



# Collaborative Dynamics: Influencers & Airlines in Consumer Perceptions

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Dissertation written under the supervision of professor Helena  
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the MSc in  
Management with Specialisation in Strategic Marketing, at the Universidade  
Católica Portuguesa, Mai 2024.

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the evolving role of social media influencers in the airline industry. It takes an in-depth look at how these influencers help shape consumer perceptions, influence their travel decisions and collaborate with airlines. The focus is on how partnerships between influencers and airlines are formed and maintained, exploring key aspects such as influencer selection, content creation and audience engagement. These elements are crucial to understanding the impact of these collaborations on brand perception, customer loyalty and revenue generation.

By detailing the influencer selection process, the study analyzes the criteria used by airlines to choose relevant and effective partners. It also explores how content created by influencers, whether Instagram posts, YouTube videos or travel blogs, is designed to captivate and engage audiences. The study is particularly interested in audience engagement, i.e. how influencers' followers react and interact with the content, and how this may influence their own travel decisions.

Through experiential research, this study aims to unveil the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies in the dynamic context of airline digital marketing. It seeks to identify the main challenges faced by airlines and influencers in their collaborations, such as issues of credibility, transparency and impact measurement. To finally end up with an in-depth understanding of the benefits and limitations of influencer marketing in the airline sector, highlighting best practices and areas for improvement.

**Title:** Collaborative Dynamics: Influencers & Airlines in Consumer Perceptions

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**Keywords:** Influencers, airline industry, branding, customer engagement, instagram

**Resumo:**

Este estudo centra-se na evolução do papel dos influenciadores das redes sociais no sector das companhias aéreas. Analisa em profundidade a forma como estes influenciadores ajudam a moldar as percepções dos consumidores, influenciam as suas decisões de viagem e colaboram com as companhias aéreas. O foco está na forma como as parcerias entre influenciadores e companhias aéreas são formadas e mantidas, explorando aspectos fundamentais como a seleção de influenciadores, a criação de conteúdos e o envolvimento do público. Estes elementos são cruciais para compreender o impacto destas colaborações na perceção da marca, na fidelização dos clientes e na geração de receitas.

Ao detalhar o processo de seleção de influenciadores, o estudo analisa os critérios utilizados pelas companhias aéreas para escolher parceiros relevantes e eficazes. Também explora a forma como os conteúdos criados pelos influenciadores, quer sejam publicações no Instagram, vídeos no YouTube ou blogues de viagens, são concebidos para cativar e envolver o público. O estudo está particularmente interessado no envolvimento do público, ou seja, na forma como os seguidores dos influenciadores reagem e interagem com o conteúdo e como isso pode influenciar as suas próprias decisões de viagem.

Através da investigação experimental, este estudo tem como objetivo revelar a eficácia das estratégias de marketing de influenciadores no contexto dinâmico do marketing digital das companhias aéreas. Por fim, termina com uma compreensão aprofundada dos benefícios e limitações do marketing de influenciadores no sector das companhias aéreas, destacando as melhores práticas e as áreas a melhorar.

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**Palavras-chave:** Influenciadores, sector das companhias aéreas, branding, envolvimento dos clientes, instagram

## **Acknowledgments:**

First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Helena Rodrigues, for all the support, and advice. I wouldn't have been able to go through this stressful chapter of my life without his patience and valuable feedback.

Next, I'd like to thank my dear parents, Lamia and Ezzedine, without whom I would never have got where I am today. Thank you for making my dreams come true, for always taking me under your wings, for supporting me during my entire life. Thank you for the unconditional love you've given me, thank you for all the times you've pushed me to be a better person. And above all, thank you for believing in me. I dedicate every step and success of my life to you and hope that you are proud of me.

To my flatmate, Chahnez, your constant encouragement and companionship have made this experience both memorable and enjoyable without forgetting of course Rayan. Thank you for being there through the highs and lows.

To my brother Skander, your unwavering support and belief in me have been a pillar of strength. Your guidance and words of wisdom have been invaluable, and I am forever grateful.

Lastly, to my best friend Jun, your presence during the toughest times has been a source of comfort and resilience. Your friendship and support have made all the difference, and I could not have made it without you.

Thank you all for your love, support, and encouragement.

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## **1. Introduction**

The developing social media influencer dynamic in the airline industry is explored, examining how they shape consumer perceptions, influence travel decisions and collaborate with airlines (Smith & Johnson, 2021). The survey also looks at the multifaceted nature of influencer marketing in aviation, analyzing its effects on branding and customer engagement strategies (Anderson et al., 2019). Insights gleaned from the study highlight the effectiveness, challenges and transformative potential of influencer-airline collaborations in modern airline marketing and consumer behavior (Taylor et al., 2020).

The topic-specific focus is on clarifying the dynamics and outcomes of partnerships between social media influencers and airlines, examining factors such as influencer selection, content creation, audience engagement and the resulting effects on brand perception, customer loyalty and revenue generation for airlines (Ao et al., 2023). Through research and empirical analysis, this thesis seeks to explore the complexities of influencer marketing strategies employed by airlines, assess their effectiveness in reaching target audiences and identify the shades of successful influencer-airline partnerships in the digital marketplace today (Mardon et al., 2023).

While influencer marketing is widely recognized as a powerful tool in the travel industry, there is a gap in understanding how the impact of expert travel influencers differs from that of miscellaneous influencers. Existing research focuses primarily on the general effectiveness of influencer marketing, but lacks specific information on how the influencer's expertise and niche specialization influence audience perceptions and behaviors (Han 2024)

In the context of the limited understanding of variation in influencer impact, (Liu et al.,2022) highlighted the importance of in-depth research into how influencer influence varies between different generations, particularly Generation Z, in tourism marketing. The study revealed the important role that influencers play in shaping consumer behavior and preferences.

This points to the need to study how collaboration between social media influencers and airlines influences consumer perceptions and levels of engagement.

This research question delves into the intricate interplay of influencer-airline partnerships, examining how they influence audience attitudes, behaviors, and brand perceptions within the airline industry framework. It sets a definite path for examining the involvement of social

media influencers in molding consumer perceptions and impacting travel choices, all while considering the collaborative dynamics between influencers and airline entities.

Building upon the exploration of influencer-airline partnerships, this study aims to achieve its research objectives by meticulously assessing the impact of these collaborations, identifying the key success factors, comparing audience responses and perceptions, and distinguishing the varying effects brought about by both expert and diverse influencers within the dynamic landscape of the airline industry.

### **1.1. Research Objectives:**

1. Assessing Influencer-Airline Collaboration Impact.
2. Identifying Collaboration Success Factors.
3. Compare Audience Response and Perceptions.
4. Differentiating Impact between Expert and Diverse Influencers.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Condition: High level of engagement or low level of engagement**

In the digital age, social media influencers play an important role in consumer behavior and brand perception. The level of engagement that influencers generate can greatly affect their influence and effectiveness. This literature review explores the distinction between high and low levels of engagement as a condition hypothesis in the context of social media influencers.

High engagement on social media platforms is characterized by a high number of likes, comments, shares and other forms of interaction. Influencers with high engagement rates are often considered more trustworthy and influential.

High levels of engagement are linked to increased follower trust and loyalty, strengthened brand partnerships and greater overall influence. Engaged followers are more likely to take actions such as purchasing recommended products or spreading word-of-mouth recommendations (Levesque & Pons, 2023).

Successful influencers often use content strategies that promote interaction and community building. These include creating relatable content, engaging in two-way communication and regularly publishing high-quality material (Perreault & Mosconi, 2018)

Low engagement is characterized by a reduced number of interactions, which can damage the perception of an influencer's influence on social media.

Low engagement can lead to reduced visibility and credibility. Followers may experience low-engagement influencers as less authentic or engaging, which can reduce the effectiveness of their influence on consumer behavior (Levesque & Pons, 2023).

Low-engagement influencers may have difficulty securing brand partnerships and monetization opportunities. They may tend to reconsider their content strategies and engagement tactics in order to increase interaction ratios (Cui & Wangenheim, 2023).

Condition hypothesis: high or low engagement

The condition hypothesis involves exploring the impact of different degrees of engagement on the effectiveness and results of social network influencers.

A high level of engagement is generally correlated with increased trust and influence. Users are more likely to trust recommendations from highly engaged influencers, which can lead to higher conversion rates. Conversely, low engagement rates can indicate a lack of authenticity and diminish influence (Levesque & Pons, 2023).

Metrics such as the number of likes, comments and shares are key indicators of engagement levels. These metrics are often used by brands to assess the potential impact of partnering with an influencer (Gross, J., Cui, Z., & von Wangenheim, F., 2023).

High engagement is often associated with interactive behavior on the part of followers, such as participating in discussions and sharing content. Low engagement can result in passive following, where followers do not actively engage with the influencer's content (Lima, Francisco & Brandão, 2022).

The literature points to significant differences between high and low levels of engagement in the context of social media influencers. High levels of engagement are essential for maximizing influence, credibility and effectiveness, while low engagement can undermine an influencer's impact. Understanding these dynamics can help influencers and brands optimize their strategies for greater success.

### **2.3 Brand Attitude:**

The literature review on influencer marketing highlights its importance in various industries, including the aviation sector. Research indicates that influencer credibility plays a central role in shaping brand attitudes, establishing a direct correlation between influencer credibility, brand attitude and consumer behavior (Wardani, P. E. 2019).

In the airline industry, social media influencers have shown that, in order to be a central figure in endorsing airline services and reshaping consumer perception (Wibisono & Ruldeviyani, 2021). Studies have proven that influencers on social media platforms such as Twitter help stimulate brand engagement and help shape consumer preferences (Wibisono & Ruldeviyani, 2021). However, there is a need to further explore the complex aspect of influencer marketing in the airline industry, including identifying influencers and understanding their impact on consumer behavior (Chen et al., 2008).

A rigorous review of the literature highlights the need to address the challenges and threats posed by influencer marketing in brand usage, highlighting flaws in current research that deserve attention (Alipour et al., 2021).

The results obtained can contribute to the development of strategies for effective influencer marketing campaigns in the airline industry, which will enhance brand engagement and consumer loyalty.

H1: Participants in the high engagement condition will show a more positive attitude towards the brand compared to participants in the low engagement condition.

The hypothesis posits that when people are deeply engrossed in the influencer's material, they are inclined to cultivate a more favorable disposition towards the company. Increased customer interaction leads to heightened attention and interest, hence enhancing the brand's appeal and credibility. Consequently, these favorable perceptions can cultivate stronger brand allegiance and a higher probability of future engagements with the brand.

## **2.4 Intention to Visit Advertised Destination**

Understanding travelers' intention to visit advertising destinations is imperative to destination marketing research. This understanding facilitates the formulation of effective marketing strategies and strengthens the competitiveness of destinations. The Destination Advertising Response (DAR) model, frequently used in research, highlights the importance of assessing the effectiveness of destination advertising in stimulating tourist visit intent (De Souza et al., 2019). Furthermore, visitors' intentions to choose a destination are significantly influenced by user-generated content (UGC) on social networking platforms. Positive UGC enhances destination appeal and influences the decision-making process (Akkuş & Arslan, 2021). Nostalgic destination advertising is particularly effective in eliciting historical feelings and activating visit intentions, and psychological concepts such as destination nostalgia and sense of history also play an important role in shaping visitor intentions (Su et al., 2024). By contrast, the way that language and images are presented in destination marketing materials greatly influences how tourists feel and see the place (Wu et al., 2022). Communities may develop destination marketing plans that successfully affect tourists' intents to visit promoted locations, hence improving overall marketing success, by knowing these elements.

The initial hypothesis can be formulated as follows, as indicated in the literature review presented:

H2: Consumers with high levels of engagement are significantly more likely to want to visit an advertised destination than those observing ads with low levels of engagement.

This hypothesis implies that individuals who demonstrate a high level of engagement with an advertisement are more likely to want to visit the advertised destination than those who watch an advertisement with a low level of engagement. The destination is made more pleasant and the travel prospects of Internet users are improved by attractive ads that attract attention and generate interest.

## **2.5 Intention to Purchase Advertised Products**

Gaining insight into consumers' intents to purchase advertised items is crucial for marketing research as it helps to create effective advertising campaigns and illuminates consumer

behavior. The literature now in publication emphasizes a number of important elements that affect customers' desire to purchase advertised goods. First, research indicates that commercials have a significant impact on consumers' inclinations to buy (Abbas et al., 2022). Good advertising may increase knowledge, mold opinions, and finally affect customers' decisions to buy the products they see advertised. Moreover, a major influence on customers' willingness to purchase is their views about advertising.. Compelling and appealing advertising content is essential, as favorable perceptions of advertising messages correlate with increased purchase intentions (Shastry & Anupama, 2021).

Socio-economic factors, including income, education and social status, also affect consumers' responses to ads and their purchase intentions. These elements affect customers' views of the legitimacy, brand image, and value of the product, which in turn affects their desire to buy promoted goods (Arshada & Aslam, 2015). Ho Nguyen et al. (2022) report that people's opinions regarding advertising can influence the link between advertising and purchase intention. Good views about advertising increase customers' expectations of the worth of the items, which encourages them to buy the promoted goods. Furthermore, the introduction of smartphone advertising has become a major element affecting the intents of consumers to purchase. Effective mobile advertising strategies need marketers to comprehend how smartphone advertisements affect consumer behavior (Martins et al., 2019). All things considered, creating memorable advertising campaigns and reaching target audiences successfully depend on an awareness of these elements. The subsequent theories are those that we can put out:

H3: Those in the high engagement condition will be more likely than those in the low engagement condition to show intents to buy marketed items.

We propose, based on a study of the literature, that people in high engagement conditions will be more likely than those in low engagement conditions to want to buy marketed items. Purchase intentions are probably going to rise with good engagement techniques that improve customer connection and involvement.

This increase in engagement can be attributed to the heightened awareness and positive perceptions of advertised products created by engaging content (Abbas et al., 2022). In addition, when consumers find advertising content engaging and relevant, the perceived value

and legitimacy of products increases, boosting purchase intentions (Shastry & Anupama, 2021).

## **2.6 Level of Engagement**

Engagement is an essential metric in diverse fields such as social media, marketing and education, as it serves as a barometer for audience interaction and the effectiveness of communication strategies. In social media, engagement encompasses a range of activities such as likes, shares, comments and click-through rates, influenced by factors such as content relevance, timing and platform algorithms (Ao et al., 2023). Similarly, in marketing, engagement means the depth of connection between consumers and brands, correlating with increased brand loyalty and advocacy (Han & Balabanis, 2023). Strategies for strengthening marketing engagement include personalized communication, interactive content and community building (Han & Balabanis, 2023). In education, engagement is essential for effective learning outcomes, through active participation, motivation and interest in learning activities (Matin et al., 2022).

Variables influencing educational engagement cover instructional design, teaching methods and student motivation (Matin et al., 2022). A variety of measures and tools, including analytic dashboards, surveys and sentiment analysis, are used to assess engagement levels, with a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches offering a comprehensive insight into engagement dynamics (Kumar et al., 2023). Eventually, a nuanced insight into engagement in different environments enables the development of strategies to support significant interactions and achieve desired outcomes.

H4: Participants in the high engagement condition will show higher levels of engagement with the influencer than those in the low engagement condition.

According to Hypothesis 4, individuals would show more engagement with an influencer when exposed to material or interactions that are meant to encourage high engagement, as opposed to being exposed to low-engagement settings. According to this theory, influencers may expect a certain amount of interaction from their audience if they also participate to a certain degree.. High engagement conditions may include factors such as interactive content, personalized communication or frequent updates, which are expected to strengthen the bond between the influencer and his or her followers. Conversely, low-engagement conditions may

not include these interactive elements, resulting in comparatively lower levels of audience engagement (Kay, Mulcahy and Parkinson, 2020).

## **2.7 Personality Perspective**

Research in destination marketing would be remiss if it didn't account for the influence of personality on people's propensity to interact with marketed locations. Tourists' impressions and choices are shaped by a destination's "personality," which may be defined as the human traits associated with the location. In a 2013 study, Papadimitriou et al.. Personal characteristics such as destination-related norms, values and preferences play an important role in tourists' decision-making process (Papadimitriou et al., 2013).

Tourists often personify destinations according to their values and perceptions, which influences their intention to visit and their level of engagement (Guo et al., 2024). When destination advertising is in line with the tastes and personality characteristics of visitors, it may strengthen their desire to travel (Guo et al., 2024). Furthermore, the good perception of the location and the emotional impact of internet evaluations might affect trip plans and, in the end, degrees of involvement (Kanwel et al., 2019).

Higher levels of involvement may arise from tourists that have adventurous and open-minded personalities looking for new experiences provided by promoted locations (Guo et al., 2024). Alternatively, introverts could choose more sedate locations, which affects their choices for involvement (Guo et al., 2024). Characteristics of the personality may increase customer involvement and strengthen bonds between customers and promoted items. We so put forward the following theory:

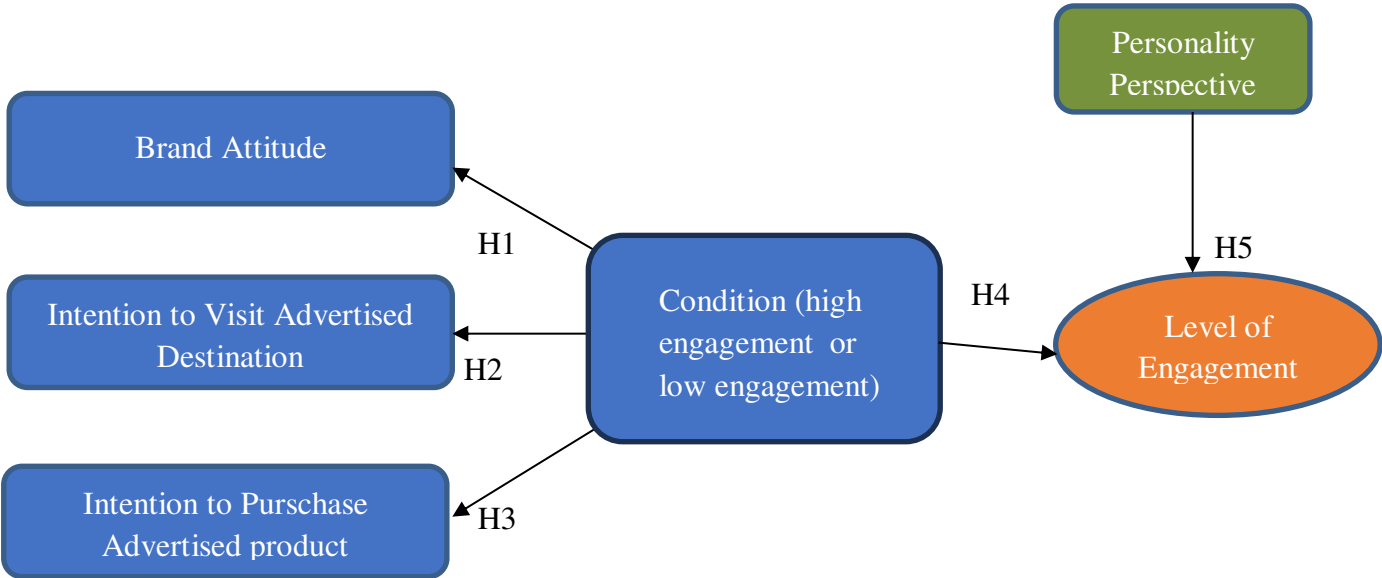
**H5:** People who are more adventurous, who value authenticity, who tend to prefer luxury, who are more open to new experiences and who are more extroverted will display higher levels of engagement.

This hypothesis suggests that people's personality traits greatly influence their engagement levels. Specifically, people who are adventurous, value authenticity, prefer luxury, are open to new experiences and are extroverted are likely to display higher levels of engagement. By

recognizing these characteristics, marketers can better design their strategies around these personality traits, thereby increasing consumer engagement with their content (Vu et al., 2022).

**3. THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

The conceptual model for influencer-airline collaboration (Jang et al., 2021) outlines the key variables including frequency of collaboration activities, trust between influencer and airline, and audience response metrics.



*Figure 1: Conceptual model that explains how the condition impact each variable*  
*Source: Adapted from (Jang et al., 2021)*

H1: Participants in the high engagement condition will display a more positive brand attitude compared to those assigned to the low engagement condition.

H2: Those in the high engagement condition will exhibit more intentions to visit an advertised destination than those viewing the low engagement advertisement.

H3: Individuals assigned to the high engagement condition will exhibit increased intentions to purchase advertised products as compared with those in the low engagement condition.

H4: Participants in the high engagement condition will show higher levels of engagement with the influencer than those in the low engagement condition.

H5: People more adventurous, who attribute importance to authenticity, who tend to prefer luxury, more open to new experiences, and more extroverted will display higher levels of engagement.

Influencer relationship success factors, such as how well the influencer's content fits with the airline brand and how engaged the influencer's audience is, play a big role in shaping how people think and what they want to buy (Jang et al., 2021).

In 2021, Jang et al. discovered that different types of influencers, like experts or diverse, may have different effects on general opinion.

. This emphasizes the need of considering the influencers' competency and diversity when developing marketing strategies.

When evaluating the efficacy of influencer marketing initiatives in the tourism industry, it is crucial to take demographic factors like age, gender, income, and travel frequency into account, as emphasized in the Jang et al. (2021) model.

Influencer A □ promoting a an airline with low engagement (GroupA)

Influencer B □ promoting the same brand with high engqgement (GROUPB)

#### 4. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE TABLE

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Adapted from (authors)</b>
<b>Brand Attitude</b>	(BA) 1. How would you rate the influencer reputation?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(BA) 2. To what extent do you trust recommendations from influencers?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Chen, 2022
	(BA) 3. How well does the influencer align with your values?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Wang, 2023
	(BA) 4. How positively do you perceive the influencer's image?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Baek 2022
	(BA) 5. Do you perceive the influencer as innovative and forward-thinking?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Ebrahim, 2016
<b>Personality Traits</b>	(PA) 1. Rate your level of adventurousness	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(PA) 2. How important is authenticity in brand endorsements to you?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Wang, 2023
	(PA) 3. Rate your preference for luxury experiences	1- 5 Likert Scale	Hannum 2021
	(PA) 4. How open are you to trying new products or experiences?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Chen 2021
	(PA) 5. Rate your level of extraversion	1- 5 Likert Scale	Baek, 2022
<b>Intention to Visit Adv. Destination</b>	(ID) 1. How likely are you to visit the advertised destination?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2023
	(ID) 2. How interested are you in exploring new travel destinations?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Ebrahim, 2016
	(ID) 3. Rate your level of travel frequency	1- 5 Likert Scale	Hannum 2021
	(ID) 4. How much do you prioritize travel experiences?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Wang, 2023

	(ID) 5. How important is convenience in travel planning to you?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Chen, 2022
<b>Level of Engagement</b>	(LE) 1. How engaged do you feel with the influencer's content?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2023
	(LE) 2. How likely are you to interact with the influencer's social media posts?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Hannum, 2021
	(LE) 3. How often do you participate in brand-related events?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Baek, 2022
	(LE) 4. How likely are you to share brand-related content with others?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Ebrahim, 2016
	(LE) 5. How much do you enjoy engaging with influencers online?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Chen, 2022
<b>Intention to Purchase Adv. Product</b>	(IP) 1. How likely are you to purchase products advertised by the influencer?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(IP) 2. How often do you make purchases based on influencer recommendations?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Wang, 2023
	(IP) 3. How much influence do influencer endorsements have on your purchase decisions?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Hannum, 2021
	(IP) 4. How important are reviews and testimonials in your purchase process?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Baek, 2022
	(IP) 5. How likely are you to trust products endorsed by influencers?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Chen,2022
<b>Demographics</b>	(D) 1. What is your age group?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(D) 2. What is your gender?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(D) 3. What is your income level?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
	(D) 4. How frequently do you travel?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021

	(D) 5. What is your level of education?	1- 5 Likert Scale	Jang et al., 2021
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Source: Own elaboration based on the Literature

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Pretest

A pre-test was carried out to guarantee the correctness and integrity of the data collected prior starting the main investigation. The pre-test's main goal was to gauge participants' knowledge with the chosen airline firms, therefore preventing biased answers.

To that end, participants were given the choice of Frenchbee or Spirit Airlines as their airline and asked to score their familiarity on a five-point semantic scale from 1 (not at all familiar) to 5 (very familiar).

In addition, using a comparable five-point semantic scale with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 the best, participants were asked to score these airlines on a variety of criteria including dependability, customer service, safety, comfort, and price. The pre-test also tried to determine how well participants knew Instagram, how often they used the social media site, and how often they interacted with influencers.

The main goal of asking participants about their past purchases of goods or services that influencers had recommended was to determine how involved they felt they were. In addition, participants were asked to describe, for them, a healthy degree of participation in terms of shares, likes, follows, or views. All things considered, the pre-test was an essential first step in guaranteeing the reliability and validity of the major research that followed.

Using airlines that the participants had never heard of, the study sought to remove any impact from pre-existing brand awareness or views. The survey also looked at how many followers people thought were enough to heed influencers' advice. There were five alternatives offered to participants: less than 10K, between 10K and 50K, between 50K and 100K, 100K and 500K, and more than 500K. Seventy percent of the participants chose the most popular answer, "between 100K - 500K," according to the poll.

25 people answered the survey that was sent out on social media and conducted using Qualtrics ([https://ucpresearch.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_39tJOtuAJyO0gVU](https://ucpresearch.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_39tJOtuAJyO0gVU)). Sixty-six percent of individuals identified as male and forty-four percent as female. Age-wise, 28% were between 26 and 34, 68% were between 18 and 25 and 4% were under 18 years old. About nationality, 50% were Tunisian, 17% were German, 17% were French, and 17% were Portuguese.

Moreover, the poll revealed that "likes and comments" were the most often mentioned elements of involvement by participants—96% of the respondents mentioned these elements. Considering these results, Frenchbee Airlines was chosen to be presented in the primary survey since, in comparison to Spirit Airlines, which the participants were aware of, it was the least recognized brand.

## **5.2 Dependent variables:**

**Brand Attitude:** This variable measures participants' overall perception and sentiment towards the brand featured in the influencer's content or advertisement.

**Intention to Purchase Advertised Product:** This variable assesses participants' inclination or willingness to buy the product(s) showcased in the influencer's content or advertisement.

**Intention to Visit Advertised Destination:** This variable gauges participants' desire or likelihood to travel to the destination promoted in the influencer's content or advertisement.

## **5.3 Independent Variables:**

**Condition (High Level or Low Level of Engagement):** This parameter shows how involved people are in the influencer's advertising or content. Rich interactions include likes, comments, and shares; low engagement conditions have few interactions.

Personality traits include qualities like extroversion, luxury preference, openness to new experiences, and appreciation of authenticity. Personalities affect how involved people are and how they react to influencer material or commercials.

A framework is provided by these dependent and independent variables to examine how personality characteristics and degrees of engagement affect participants' brand attitudes, intentions to buy marketed goods, and intentions to visit promoted locations. Researcher may

learn about the efficiency of influencer marketing tactics and the elements influencing customer behavior in reaction to influencer content by looking at the connections between these variables.

For a number of reasons, survey research often uses the Likert scale. With its systematic approach to evaluating attitudes and perceptions, it enables respondents to express their views on a range of agreement to disagreement. Through the generation of statistically evaluated quantitative data, this scale format allows data analysis and provides perspectives of the respondents (Bishop PA & Herron RL, 2015). Higher response rates and effective data gathering are also ensured by the ease of use and understanding of Likert scales (Maniyamkott, 2024). In conclusion, due of its interpretability, simplicity, and capacity to record intricate answers, the Likert scale is the most often used tool for assessing attitudes and views.

#### **5.4 Procedure**

Participants were initially directed to the survey link through various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The link served as a randomizer, assigning participants to one of two main conditions: "low level of engagement influencer" or "high level of engagement influencer." This random assignment was facilitated by clicking the link.

Upon entering the survey, participants encountered an introductory section comprising a welcome message, general information about the researcher, an explanation of the study's purpose and duration, and reassurance regarding the absence of correct or wrong answers. They were urged to answer honestly, promised anonymity and secrecy, and congratulated for taking part.

After the introduction, participants were to arrange a winter vacation and search Instagram for influencers' suggestions for destinations and airlines.

Participants were then split into two groups, one of which was exposed to the "high engagement influencer" condition and the other to the "low engagement influencer" condition. The identical Instagram photo with influencer @Valeriamaktuf—who has over 200K followers and is well-known for endorsing travel locations and airlines—was seen by both groups.

The first group, "high level of engagement influencer", was presented with an average of 70k likes and 30k comments on these posts. while the second group, "low level engagement influencers", was presented with the same post and the same influencer, but in this case, with the indication that the latter has only 2000 likes and 30 comments on average on these posts. To sum up, two different groups, same post, same influencer, different level engagement, based on likes and comments according to pretest responses.



Figure 2: Instagram posts: Fictional influencer @Valeriamaktuf promoting airline company @frenchbee “high level of engagement” vs “ low level of engagement”

People were tasked with rating the influencer's image, value, credibility, and trustworthiness after reading the communication. They were then questioned about their opinions of the influencer's reliability and if they intended to purchase the advertised item or vacation location. Following that, using manipulation questions, we asked participants to score their opinions on the influencer and the brand.

After reading the message, people were asked to score the influencer's credibility, trustworthiness, value, and image. Their view of the influencer's legitimacy as a source and their intents to acquire the promoted vacation or product were the next questions.

. This was followed by manipulation questions to assess participants' perception of the influencer and brand promotion, as well as an assessment of their personality traits, travel experience and frequency, and then with their interaction with sponsored or recommended content, and finally demographic questions.

## **5.5 Design**

The experiment used a mixed design: a type of influencer (high vs. low level of engagement). The type of post was the between-subjects factor, with "high engagement" and "low engagement" groups. Participants were randomly allocated to one of two conditions, guaranteeing that each person received just one type of post. This configuration is a between-subjects factor since it compares the reactions of multiple groups of participants, each exposed to a different level. Regardless of the type of post allocated to them, participants were subjected to the same types of follow-up questions in order to compare the two groups.

This feature of the design is a repeated measures factor since it required both groups of participants to encounter and reply to two different types of posts. This mixed-methods approach allowed us to develop a more thorough understanding of how differences in engagement rates affected participants' replies both separately and interactively.

## **5.6 Data analyses**

Prior to testing H1, H2, H3, and H4, the univariate normality of the four main variables (Brand Attitude, Intention to Visit, Intention to Purchase, and Engagement) was assessed separately for each experimental condition. Eight Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted, and Brand Attitude was assessed as sufficiently normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk test  $p > .05$ ). However, Intention to Visit, Intention to Purchase, and Engagement were assessed as not following univariate normality on account of statistically significant Shapiro-Wilk tests ( $p < .05$ ).

Thus, to test for H1, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess differences in Brand Attitudes between experimental conditions. Following, three nonparametric Mann-Whitney-U tests were conducted to test H2, H3, and H4, to assess differences in Intention to Visit, Intention to Purchase, and Engagement between experimental conditions (high engagement vs. low engagement).

Moreover, to test for H5, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with the level of engagement variable as dependent variable, entering the five personality traits analysed as independent variables within a single model — Durbin-Watson, Tolerance, and VIF statistics were calculated to rule out potential issues regarding autocorrelation and multicollinearity.

## **6. Result analysis**

### **6.1 Participant**

The survey was built using Qualtrics and distributed via three social media platforms: WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. This choice of distribution was based on the efficiency, and time-saving capabilities of these platforms. The survey mainly targeted all individuals, men, and women. A total of 125 participants participated in the study. The sample is composed of 57.6% of females and 40.8% of males and only 1.6% identified as others.

Regarding age, 36% of participants were between 19- 26 years old, followed by 59.2% between the age of 24-35 years old. Nationalities were diversified with 68% of Tunisians, followed by 4.8% Germans, 8% French, 5.6% Portuguese, and 13.6% belonged to other nationalities. 5 (Appendix A)

The adoption of these specific groups was chosen due to their distinct social media use and customer behavior patterns. Members of Generation Z were born in a digital environment and have grown up in an era when social media is ubiquitous in all aspects of their life.

Furthermore, they are quite conversant with the influencer culture. These traits make them ideal subjects for our investigation.

### **6.2 General results**

Descriptive summary and frequency statistics for sociodemographic variables and those involved in the main analyses are displayed in the (appendix A). These statistics provide an overview of the sample characteristics, including variables such as age, gender, education level, income, and other relevant demographic information. Additionally, the appendix includes detailed statistics on key variables pertinent to the study, such as levels of engagement, brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and travel intentions.

### **6.3 Reliability test**

Also, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency values were found for the four key variables: Engagement, Brand Attitude, Intention to Visit, and Intention to Purchase. These factors are very important for figuring out how reliable the scales are that are used to measure these things. Since the results were between "acceptable" and "satisfactory," the scales used in the research are reliable and provide consistent findings.

According to Peterson (1994), Cronbach's Alpha values greater than .7 are acceptable for fundamental research but should be higher than .9 for applied research. Each statistic's precise Cronbach's Alpha values are given in (Appendix B). The stability and dependability of the objects under measurement are ensured by this reliability analysis, which also increases the trustworthiness of the data outputs. Because these ratings are so trustworthy, the study's conclusions about the relationships between degrees of engagement, brand attitude, purchase plans, and visit intents are robust.

### **6.4 Engagement Conditions and Consumer-Related Variables**

Regarding H1, the independent-samples t-test did not reveal statistically significant differences in brand attitude between experimental conditions ( $p > .05$ ). Similarly, as for H2, H3, and H4, the three respective Mann-Whitney-U tests did not reveal statistically significant differences in any of the remaining three variables between experimental conditions ( $p > .05$ ). Thus, no support was rendered for these four hypotheses (Appendix C).

### **6.5 Personality Traits and Engagement *with* Influencer**

As for H5, the multiple regression analysis exhibited a statistically significant prediction of engagement by the personality traits ( $F[5, 119] = 3.46, p = .006, \text{adj.-}R^2 = .090$ ). The main variable predicting engagement was preference for luxury experiences, exhibiting a positive effect ( $\beta = .19, p = .040$ ); moreover, adventurousness also exhibited a marginally significant positive effect on engagement ( $\beta = .17, p = .077$ ). This implies that individuals with a more adventurous personality are likely to engage more, although this effect was not as strong as the preference for luxury experiences. These findings render partial support for H5, which

hypothesized that personality traits such as adventurousness and preference for luxury experiences would predict higher levels of engagement.

Rendering partial support for H5, no multicollinearity or autocorrelation issues were detected. All parameters of the regression model can be found in the (Appendix D)

## **7. Discussion**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the dynamics of influencer marketing in the airline industry, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which collaborations between social media influencers and airlines affect consumer perceptions, travel decisions, and brand engagement. A comprehensive survey was conducted to achieve this, with a focus on a diverse cohort that was recruited through prominent social media platforms. The survey gathered information on brand attitudes, engagement levels, sociodemographic variables, and purchase and visit intentions. The scales' consistency was verified through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which guaranteed the reliability of the measures (Peterson (1994).

The analysis employed independent-samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney-U tests to compare brand attitude and other critical variables across experimental conditions. Furthermore, in order to examine the correlation between engagement levels and personality attributes, multiple regression analysis was implemented. The results provided nuanced insights into the factors that influence consumer engagement and the role of personality traits in these dynamics. The implications of these findings will be further explored in this discussion, which will also examine the broader context of influencer marketing in the airline industry.

### **7.1 Engagement Conditions and Consumer-Related Variables**

Examining the dynamics of influencer marketing in the airline industry, more especially, how airlines and social media influencers collaborate to impact consumer perceptions, travel decisions, and brand loyalty—was the main goal of this study. An large survey that was sent via popular social media platforms allowed for this. The survey collected data on future plans for visits and purchases as well as demographics, engagement, and brand perception.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients verified the consistency of the used scales and hence the dependability of the measurements (Matin et al., 2022).

Mann-Whitney-U tests and independent-samples t-tests were used by the research to compare brand attitude with other significant factors in various experimental scenarios. Additional

research was done utilizing multiple regression analysis to look at the relationship between personality traits and engagement levels (Shastry & Anupama, 2021).

The results provided complex understandings of the elements impacting customer involvement and the part played by character attributes in these interplays. Here, we'll take a closer look at the bigger picture of influencer marketing for airlines to see what these findings mean.

## **7.2 Personality Traits and Engagement with Influencer**

The results of this research provide important new information on the dynamics of interaction with influencers by showing that just two particular personality characteristics have a substantial predictive capacity, therefore partly supporting the original theories. This emphasizes the part personality plays in determining engagement behaviors and suggests the presence of other influencing variables beyond personality. In fact, the importance of authenticity in influencer relationships has been highlighted in earlier literature, which is in line with the conclusions of this study. The low adjusted R-squared values suggest, however, that personality characteristics may not be sufficient to fully explain the complexities of engagement dynamics, indicating the need for further research (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

The quite low adjusted R-squared values suggest that unidentified causes are probably going to affect engagement metrics. Though not included in the research, factors like as follower demographics, platform complexity, and content relevance may all affect engagement levels (Agnihotri et al., 2021). Moreover, the discovery of only two significant factors indicates that they could be very crucial in predicting engagement, while other variables might have weaker relationships or need for a bigger sample size to be discernible. Thus, this study not only clarifies the connection between personality and influencer engagement but also highlights the variety of the phenomena, which necessitates more investigation and improvement in next endeavors.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study addressed the complex dynamics of influencer-airline partnerships, in order to understand how these collaborations are shaping a consumer's attitudes and behaviors, as well as brand perceptions within the airline industry. In answering the research question and the defined objectives, this study provided comprehensive information on the multiple impacts of social media influencers on airline marketing strategies.

Assessing the impact of collaboration between influencers and airlines, influencers effectively improve brand visibility and engagement, increasing customer interest and interaction with airline brands. This impact is particularly evident in how consumers perceive the airline's image and credibility.

Key success factors identified include the relevance and authenticity of the influencer, the quality and creativity of the content produced, and the alignment between the influencer's audience and the airline's target market. Successful partnerships are characterized by clear communication, mutual objectives and an authentic link between the influencer and the airline brand.

### **8.1 Theoretical and Practical implications**

By elucidating the ways in which influencer traits, such as knowledge and audience alignment, affect customer perceptions and actions within the airline sector, this research contributes to the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing. It adds to a more complex model of influencer marketing efficacy by providing actual proof that these traits are important.

This study adds to what is already known about the ways in which social media influencers impact consumer engagement with brands and brands' loyalty to those brands as well as the ways in which those brands connect with their customers (Pandey & Yadav, 2019).

Academic knowledge of influencer classification and its impacts is enhanced by the study's contribution to the theoretical discussion on how diversified influencers and expert influencers affect consumer behavior differently (Haque, 2023).

The results have real-world implications for airlines, who may use them to better identify influencers whose audiences match their target demographic. For marketing initiatives to be as successful as possible, this strategic approach is crucial.

The research emphasizes that engaging consumers is greatly facilitated by original, high-quality content. According to Panday and Yadav (2019), airlines may improve their brand's image and customer engagement by working directly with influencers to create visually attractive and useful content.

The best way to create lasting storylines and stronger ties with your audience is to form long-term alliances with influential people in your field. According to Szakal et al. (2024), this strategy has the potential to increase brand awareness and customer loyalty over time.

Szakal et al. (2024) found that airlines may better address customer demands by including qualitative approaches like focus groups and interviews into their marketing strategy. These methods provide deeper insights into consumer motives and emotions.

## **8.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

There are a number of caveats to the influencer-airline partnership research that should be taken into account. The results may not be applicable to a broader population due to the small sample size of 125 people. Future studies should aim for bigger and more varied samples to better reflect the target population and strengthen the reliability of the results. Furthermore, the research mainly focuses on the effects of influencer-airline partnerships on customer engagement and perceptions, while it does a good job of addressing these issues as a whole (Elemonie 2020). To get a fuller picture of the complex impacts of influencer marketing on the airline sector, future studies might broaden the focus to include other important variables like purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

Several recommendations for further study arise in view of these constraints. First, one interesting way to look at how influencer-airline alliances change over time is via longitudinal research. The success of such partnerships may be better understood in the long run if researchers follow changes in audience perceptions and behaviors over time. The factors that drive the success of influencer marketing for airlines might be better understood with the addition of qualitative research methodologies like focus groups or interviews to the quantitative data already collected. To better understand the dynamics at work, qualitative

methods may reveal more complex viewpoints and reasons for consumer reactions to influencer material.

The purpose of these recommendations is to fill in the gaps in our knowledge about influencer-airline partnerships and to remedy the shortcomings that have already been pointed out. Future research efforts may greatly increase understanding in this subject by using these ideas, leading to more successful solutions.

## 9. APPENDIX

### Appendix A: Demographics and descriptive statistics

#### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Brand Attitude – 1 negative to 5 positive	125	1,20	5,00	3,1120	,71905
Intention to Visit Destination	125	2,00	5,00	3,6784	,62056
Level of Engagement with Influencer	125	1,00	5,00	2,5152	,90456
Level of Intention to Purchase	125	1,40	5,00	2,8560	,72894
Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of adventurousness	125	1	5	3,82	,937
Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How important is authenticity in brand endorsements to you?	125	1	5	4,12	,903
Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your preference for luxury experiences	125	1	5	3,70	1,116
Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How open are you to trying new products or experiences	125	2	5	4,10	,878
Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of extraversion	125	1	5	3,74	,968
Valid N (listwise)	125				

#### What is your gender?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	51	40,8	40,8	40,8
Female	72	57,6	57,6	98,4
Non-binary / third gender	1	,8	,8	99,2
Prefer not to say	1	,8	,8	100,0
Total	125	100,0	100,0	

#### What is your nationality? – Selected Choice

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Tunisian	85	68,0	68,0	68,0
Portuguese	7	5,6	5,6	73,6
German	6	4,8	4,8	78,4
French	10	8,0	8,0	86,4
other, please specify:	17	13,6	13,6	100,0
Total	125	100,0	100,0	

#### Please answer these questions about yourself What is your age gro

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18 – 24	45	36,0	36,0	36,0
25 – 34	74	59,2	59,2	95,2
35 – 44	3	2,4	2,4	97,6
45 – 54	2	1,6	1,6	99,2
55 – 64	1	,8	,8	100,0
Total	125	100,0	100,0	

#### Condition – high vs low engagement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid low engagement	59	47,2	47,2	47,2
high engagement	66	52,8	52,8	100,0
Total	125	100,0	100,0	

#### Statistics

	Please answer these questions about yourself What is your age gro	What is your gender?	What is your monthly income level?	What is your nationality? – Selected Choice
N Valid	125	125	125	125
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mode	2	2	1	1

## Appendix B: Reliability test

Scale: Brand Attitude	Scale: Intention to Visit	Scale: Level of Engagement	Scale: Intention to Purchase																
<p><b>Reliability Statistics</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cronbach's Alpha</td> <td>N of Items</td> </tr> <tr> <td>,803</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	,803	5	<p><b>Reliability Statistics</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cronbach's Alpha</td> <td>N of Items</td> </tr> <tr> <td>,619</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	,619	5	<p><b>Reliability Statistics</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cronbach's Alpha</td> <td>N of Items</td> </tr> <tr> <td>,857</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	,857	5	<p><b>Reliability Statistics</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cronbach's Alpha</td> <td>N of Items</td> </tr> <tr> <td>,823</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	,823	5
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items																		
,803	5																		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items																		
,619	5																		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items																		
,857	5																		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items																		
,823	5																		

## Appendix C: Engagement Conditions and Consumer-Related Variables

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Brand Attitude – 1 negative to 5 positive	Equal variances assumed	,338	,562	-1,505	123	,135	-,19286	,12818	-,44658	,06086
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,522	122,031	,131	-,19286	,12674	-,44375	,05803

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Intention to Visit Destination	125	3,6784	,62056	2,00	5,00
Level of Intention to Purchase	125	2,8560	,72894	1,40	5,00
Level of Engagement with Influencer	125	2,5152	,90456	1,00	5,00
Condition – high vs low engagement	125	,53	,501	0	1

**Ranks**

		Condition – high vs low engagement	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Intention to Visit Destination	low engagement		59	62,84	3707,50
	high engagement		66	63,14	4167,50
	Total		125		
Level of Intention to Purchase	low engagement		59	64,59	3811,00
	high engagement		66	61,58	4064,00
	Total		125		
Level of Engagement with Influencer	low engagement		59	63,39	3740,00
	high engagement		66	62,65	4135,00
	Total		125		

**Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	Intention to Visit Destination	Level of Intention to Purchase	Level of Engagement with Influencer
Mann-Whitney U	1937,500	1853,000	1924,000
Wilcoxon W	3707,500	4064,000	4135,000
Z	-,047	-,467	-,114
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,962	,641	,909

a. Grouping Variable: Condition – high vs low engagement

## Appendix D: Personality Traits and Engagement with Influencer

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,356 <sup>a</sup>	,127	,090	,86286	2,078

a. Predictors: (Constant), Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of extraversion, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How important is authenticity in brand endorsements to you?, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your preference for luxury experiences, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How open are you to trying new products or experiences, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of adventurousness

b. Dependent Variable: Level of Engagement with Influencer

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12,863	5	2,573	3,455	,006 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	88,598	119	,745		
	Total	101,461	124			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Engagement with Influencer

b. Predictors: (Constant), Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of extraversion, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How important is authenticity in brand endorsements to you?, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your preference for luxury experiences, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How open are you to trying new products or experiences, Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of adventurousness

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	,922	,503		1,832	,069		
	Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of adventurousness	,166	,093	,172	1,783	,077	,789	1,267
	Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How important is authenticity in brand endorsements to you?	-,080	,095	-,080	-,846	,399	,822	1,216
	Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your preference for luxury experiences	,158	,076	,194	2,075	,040	,836	1,196
	Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – How open are you to trying new products or experiences	,077	,099	,075	,782	,436	,799	1,251
	Based on your own personality traits on a scale to 1 to 5 (1= not at all, 5= completely) – Rate your level of extraversion	,104	,091	,112	1,152	,251	,780	1,282

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Engagement with Influencer

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