.444	.184		2.417	.016	.083	.806		
	CE	.388	.055	.300	7.032	.000	.279	.496	.858	1.166
	TRUST	.569	.053	.461	10.822	.000	.466	.672	.858	1.166

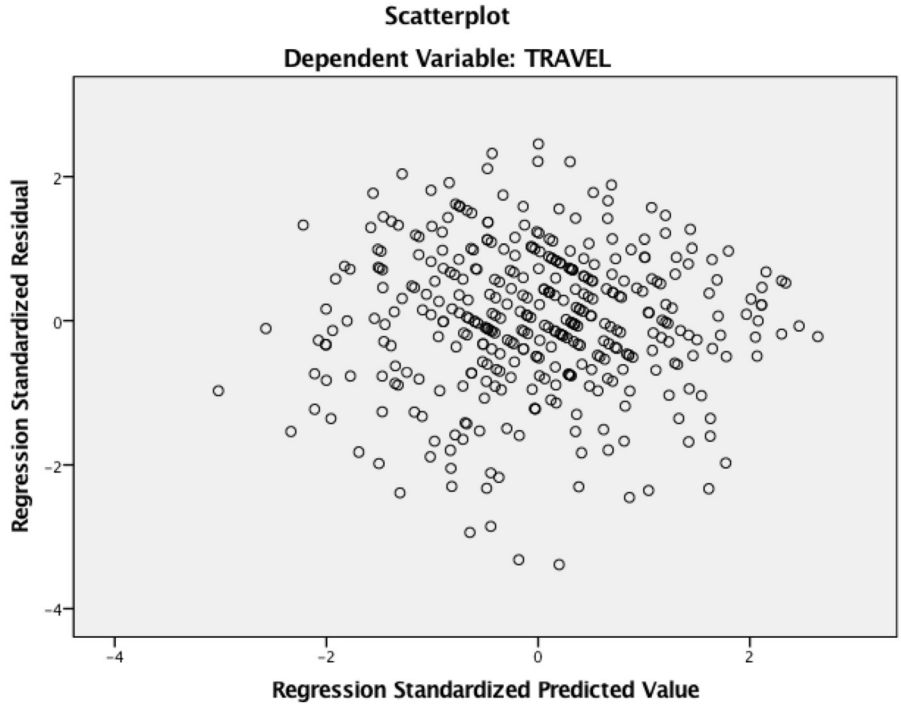
a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL

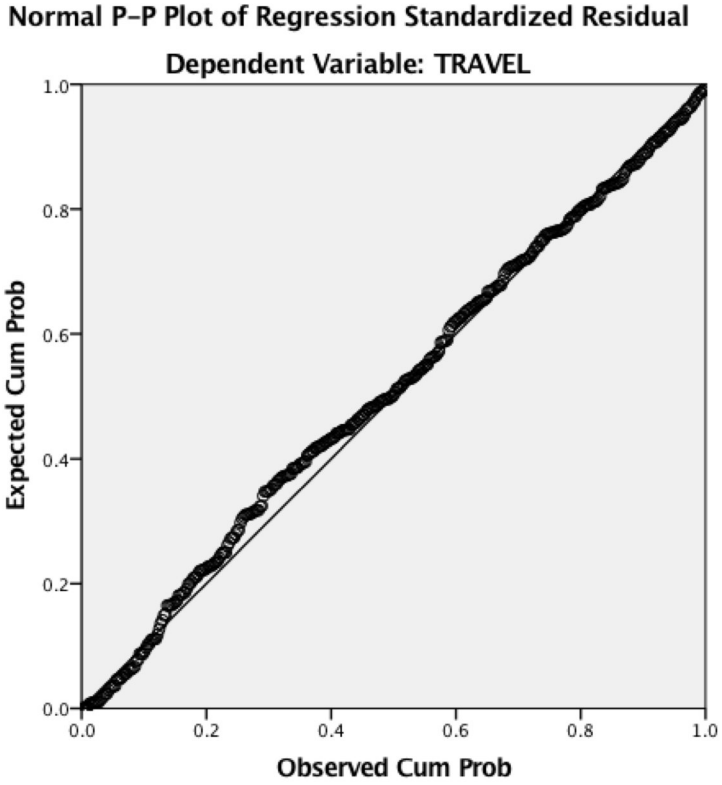
Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions		
				(Constant)	CE	TRUST
1	1	2.935	1.000	.00	.01	.00
	2	.045	8.058	.15	.99	.10
	3	.020	12.207	.85	.00	.89

a. Dependent Variable: TRAVEL




Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Regression Standardized Residual
Regression Standardized Predicted Value
2
0
-2
-4
-4
-2
0
2


Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: TRAVEL
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0