

The Effect of Instagram Influencers on Vacation Destination Choice

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Abstract

There has been an increase in the use of Instagram influencers in the travel and tourism industry. These influencers are being used to reach new audiences and showcase destinations. However, do they have any influence on such a complex decision? This dissertation investigates whether Instagram influencers have an effect on vacation destination choice. Previous research in other industries shows that influencers have a positive effect on purchase intention, but research also states that destination choice is a complex multistage process. This becomes the research question for this dissertation, what effect do Instagram influencers have on vacation destination choice? The study hypothesized that the use of an influencer (versus non influencer) in an Instagram travel post would encourage intention to visit a travel destination. It was also hypothesised that an attractive image in the Instagram post would be more effective at encouraging intention to visits, than a non-attractive image. The study that was conducted involved 125 New Zealand subjects aged 18-30 years who were recruited by DYNATA an online panel company, and the subject destination was a relatively low-profile international destination, Canberra (Australia). The subjects were presented with one of four conditions. The first was an Instagram travel post by an influencer and an attractive image. The second was an Instagram travel post by an influencer but with an unattractive image. The third was an Instagram travel post by a regular Instagram user with the same attractive image. The fourth was an Instagram travel post by a regular user but with an unattractive image. The subjects were asked to complete rating scales on the persuasiveness of the advertisement and intention to visit. The results of the study were analysed using one-way ANOVA. The findings show that the use of an influencer has a significant effect on persuasiveness of the advertisement and intention to visit a destination. Attractiveness of the Instagram post is significant on persuasiveness of the advertisement but not on intention to visit. This provides an addition and update to destination choice literature and the external stimuli part of the destination choice process. This also answers the call by multiple researchers to analyse the use of social media influencers in the travel and tourism industry. Destination marketing managers would be interested in this research to help formulate marketing plans or to start using influencer marketing. This dissertation had some limitations including the Covid-19 crisis that was present in the country while data was collected.

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning"

Anish shah

26th November 2020

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Ethical Approval

Ethics approval was granted on 1st April 2020 by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) until 1st April 2023 (see Appendix A). The ethics application number is 20/97.

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The use of social media influencers has been increasing across multiple industries all over the world including one of the world's largest, the travel and tourism industry (Kim, Han, Yoo, & Gerla, 2017; UNWTO, 2019). These online celebrities based on the social media platform Instagram have started to command significant amounts of money for single advertising post (WEBFX, 2020). In the travel industry this is on top of the costs of their luxury accommodation and flights. So, the question needs to be asked whether they are worth the cost for a destination to hire them. This study aims to investigate the impact of Instagram influencers on destination choice. Could the use of Instagram travel influencers have an effect on the decision making of potential travellers?

This chapter introduces the study and its context. The first section is the background of the research followed by the gap in literature. Next is the research question and hypotheses. After that is the significance of the study. The final section of this chapter will describe the organization of this dissertation.

1.2 Background

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the use of social media influencers to promote products and services. These influencers cover a wide range of products and industries. Social media influencers are defined as third party endorsers that help to shape audience attitudes (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). There have been many large multinational corporations and even government departments that have used influencers to generate awareness or reach new audiences including NIKE, tourism New Zealand and more. Social media influencers are regarded as opinion leaders and usually have some level of expertise in areas such as makeup, technology, or travel. They are based on a variety of platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.

Influencers are known to open and update their followers regularly on their lives. This creates a perceived online relationship as they are more believable and accessible than regular celebrities (Abidin, 2016). Not only this but research has proven that influencers are more likely to be sought out for advice than a CEO and they also have a positive impact on purchase intention (Freberg et al., 2011; Lim, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Influencers with high numbers of followers have been found to be more likeable than others and also more influential as opinion leaders (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

The travel industry is one of the largest in the world and is a key part of the economy for many nations and provides millions of jobs (UNWTO, 2019). In fact, in 2018 there were over 1.1 billion travellers worldwide. These travellers are making use of the Internet and various social media platforms to engage in information search prior to travelling. With such a large number of potential tourists engaging in information search it is beneficial for the industry to understand the motivating factors behind travel to direct effective marketing campaigns.

There has been a recent rise in the use Instagram influencers in the travel industry as reaching new audiences is key for destination marketing managers. There have been multiple highly successful campaigns such as Yao Chen partnering with Tourism New Zealand or the influencer campaign implemented by Curacao (Barbe, Neuburger, & Pennington-Gray, 2020; Tourism New Zealand, 2012). Influencers could possibly be a driving force of growth in destination marketing. However, while research has suggested influencers to be effective in other industries, travel and destination choice is a more complex process and there has not been enough research to conclusively say that influencers are effective in promoting destinations as well.

1.3 Gap in the Literature

This study is responding to a call by Gretzel (2017) and Magno and Cassia (2018) who argue that there is not sufficient research surrounding the use of social media influencers in travel and tourism especially since it is such a large worldwide industry that has adopted the use of influencers regularly. Research does exist on the use of social media influencer in promoting various products however travel and tourism and destination choice in particular is far more complex and has a much higher level of risk involved (Crompton, 1992; Tasci & Kozak, 2006).

There is also a gap in the destination choice process literature. More specifically in the external information used in the process. It identifies word of mouth and marketing communications and gives them differing level of influence on the process, but it has not been updated to include social media influencers that are ambiguous but highly influential (Gretzel, 2017).

1.4 Research Question

The research question of this study is:

Q1 what effect do Instagram travel influencers have on vacation destination choice?

1.5 Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are:

H1: The use of an influencer (versus non influencer) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H2: The use of attractive graphics (versus unattractive graphics) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H3: The use of an influencer (versus non-influencer) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

H4: the use of attractive graphics (versus non-attractive graphics) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

To assess persuasiveness of the advertisement a scale adapted from Pham and Avnet (2004) and Haws, Dholakia, and Bearden (2010) is used. To assess intention to visit a scale from Alvarez and Campo (2014) is used. Intention is a driver of behaviour and is used in this study as a predictor of destination choice (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977); Gómez, Imhoff, Martín-Consuegra, Molina, and Santos-Vijande (2018).

1.6 Significance of the Study

Instagram travel influencers are already being used in the industry to promote various destinations, hotels, and activities. These online celebrities have gathered large numbers of followers on Instagram such as Chris Burkard with over 3 million, and now monetize them through advertising other businesses. However, while managers are using influencers to showcase destinations, there is a lack of academic literature to support whether these influencers have any effect on individual's destination choice. This study aims to investigate this phenomenon and contribute to the vacation destination choice literature.

1.7 Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study consisting of the background, gap in the literature, research question and hypotheses and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 is a literature review of the key concepts in this research which are Instagram, travel, social media influencers and destination choice. Chapter 3 discusses the design of the research and includes the sample, measures used and procedure of the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study through frequency histograms and ANOVA. Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical and managerial implications of the research, the limitations, and directions for future research.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review relevant areas of literature to support the research being undertaken. The topics of literature to be reviewed are Social media, Instagram, social media influencers, travel, travel influencers and destination choice. This research will aim to extend the current literature on social media influencers which has been identified to be lacking (Lim et al., 2017). This study focuses on the use of social media influencers in the context of tourism and specifically destination choice as there is an increasing use of and monetary spend on Influencers by the tourism industry (Tourism New Zealand, 2012; Xu & Pratt, 2018). The purpose of the research is to measure whether the use of social media influencers to promote destinations has an effect on destination choice for an individual. Previously studies have found that the use of influencers has a positive influence on consumer's purchase intention and that influencers are more likeable (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017). However, research on the use of social media influencers in tourism is still lacking (Gretzel, 2017; Magno & Cassia, 2018).

2.2 Social media

Social media as defined by Chu (2011), refers to a group of internet-based applications where user generated content is created and exchanged and is very popular among young internet users. Social media applications are classified by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) into categories that are determined from the applications's characteristics. The first category is social networking sites that are applications which promote the connections between users. Usually the users create profiles containing personal information, photos and videos and invite others to access them and also instant message with them. Examples of this are Facebook and Instagram. The second category are blogs which are personal websites on platforms such as blogspot that usually display date stamped content which vary from a personal diary and experience to information on a topic area. The third category is content communities which exist for the purpose of sharing media amongst users and communities such as Pinterest exist for photos, videos and more.

The focus of this research are social networking sites and in particular Instagram. It has been found that consumers gather information on products, services and retailers through social networking

sites (Holzner, 2008). Individuals may do this by creating posts that others comment their opinions on or even joining public discussions in specific groups. This creates a word of mouth effect that has a far greater reach than face to face interactions (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016). This phenomenon is well documented in marketing literature. Steffes and Burgee (2009) found that there was a greater influence on decision making from online obtained information than physical peer to peer interactions among students. Chu and Kim (2011) found that tie strength, trust, normative and informational influence have a positive relationship with e word of mouth behaviour. E. Kim, Sung, and Kang (2014) found that brands benefit from e word of mouth on twitter via re tweets which allow brand followers to expose their networks to brand messages which in turn generates new interest for the original tweet and brand. Both, Teng, Khong, Chong, and Lin (2017) and Viglia, Minazzi, and Buhalis (2016) support that social networking sites have a greater impact on word of mouth.

Companies have increasingly taken up the use of social networking sites to launch marketing campaigns and interact with their consumers. This is referred to in the literature as social media marketing. Chi (2011), has referred to social media marketing as the connection of brands and consumers as a social interaction on a personal channel. However, this perceived connection can only happen when customers are following the brand page, trusting the brand page and accepting of its posts. Muk and Chung (2014) found that both utilitarian and hedonic values have a positive impact on attitudes toward brand pages which has a significant relationship with the intention to join brand pages. Christou (2015) concluded that brand characteristics on social media such as predictability, competence and reputation are important for establishing and maintaining trust which then influences brand loyalty. Acceptance of brand posts by consumers can be predicted by the positioning of it and the vividness and interactive characteristics of it (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012).

The ability for brands to create social and emotional ties between themselves and their consumers through social media activities is important as it generates a closer relationship between the two (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). The marketing industry also supports this, Coulter and Roggeveen (2012) state that firms around the world believe social media applications support customer experience and relationship management. Evidence from other researchers also supports this stance. Maecker, Barrot, and Becker (2016) and Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp, and Agnihotri (2014) both found a positive effect on the performance of customer relationships. However Moore, Hopkins, and Raymond (2013) noted that there are differences between the platforms used for business to business relationships and business to consumer relationships. Business to business

relationship management takes place on professional networking sites i.e. LinkedIn, while business to consumer management is conducted on regular social networks such as Facebook or Instagram.

Consumers are increasingly considering social media as a major information source when it comes to making decisions on what to purchase (Alalwan et al., 2017). It has also been identified that consumers use social media over the traditional buying process and even into the post purchase process where they may want to share their experiences online (Drews & Schemer, 2010). It has also been proven that social media advertising positively impacts customer's intention to purchase and actual purchase among millennials (Duffett, 2015). Further to this, demographics of social media users and their attitudes towards advertising has also been studied. A study found that women tend to hold more positive attitudes toward social media ads (Bannister, Kiefer, & Nellums, 2013). Another study concluded that younger people between the ages of nineteen and twenty four had the most positive attitudes towards social media ads (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011). Leung, Bai, and Stahura (2015) state that experience with social media influences a consumers attitude towards brands using social media. Therefore the results of the previous study is not surprising as that age group are the most active users. Instagram has been chosen for this research as it has become a very popular tool among brands for social media marketing with over half of the top brands utilising it (Wally & Koshy, 2014).

2.3 Instagram

Instagram is a comparatively newer popular photo and video sharing social network which has grown to one billion active monthly users worldwide as of June 2018 (Statista, 2018). On Instagram users can take photographs, edit them using filters, post photographs to their audience which can be friends or any other user and communicate with others through liking, commenting on other posts (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Instagram is unique and different from other social media platforms whereby users have to create visual content in the form of a photo or video in order to post, they have the ability to use filters to enhance their content and it is common to keep a public profile that is visible to all other Instagram users which leads to people following and interacting with users that they have never met (H. Chen, 2018).

Due to its phenomenal growth and large audience an increasing number of brands and organisations are using this platform to communicate with consumers (H. Chen, 2018). Research has shown that users of Instagram participate for the aspects of personal gratification, usefulness of features,

socialisation, product information, and entertainment (Ting, Ming, de Run, & Choo, 2015). Other research on Instagram marketing from a consumer standpoint has revealed that bombarding Generation Y with advertising posts will not work as they are only open to accepting these posts a couple of times per week and a variety of posts such as private pictures, inspirational posts and informative posts is best in retaining their interest (Johansson & Eklöf Wallsbeck, 2014). On the other hand, research from an organisational standpoint shows that the benefits of using Instagram include it being inexpensive, having high levels of exposure, being user-friendly and for smaller businesses, the companies values can be conveyed as a result of the visual nature (H. Chen, 2018; Wally & Koshy, 2014).

Marketing on Instagram can be done through various ways. One of the most used are sponsored posts that are ads posted on Instagram feeds of the brands target market. This was a very effective method for the early adopting brands such as Michael Kors that gained 34,000 followers to their page in only eighteen hours (Delo, 2013). Another tool that marketers use are hashtags which are metadata tags of either a word or phrase that groups content for sharing and viewing by users. Some companies have found success through the use of hashtag campaigns where users partake in a contest by uploading content with a particular hashtag. For example Ben & Jerry's created a campaign of #captureeuphoria that created over 17,000 user generated posts (H. Chen, 2018). Due to the increased number of brands that are now present on Instagram these two major tactics no longer have the same effect. As a result, the Instagram marketing industry is transitioning on from sending out mass message ads to focusing more on reaching their audience via the content they already consume. Brands have now enlisted the use of Instagram influencers as endorsers to get a better reach and more engagement to their product as it is easier for an influencer to incorporate the product into their daily post and therefore be seen as word of mouth rather than advertising (Abidin, 2016).

Instagram as a platform is based on the presentation of images. Inherent properties of an image used as material for communications can affect consumer attitudes towards products and studies have suggested that the use of attractive or high quality images have a higher likelihood to generate positive affective experiences on social networking sites (Colliander & Marder, 2018; Teo, Leng, & Phua, 2019). Image quality is also likely to be used by consumers to infer product quality i.e. high-quality image will elicit positive association of product quality (Wells, Valacich, & Hess, 2011). Teo et al. (2019) state that for an image to be perceived as likeable and credible, it must conform to the rules of the medium it is presented on beyond the sole importance of quality. Informal images and snapshots are more likely to work better than formal studio images on Instagram and other social networking sites as they are informal platforms (Colliander & Marder, 2018). This study is in the

travel and tourism context on Instagram where most of the images are informal but also high quality (attractive) due to the easy accessibility of image editing software.

2.4 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers have been defined in literature as third party endorsers that help to mould attitudes of their audience (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencers are regarded as opinion leaders on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These social media influencers tend to have a strong influence on their audience due to their high level of social presence (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Large multinational corporations such as NIKE are using influencer marketing as a strategy and investing heavily in, reports suggest that 121 billion US dollars was spent on marketing strategies employing the use of influencers in 2015 (Kim et al., 2017).

influencers on social media usually have greater connection and rapport with their followers and thus are accepted as having higher levels of trustworthiness, credibility and knowledge than regular celebrity endorsers (Lim et al., 2017). Individuals have the option to choose to follow influencers online and as they share aspects of their life and interact with followers often, individuals perceive them to have better accessibility, be more believable, intimate and easier to relate with (Abidin, 2016). Social media Influencers are known to post very regularly to update their followers therefore, their endorsements can be integrated into updates seamlessly and is more likely to be viewed as electronic word of mouth (De Veirman et al., 2017). Electronic word of mouth or E- word of mouth has been tested in the hotel industry and found to be a strong predictor of online hotel booking for all ages (Confente & Vigolo, 2018). Babić Rosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, and Bijmolt (2016) reiterate the power of E word of mouth on consumer decisions and state that consumers trust each other more than advertisers.

The current research on social media influencers in general is relatively slim (Lim et al., 2017). However there still has been a few studies that have studied their influence and perceptions. Freberg et al. (2011) studied the public personality perceptions of social media influencers and found that they viewed as having a higher likelihood of being sought out for advice and reassurance when compared with CEO's as a spokesperson. Francalanci and Hussain (2016) researched how influential content spreads across a network and the role of influencers in the tourism domain. They concluded that the use of information spreaders or influencers can be used to increase reach. Lim et al. (2017) researched the effectiveness of social media influencers on consumer attitude and

purchase intention and found that they do have a positive impact on intention to purchase in consumers. De Veirman et al. (2017) found that influencers on Instagram that have a high number of followers are perceived to be more likeable as they are considered more popular and this also increases their status as perceived opinion leaders.

2.5 Travel

One of the largest industries in the world is the travel and tourism industry with over 1.1 billion travellers accounting for 29% of services exports worldwide and generating a staggering USD 1.7 trillion in revenue in 2018 (UNWTO, 2019). The world tourism organisation also expects the number of travellers to grow 3-4% in the coming year. This is no surprise as travel is recognised as an essential component of life in the modern developed world and research has shown that people feel happier, relaxed and healthier after taking a trip (C.-C. Chen & Petrick, 2016). While it is beneficial for individuals to travel, not every individual has the ability or motivation to travel as it would depend on factors such as health, financial ability, family life and political issues (Camilleri, 2018). For the large numbers of people that do travel, the industry is highly motivated to understand what influences people to travel to certain destinations and activities to partake in, to be able to effectively direct their marketing campaigns.

Individuals that would like to travel usually engage in some form of information search beforehand and in the current digital age they are turning to the internet that has an enormous amount of information available at their fingertips (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). It has already been identified that the independent travel segment of the market has been growing for several years and this is not surprising as access to information has become easier. Hyde and Lawson (2003) define independent travellers as tourists who have not booked travel packages with retailers but instead booked only air travel with a retailer or have simply forgone the retailer and have used the internet. Information search has been transformed by the internet and how information search is undertaken in the buying process as it can reduce uncertainty and perceived risk (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In the travel context individuals are able to go online and make purchases or search for information that they would usually rely on travel agencies for such as making ticket bookings or room reservations (Morrisonn, Jing, O'Leary, & Cai, 2001). According to Buhalis and Law (2008) a traveller that is well

informed generally has better interactions with the destination culture, is able to find products and services that they need and make use of promotions that are available.

Travellers have become more independent than ever and use a variety of tools when planning trips from reservations systems to online travel agencies, search engines, social networking sites and more (Buhalis, 1998; Buhalis & Law, 2008). Travellers in the digital age also spend time on comparing prices between accommodation and flight providers as they are able to easily do so and take advantage of better pricing without having to take additional time for multiple physical quotes (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The internet has allowed travellers to be in direct contact with suppliers and the contact has allowed them to add in the element of customisation to products which increases customer satisfaction.

The internet has already been established as an influence on traveller's behaviour but more recently a lot of the influence of the internet has been through social media. Due to social media travellers now have an interest and desire to interact with others in a range of experiences with travel and as a result they believe and rely on information from each other (Chung & Koo, 2015). Social media can be used in all stages of the decision making process for a traveller and they realise that there is a need for social media in tourism (Sigala, Christou, & Gretzel, 2012). It has been calculated that user generated content i.e. blogs and social media sites resulted in approximately US \$10 billion in online travel bookings and this number would be growing year on year as people travel more (Chung & Koo, 2015). According to Sigala et al. (2012) there is a greater consumption of travel information that has been published through blogs and word of mouth comments from socially connected individuals. Some of these socially connected individuals may be social media influencers that have a large following and be paid to post information and content in the travel domain.

2.6 Travel Influencers

Traditionally celebrities have been used as endorsers for destinations with the likes of Oprah Winfrey and Jackie Chan as high-profile endorsers but social media has created micro celebrities who through their high quality of relevant and engaging content have amassed a following due to which they are being used as endorsers as well (Gretzel, 2017; Xu & Pratt, 2018). The use of micro celebrities as influencers by travel marketers started before the popularity of social media with the use of travel bloggers when blogs were identified as important sources of information for travellers

(Lin & Huang, 2006). This has continued onto social media as people consume more social media applications than blogs. The use of Chinese social media influencer Yao Chen by Tourism New Zealand in 2011 and 2012 is an example of this. During which time her followers increased from 12 million to 58 million, a reach that could not be afforded by Tourism New Zealand for that target market through traditional media (Tourism New Zealand, 2012). This was hailed as a success as in the year to September 2012 China became the third highest source of visitors to New Zealand.

Travel influencers have the ability to reach targeted audiences and generate message amplification through their engaging content which marketers have recognised and started taking advantage of as this has the potential to generate a better return than traditional advertising (Gretzel, 2017). On the other hand, travel is also an industry influencers want to be involved with due to perks and collaborations with well-known brands that can enhance their own personal brand which would be why marketers face no shortage of influencers to use but the challenge becomes authenticity of the message when the audience knows the influencer is being compensated for the content generated (Gretzel, 2017).

Research of how social media influencers affect followers in tourism had been relatively overlooked till Magno and Cassia (2018) quantitatively researched the formation of attitudes and decisions. Through this they found that followers may adopt the travel suggestions provided but that depended on the perceptions of trustworthiness and quality of information provided. Xu and Pratt (2018) researched travel destinations that were endorsed by social media influencers in a Chinese consumer context. Using the self-congruity theory perspective, they found there is a significant positive impact on visit intention of the destinations endorsed when there is congruence between an influencers perceived image and the consumers ideal self-images.. Even though social media influencers significance in travel and tourism has been noted, there is still lack of research in the area, particularly in the persuasiveness of influencers messages and why (Gretzel, 2017).

2.7 Destination choice

The existing research on destination choice for traveller is split into two distinct sections based on the purpose of travel. The first section is travel for utilitarian purposes i.e. destinations for international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and the second is travel for hedonic or vacation reasons (Um & Crompton, 1990). This research focuses on destination choice for the purpose of a vacation. Researchers have defined that destination choice is a process where a destination is

selected from the available alternatives (Crompton, 1992; Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013). This process may also require hedonistic and emotional needs to be met as well as to minimize the potential for unnecessary risks, therefore making it a highly involving decision making process that goes through multiple stages (Crompton, 1992). The stages of this process involve eliminating competing destinations to make a choice that will best fit the needs of the decision maker (Crompton, 1992). Due to the increasing number of tourists worldwide and therefore the amount of money spent on tourism, it becomes within the interests of destinations to influence this process and attract a greater number of tourists to grow their revenues and profitability (Tham et al., 2013; UNWTO, 2019).

External factors help to formulate the image of a destination in the mind of a potential traveller (Tham et al., 2013; Um & Crompton, 1990). Um and Crompton (1990) define external factors as the combination of social interactions and marketing communications that a person may be exposed to, these interactions or stimuli are then further classified into significative, social, or symbolic. Significative stimuli are created from the physical exposure to the destination, symbolic stimuli are created from the exposure to marketing communications in the media, and social stimuli is a result of previously physical and now digital interactions with other people (Chi, 2011; Um & Crompton, 1990). The source of information with the highest level of influence on destination choice was reported to be interpersonal relationships in 1977 and even recent studies show that this has not changed as a 2012 study reiterated that the information from friends and family was the most important in making a decision on a travel destination (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Walter & Tong, 1977).

External information plays a part in influencing and creating the internally held destination image for a traveller. Destination image is defined as the individual perceptions of a destination (Tham et al., 2013). Over time the destination image develops, and research suggests a destination with a more positive image is most likely to be the destination chosen (Gartner, 1994). As the destination image develops and becomes more familiar to a potential traveller it reduces the feelings of uncertainty towards the destination and therefore reducing the risk of potentially making the wrong decision (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Tham et al. (2013) state that this may be due to the personal needs and motivations of a traveller being aligned with the destination as a result of developing a positive destination image, therefore having a higher likelihood that the destination may be considered as a choice. External influences such as media and word of mouth aid in the development of destination image with word of mouth, known in marketing literature to be a highly credible and therefore

highly influential source of information in multiple product and service categories (Croy, 2010; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Gartner, 1994; Patzer, 1983). In the context of tourism, a study by Murphy, Mascardo, and Benckendorff (2007) found that 78% of individuals used word of mouth information from friends, family and other travellers for planning a trip.

Intention can be defined as the likelihood to act (Gómez et al., 2018). Intention is a driver of behaviour and therefore, using intention as a measurement is an appropriate method for predicting behaviour and in the context of this study, destination choice (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977; Gómez et al., 2018). In the context of tourism and destination choice, multiple studies have addressed intention to visit various destinations with influencing variables including culture, sporting events and blogs (Chalip, Green, & Hill, 2003; Y.-C. Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014; Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007). However, the use of social media influencers in tourism and destination choice has not been widely researched (Magno & Cassia, 2018).

2.8 Conclusion

Tourism is an integral part of the economy for many destinations and a factor for growth and prosperity. Due to this, the destinations are actively trying to reach and entice potential new travellers through new sources such as social media influencers. An example of this is the aforementioned partnership between tourism New Zealand and Chinese social media influencer Yao Chen (Tourism New Zealand, 2012). This literature review has covered social media influencers and their impact on perceptions however, it has noted that there are still gaps in the social media influencer literature (Lim et al., 2017). The gap that this research will contribute to is in the tourism context and in particular vacation destination choice where it has been identified that research does not sufficiently cover persuasiveness of influencer's messages and destination choice (Gretzel, 2017; Magno & Cassia, 2018). The next chapter will outline the design of the study conducted.

2.9 Hypotheses

Based on the above literature review, the study proposes the following four hypotheses.

H1: Use of an influencer (versus non influencer) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H2: Use of attractive graphics (versus unattractive graphics) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H3: Use of an influencer (versus non-influencer) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

H4: Use of attractive graphics (versus non-attractive graphics) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

Chapter Three – Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to identify whether the use of an Instagram travel influencer has an effect on destination choice. There is a current gap in the destination choice literature as the effect of influencers has not been thoroughly researched (Magno & Cassia, 2018). This research proposes to contribute to this body of literature through a quantitative approach using a 2x2 between subjects experiment with the use of an Influencer and manipulation of image quality to measure the effects on persuasiveness of the message and intention to visit the destination. The following sections will outline how this experiment was conducted including information on the sampling procedure (3.2), the variables and measures used (3.3), the procedure of the study (3.4), how the data is analysed (3.5) and ethical considerations (3.6).

3.2 Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 125 New Zealand subjects who were invited to participate from Dynata, an online research panel company. An online invitation was sent out on the 1st of September 2020 to individuals between the ages of 18 and 30, who were based in New Zealand and who had travelled overseas in the past 24 months. These criteria were chosen as individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 are the age group that is the most prevalent user group for Instagram (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). The study also required the subjects to have also travelled overseas in the past 24 months as it would be these individuals who are familiar with the process of travelling and are also potential future travellers. Originally the study required the participants to have travelled within the past 12 months however, the data was collected during Covid-19 times that have considerably limited when participants could have travelled last. To recruit participants that fit these criteria, Dynata ran a quick poll of their panel members first before the study was launched. On top of this, two screening questions were included to automatically disqualify participants that did not fit the criteria. The questions are:

Q1 Have you travelled overseas in the last 24 months?

Q2 Which of the following social media do you use frequently?

3.3 Measures

The independent variables in this study are the use of either an influencer versus a non-influencer and image quality (high versus low). The influencer chosen for this study is Chris Burkard, an Instagram influencer in the travel industry with over 3 million followers. The non-influencer for this study was a non-celebrity male of similar age to Chris Burkard.

The destination chosen for this study is Canberra, Australia. Canberra is the capital city of Australia; however, it is not known for its tourist attractions. This city was chosen above more attractive destinations such as Surfers Paradise or Byron Bay as the attractiveness and previous knowledge of the destination may affect the perceptions of subjects and may not give accurate data. Therefore, the use of Canberra would show whether the Influencer had an effect or not.

The high-quality image selected for the study is a clear, aesthetically pleasing and professionally edited image of a Canberra landmark while the low-quality image selected is blurry, grainy image of another Canberra landmark. The images are kept constant among the Influencer and non-Influencer conditions. The images used in the study are shown in Figures 1 and 2:

Figure-1 High quality (attractive) image used in the study

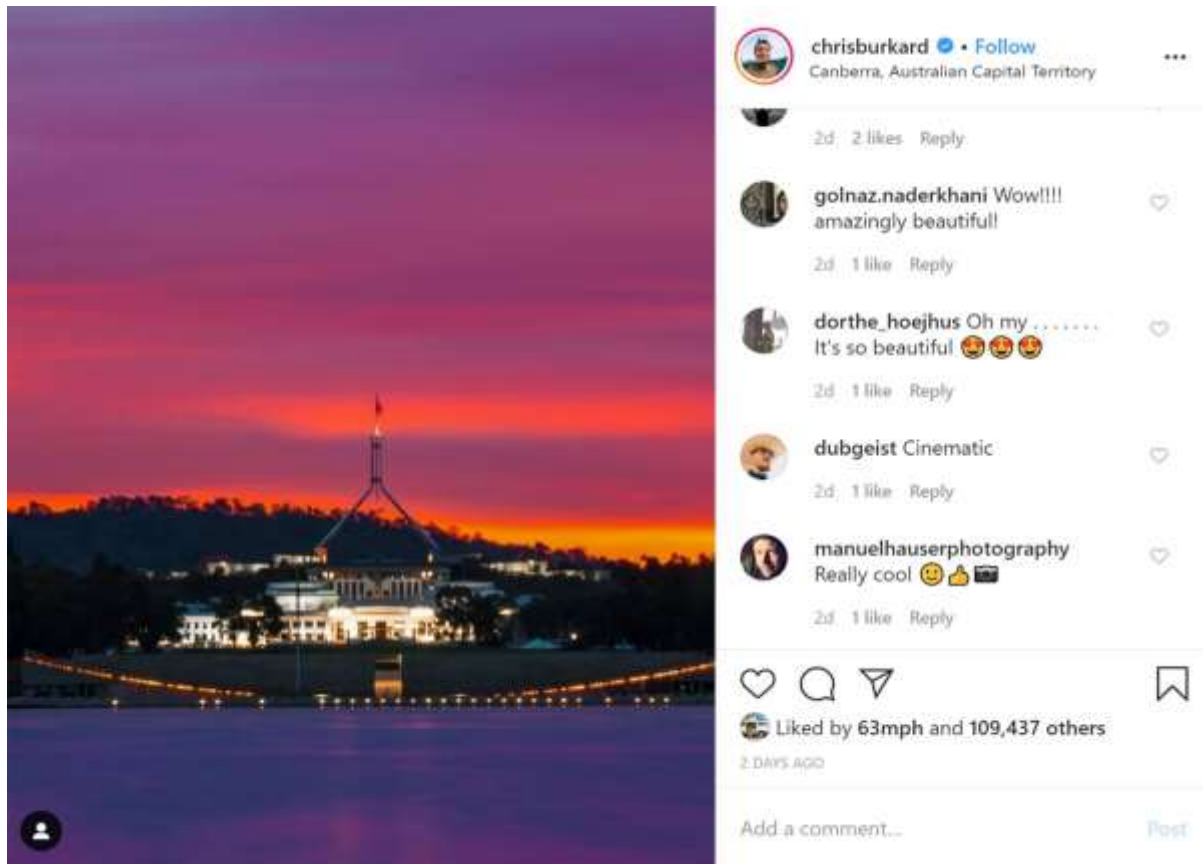


Figure- 2 Low quality (Unattractive) image used in the study



The first dependent variable of this study is *persuasiveness of the ad*. This is measured using a scale which has been adapted from Pham and Avnet (2004) and Haws et al. (2010). This is a two-item seven-point scale with bipolar statements “influence my opinion - doesn’t influence my opinion”, “changed my attitude – didn’t change my attitude”. This scale is used to measure the degree of likelihood that an advertisement, in this case an Instagram post, results in changes in attitudes (Bruner, 2015). The reported Cronbach’s alpha of this scale in previous studies are .80 Pham and Avnet (2004) and .85 Haws et al. (2010). The other dependent variable of this study is Intention to visit. This is measured using a scale adapted from Alvarez and Campo (2014). This is a seven-point three-item scale based on the level of agreement of statements “choose to visit”, “intend to visit” and “prefer to visit”. Alvarez and Campo (2014) reported the Cronbach’s alpha for this scale to be .91.

Table 1 – Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Source	Items	Scale
Persuasiveness of the ad	Pham & Avnet, 2004 Haws et al., 2010	The post Influenced my opinion about Canberra The post changed my attitude toward Canberra Cronbach's alpha = .905	1= doesn't influence my opinion 7= Influences my opinion 1= Didn't change my attitude 7= Changed my attitude
Intention to visit	Alvarez & Campo 2014	I intend to visit Canberra in the near future I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations Cronbach's alpha = .917	1= strongly disagree 7 = strongly agree

3.4 Procedure

Subjects who had been selected were directed to the online experiment from Dynata's online invitation. They first saw an information sheet that introduced the study and contact information of the researcher and AUT ethics committee should they have had any concerns. The subjects also consented to the study by agreeing at the bottom of the page. They then progressed to the screening questions. Once they had passed this stage, they were shown one of the four experimental conditions which had been generated at random and the first section of the condition consisted of a short introduction on either the influencer or non-influencer. They were then exposed to an Instagram post consisting of either the high quality or low-quality image. After being exposed to the post the subjects had been asked to answer questions regarding the influence of the post and their willingness to travel to the destination in the future using the scales mentioned. Please refer to a copy of the questionnaire attached in the appendix.

3.5 Analysis

As a first step to the analysis, the spread of data for each variable was examined by constructing a histogram for each variable. The first composite variable of persuasiveness was created as the mean of the opinion and attitude items. The second composite variable of intention was created as the mean of the intend, choose, and prefer items. Histograms were also constructed for the two composite variables. The next step was to analyse each dependent variable using two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine for direct and interaction effects. This was also done for the composite variables. All of the data was analysed using software package SPSS 26.0.

3.6 Ethics

This study was granted ethics approval by the AUT Ethics Committee after review of the study parameters and questions on the 1st of April 2020 with approval number 20/97. A copy of the approval letter is attached in the appendix.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the design of the 2x2 experimental study. The chapter has detailed the sample of the study, the variables and measures used, the procedure of the study, how the data was analysed, and ethics approval. The next chapter will present the finding of the study.

CHAPTER 4 – Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main results of study. The analysis considers the impact of the experimental manipulations on 5 dependent variables which are:

- Opinion about Canberra
- Attitude towards Canberra
- Intend to visit (Canberra)
- Choose Canberra as destination
- Prefer to visit (Canberra)

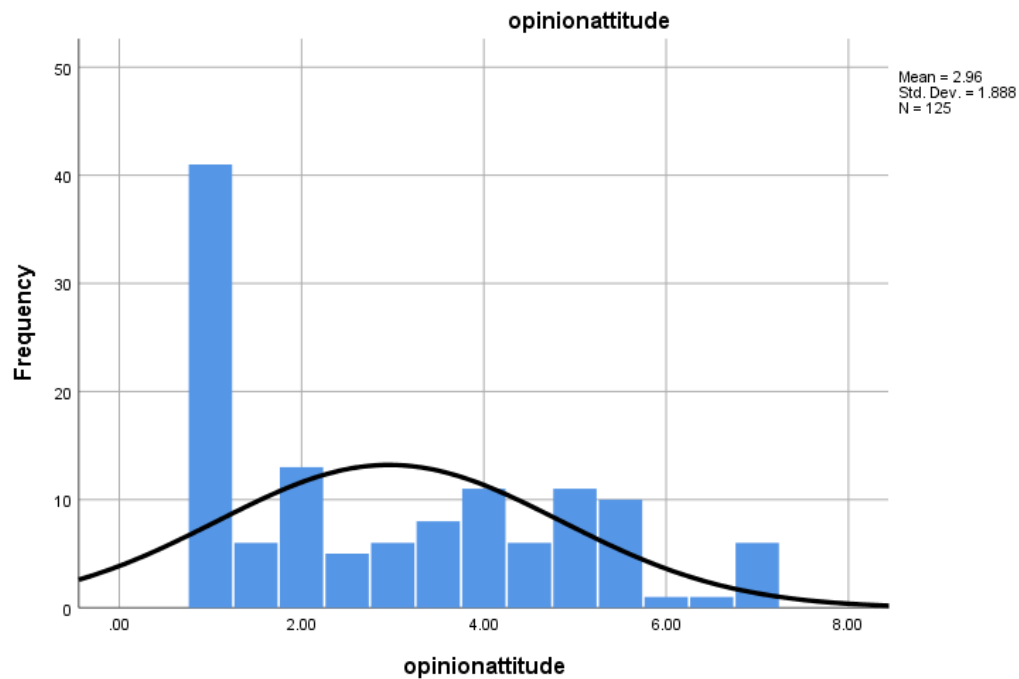
In addition, the impact of the experimental manipulations on 2 composite variables are also considered:

- Persuasiveness
- Intention

The data has been analysed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the results are reported below.

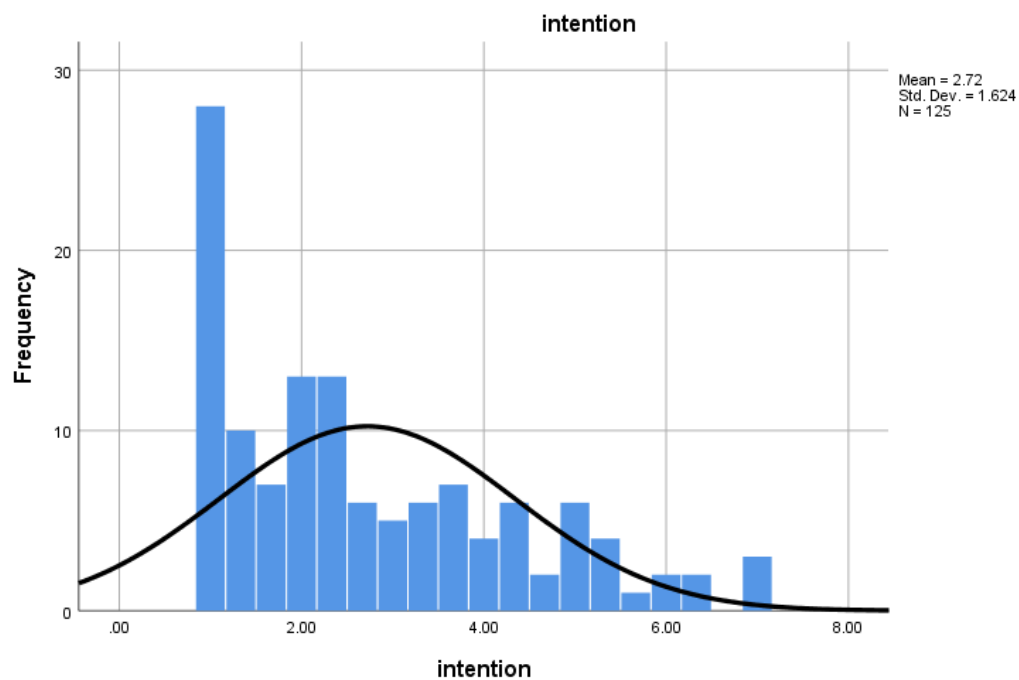
4.2 Profile Of The Dependent Variables

Figure 3 – Persuasiveness (composite variable)



For the composite variable persuasiveness, the histogram (Figure 8) has a clear peak at 1. The rest of the data is spread across the graph.

Figure 4 – Intention (composite variable)



For the composite variable Intention (Figure 9), the histogram is concentrated towards 1. The rest of the data is spread across the graph.

4.3 Results Of ANOVA

Table 2 - Results of ANOVA

Variable	Effect	Signif.		
Opinion about Canberra	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 5.52, p = .02$	$M_{\text{influencer}} = 3.38$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}} = 2.59$
	Quality	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 5.81, p = .01$	$M_{\text{high quality}} = 3.14$ $M_{\text{low quality}} = 2.59$
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = 1.17, p = .28$	-
Attitude towards Canberra	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 5.72, p = .01$	$M_{\text{influencer}} = 3.36$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}} = 2.55$
	Quality	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 4.31, p = .04$	$M_{\text{high quality}} = 3.32$ $M_{\text{low quality}} = 2.61$
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = .77, p = .38$	-
Intend to visit Canberra	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 5.72, p = .01$	$M_{\text{influencer}} = 2.85$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}} = 2.27$
	Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = 3.15, p = .07$	-
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = 2.25, p = .13$	-
Choose Canberra As destination	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)} = 4.02, p = .04$	$M_{\text{influencer}} = 3.36$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}} = 2.55$
	Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = 3.15, p = .07$	-
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = .86, p = .35$	-
Prefer to visit Canberra	Influencer		$F_{(1,121)} = 1.06, p = .30$	-
	Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = .93, p = .33$	-
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)} = .02, p = .88$	-

Persuasiveness	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)}=6.20, p=.01$	$M_{\text{influencer}}=3.36$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}}=2.57$
	Quality	√	$F_{(1,121)}=5.55, p=.02$	$M_{\text{high quality}}=3.36$ $M_{\text{low quality}}=2.59$
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)}=1.06, p=.30$	-
<hr/>				
Intention	Influencer	√	$F_{(1,121)}=4.11, p=.04$	$M_{\text{influencer}}=3.01$ $M_{\text{non-influencer}}=2.44$
	Quality		$F_{(1,121)}=2.56, p=.11$	-
	Influencer x Quality		$F_{(1,121)}=.86, p=.35$	-

For Opinion about Canberra, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)}=5.520, p=.020$, with $M_{\text{influencer}}=3.38$ and $M_{\text{non-influencer}}=2.59$ (Table 2). There is also a significant main effect for quality $F_{(1,121)}=5.811, p=.017$, with $M_{\text{high quality}}=3.41$ and $M_{\text{low quality}}=2.59$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)}=1.174, p=.281$.

For Attitude towards Canberra, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)}=5.720, p=.018$, with $M_{\text{influencer}}=3.36$ and $M_{\text{non influencer}}=2.55$ (Table 2). There is also a significant main effect for quality $F_{(1,121)}=4.318, p=.040$, with $M_{\text{high quality}}=3.32$ and $M_{\text{low quality}}=2.61$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)}=.774, p=.381$.

For Intend to visit Canberra, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)}=6.703, p=.011$, with $M_{\text{influencer}}=3.33$ and $M_{\text{non influencer}}=2.53$ (Table 3). There is not a significant effect for quality $F_{(1,121)}=2.937, p=.089$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)}=2.259, p=.135$.

For choose Canberra as destination, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)}=4.029, p=.047$, with $M_{\text{influencer}}=2.85$ and $M_{\text{non influencer}}=2.27$ (Table 2). There is not a significant effect for quality $F_{(1,121)}=3.157, p=.078$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)}=.863, p=.355$.

For Prefer to visit Canberra, the ANOVA shows there is not a significant effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)}=1.064, p=.304$. There is also not a significant effect for quality $F_{(1,121)}=.930, p=.337$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)}=.022, p=.883$.

For the composite variable Persuasiveness, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)} = 6.207$, $p = .014$, with $M_{\text{influencer}} = 3.3689$ and $M_{\text{non influencer}} = 2.5703$ (Table 2). There is also a significant main effect for quality $F_{(1,121)} = 5.556$, $p = .020$, with $M_{\text{high quality}} = 3.3644$ and $M_{\text{low quality}} = 2.5985$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)} = 1.063$, $p = .305$

For the composite variable Intention, the ANOVA shows a significant main effect for influencer $F_{(1,121)} = 4.111$, $p = .045$, with $M_{\text{influencer}} = 3.0109$ and $M_{\text{non influencer}} = 2.4427$ (Table 2). There is not a significant effect for quality $F_{(1,121)} = 2.561$, $p = .112$. The interaction effect, influencer x quality, is not significant $F_{(1,121)} = .867$, $p = .354$

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter reported on the analysis of the seven variables through SPSS. The results show that the effects of an influencer are significant in six out of seven variables while image quality is only significant in three out of seven variables as displayed in table 2. The interaction effect of influencer and quality is not significant in any of the seven variables.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research aimed to investigate whether the use of an Instagram travel influencer to advertise a destination has an impact on an individual's vacation destination choice. There has been an increasing use of Instagram Influencers in the travel industry but a lack of literature on their influence on destination choice (Magno & Cassia, 2018). This chapter will consider the research findings in light of the research aim and hypotheses, the theoretical implications of the research findings, the managerial implications, the limitations of the research and explore potential areas for further research on this subject.

5.2 Restatement of research aim and hypotheses

The aim of this research was to evaluate whether the use of an Instagram influencer has an impact on an individual's intention to visit a destination. This was addressed by using a quantitative approach in the form of an experiment with multiple conditions. The study found that in six out of seven variables, the stimuli with the influencer conditions had a significant effect on responses. The use of an Influencer is shown to be significant in the persuasiveness of a destination advertisement, therefore supporting the first hypothesis. This shows that when influencers advertise or post about a destination on Instagram, they are more persuasive than a regular Instagram user in their message. This may be due to the perception of influencers as opinion leaders and being a source of trustworthy information (Lim et al., 2017; Xu & Pratt, 2018).

The four hypotheses proposed for this study are:

H1: Use of an influencer (versus non influencer) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H2: Use of attractive graphics (versus unattractive graphics) increases persuasiveness of an Instagram travel post

H3: Use of an influencer (versus non-influencer) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

H4: Use of attractive graphics (versus non-attractive graphics) in an Instagram travel post increases intention to visit a destination

The hypotheses were tested using two- way ANOVA. The use of an Influencer was found to have a significant effect on persuasiveness of the advertisement ($p=.014$), therefore resulting in H1 being supported.

The use of attractive or high-quality images/ graphics was found to have a significant effect on how persuasive the destination advertisement on Instagram is. This finding supports the acceptance of H2. This finding shows that Instagram users prefer attractive images in posts/ advertisements over unattractive images. This is possibly because Instagram as a platform is based on images and therefore any sort of advertisement must conform to the norms or standards of the platform to be persuasive or accepted, but this does not translate to any behavioral intentions (Teo et al., 2019).

The third hypothesis H3 has been accepted as the use of an influencer has a significant effect on intention to visit a destination. This shows that Instagram users have a higher likelihood of wanting to visit a destination that an influencer has posted about or advertised as opposed to a destination that a regular user has advertised even if the destination and images are the exact same. This again, may be because of the perception of Instagram influencers being trustworthy sources of information.

It is interesting to note that the use of attractive or high quality images has been found to have no significant effect on intention to visit a destination therefore, rejecting the fourth hypothesis H4.

The interaction effect of Influencer and quality did not have significant effects on persuasiveness of the advertisement nor intention to visit the destination.

The research aim of the study can be answered to say that Instagram influencers do have a significant effect on an individual's intentions to visit a destination. This is regardless of whether their Instagram post image is attractive or not as the study shows that attractive or high-quality images do not have a significant effect on intention to visit. This means that influencers themselves have an immediate effect on consumers information processing and perceptions of destinations.

This may be because Instagram influencers are not only opinion leaders or experts in their fields but also accessible and easy to relate to as they interact with followers often, thus creating a perceived online relationship that makes it more likely for people to act on recommendations given out by influencers (Abidin, 2016; De Veirman et al., 2017; Magno & Cassia, 2018).

5.3 Theoretical implications

This study has contributed to destination choice literature where there was a lack of research on the use of social media influencers. Previous studies have not compared the effects of an Instagram influencer versus a non-influencer on persuasiveness and intention to visit when advertising the same destination. Previous literature in this stream had given the impression that influencers and non-influencers could have the same effect on persuasiveness and intention to visit as Murphy et al. (2007) reported that 78% of individuals used word of mouth information from friends, family members and other travelers for travel decision making. Jacobsen and Munar (2012) confirmed this and added that these sources were the most important in choice of destination. In contrast, this study has found that Influencers have a more significant effect on persuasiveness and intention to visit. This may be due to the fact that, over time, Influencers have become normalized and accepted as opinion leaders and experts (Lim et al., 2017).

These findings have the most implications on destination choice literature. Multiple researchers agree that destination choice is a multi-stage process (Crompton, 1992; Tham et al., 2013). Part of this process is the consideration of external information provided through marketing communications and word of mouth social interactions. The findings add another perspective to this process where the use of influencers becomes an addition to external stimuli and bridges the gap between marketing communications and word of mouth interactions. This also contributes to destination image theory as external information including word of mouth helps to formulate a destination image and the use of Instagram influencers adds another dimension in the creation of a destination image (Tham et al., 2013).

The findings of this research are in line with findings from Influencer research in other areas (simple product advertising) that have found that the use of social media Influencers have a positive effect on purchase intention (Lim et al., 2017). This shows that the use of Influencer marketing potentially

has an effect on both simple product decision making and more complex i.e. destination decision making.

5.4 Managerial implications

This study shows that Instagram travel influencers have an effect on intentions to visit a destination. This information is useful for managers to make decisions when thinking about the marketing of any destination. These findings may be particularly useful for managers aiming to increase the marketability or improve on the perceived image of a destination. This is shown in the study as Canberra as a destination is not widely known for its tourist appeal as other Australian destinations such as Sydney, or Surfers Paradise. The use of an Influencer such as Chris Burkard for destination marketing can lead to very quick awareness of new destinations and also help to alleviate any feelings of uncertainty as they use multiple Instagram tools to showcase destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

The findings of the study reveal that it would be beneficial to target younger consumers (aged under 30) using influencer marketing rather than relying on word of mouth referrals. This is because they are the largest user group, and most are familiar with Influencers and their roles on the platform. Another finding is that good quality or attractive images have an effect on persuasiveness of destination posts. This means that managers should demand high quality images to be used in their influencers posts to make it highly effective and have the highest possible return on investment for their strategy.

5.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

This research has multiple possible limitations. The first limitation is that the respondents were all New Zealand based and recruited from an online panel company. Individuals from other locations and of other cultures may possibly have differing opinions and this is a possible area of future research as travel is not only limited to New Zealanders. The second limitation is that all respondents was aged between 18 and 30. While previous research has identified that these individuals are the most prevalent users of Instagram, it ignores people above the age of 30 who are users of Instagram and also travelers. This is another potential area of future research as there is a large market of travelers who are aged above 30 (NZ, 2019). Another limitation of this study is familiarity with both

the Influencer used and the destination. While Chris Burkard has over 3 million followers on Instagram, making him one of the most popular travel influencers in the world, the subjects may not have recognized his authority on the subject. Potentially research in the future could address this by using actual followers of both influencer and non-influencer to get a more accurate understanding of the effects. The lack of pre-testing of the experimental stimuli is a limitation. Due to the timeframe and budget constraints of this research pre-testing was not able to be conducted. In the future a pre-test should be done to improve questionnaire measurement and data quality (Babonea & Voicu, 2011). There are also potential confounds from the experimental stimuli that may have occurred which are familiarity with the destination Canberra and familiarity with the influencer Chris Burkard. Familiarity with either may have positive or negative prior associations that could possibly influence questionnaire responses. A final limitation of this study is that the data collected was in the time of the Covid-19 virus where international travel has been virtually suspended potentially affecting the responses.

While a few potential research ideas have been mentioned, they would not advance literature as much as a qualitative approach to find out why influencers have an effect on destination choice and whether they are regarded more important than recommendations from friends and family. This question of why has not yet been addressed.

5.6 Conclusion of the dissertation

This research aimed to quantitatively analyze the effects of an Instagram influencer on an individual's destination choice. More specifically, the research conducted investigated whether an Instagram influencer when compared to a regular Instagram user, would affect the persuasiveness of the post and intention to travel to the promoted destination. The inspiration for this study resulted from the growing number of Instagram travel influencers and the large amount of money spent by businesses to use them as part of their marketing strategies. Therefore, an analysis of whether the money spent on them is justified was needed. The results have shown that Influencers do have a positive impact on persuasiveness of Instagram destination advertising and intention to visit a destination. However, further research into why influencers have an impact on destination choice would help to create more effective destination campaigns and better return on investments for destination marketing managers.

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Appendices

AUTEC Ethics Approval



AUT
TE Kōwhiri Kōwhiri
o Te Māori Kōwhiri

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
5-85, Private Bag 92020, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +61 9 931 9998 ext. 8016
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/research/ethics

1 April 2020

Ken Hyde
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Ken

Re Ethics Application: 20/97 The effect of Instagram influencers on vacation destination choice

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 1 April 2023.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please ensure that data will be downloaded and stored on an external hard drive and kept securely in the supervisor's office.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

For: mark.shah@aut.ac.nz

Copy of Questionnaire

Introduction

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
15/02/2020

Project Title

The effect of Instagram influencers on vacation destination choice

An Invitation

My name is Anish Shah. I am a Master of Business (Marketing) Student at Auckland University of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in this experiment to share your thoughts regarding Instagram influencers.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether travel specialist Instagram influencers have an impact on destination choice. This research will help me in my completion of my Master of Business (Marketing) qualification. Additionally, the findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are eligible to take part in this survey as a member of an opted-in consumer research panel service.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You can consent to the research by completing the survey after you accept the online invitation and carefully reading and understanding this information sheet. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). You are able to withdraw from the study at any time before completing the survey and this will not be disadvantaged in any way.

What will happen in this research?

You will take 5 minutes to undertake an online survey regarding Instagram influencers.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You will not experience any discomfort and risks by participation in this study. You can choose to stop participating in this survey at any time you would like.

What are the benefits?

You are contributing to gain insights about impact of travel Influencers on destination choice. Also, your contribution in this research will help the researcher to complete a Master of

Business qualification.

How will my privacy be protected?

No individual names or contact details will be recorded. All this information will be analysed and reported at an aggregate level that does not identify the individual responses of participants.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

About 5 minutes will be required to complete this survey.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have one week to consider this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You may email the researcher (Anish Shah) for any feedback or a summary of the research findings. (Researcher's email anish.shah@aut.ac.nz)

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this research should be notified in the first instance to the research Supervisor, Assoc Prof. Ken Hyde, Ken.Hyde@aut.ac.nz, (64) 9 921 9999 ext 5605.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Manager of AUTECH, Dr Carina Meares, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (64) 9 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Anish Shah email: anish.shah@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Assoc.Prof. Ken Hyde, ken.hyde@aut.ac.nz, (64) 9 921 9999 ext 5605

☐ Agree

Screening

Have you travelled overseas in the last 24 months?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Which of the following social media do you use frequently? (Select all that apply)

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ Twitter

☐ Snapchat

☐ TikTok

☐ Other

Influencer HQ

Chris Burkard is a full-time travel photographer from California, USA.
Please view his Instagram post and answer the questions as follows



Please tell us how strongly you identify with the following statements using the scaled responses, below:

The post influenced my opinion about Canberra (1 = doesn't influence my opinion; 7 = influences my opinion)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The post changed my attitude toward Canberra (1 = didn't change my attitude; 7 = changed my attitude)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I intend to visit Canberra in the near future (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Influencer LQ

Chris Burkard is a full-time travel photographer from California, USA.
Please view his Instagram post and answer the questions as follows





Please tell us how strongly you identify with the following statements using the scaled responses, below:

The post changed my attitude toward Canberra (1 = didn't change my attitude; 7 = changed my attitude)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The post influenced my opinion about Canberra (1 = doesn't influence my opinion; 7 = influences my opinion)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I intend to visit Canberra in the near future (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Non influencer HQ

This is Vishal Pandey. He is a builder from Canberra, Australia.
Please view his Instagram post and answer the questions as follows





Please tell us how strongly you identify with the following statements using the scaled responses, below:

The post influenced my opinion about Canberra (1 = doesn't influence my opinion; 7 = influences my opinion)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The post changed my attitude toward Canberra (1 = didn't change my attitude; 7 = changed my attitude)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I intend to visit Canberra in the near future (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



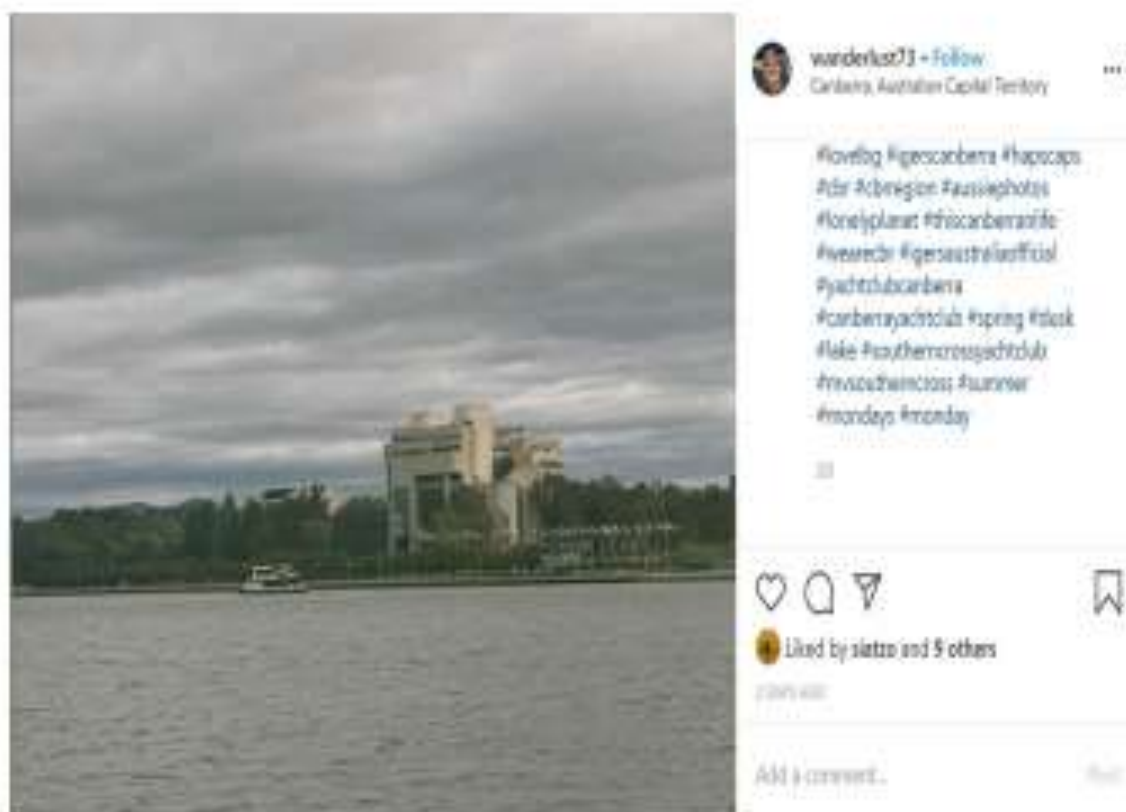
I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)



non influencer

This is Vishal Pandey. He is a builder from Canberra, Australia.
Please view his Instagram post and answer the questions as follows





Please tell us how strongly you identify with the following statements using the scaled responses, below:

The post influenced my opinion about Canberra (1 = doesn't influence my opinion; 7 = influences my opinion)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The post changed my attitude toward Canberra (1 = didn't change my attitude; 7 = changed my attitude)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I intend to visit Canberra in the near future (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations. (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

Demographics

Please select your gender

- ☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Other

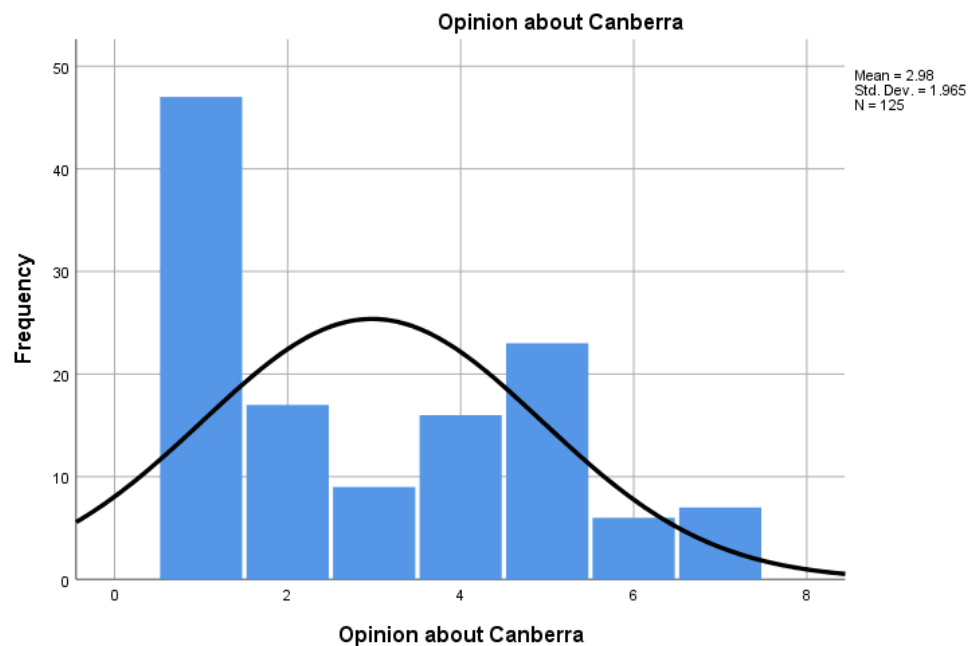
Please indicate your age

- ☐ 18-21
☐ 22-25
☐ 26-30

Powered by Qualtrics

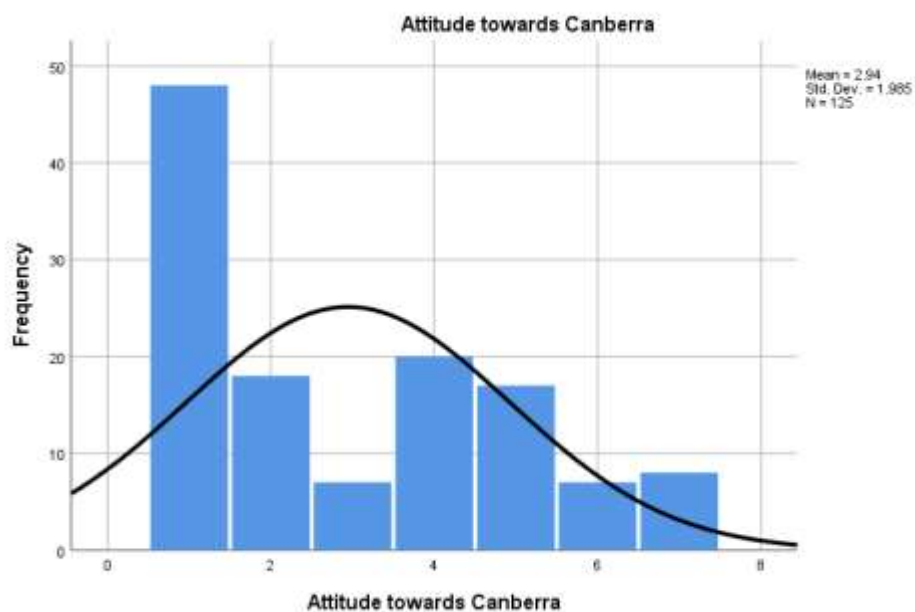
Profile of Rating Scale Items Making up Composite Dependent Variables

Figure 5 – Opinion about Canberra



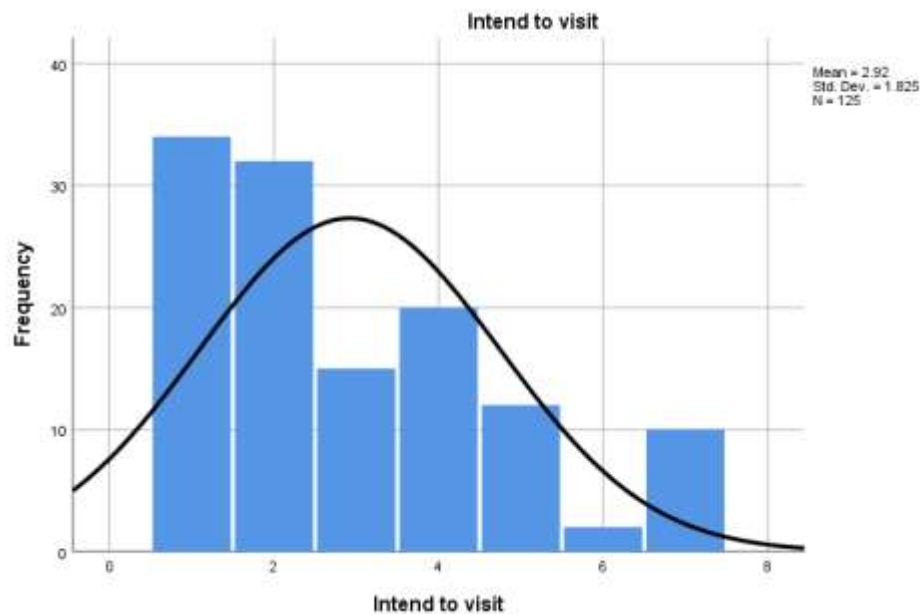
For Opinion about Canberra, Figure 3 displays a histogram that is bimodal with one peak at 1 and another smaller peak at 5 suggesting that there are two groups of subjects, each of whom has responded differently to this item due to one or other experimental condition.

Figure 6 – Attitude towards Canberra



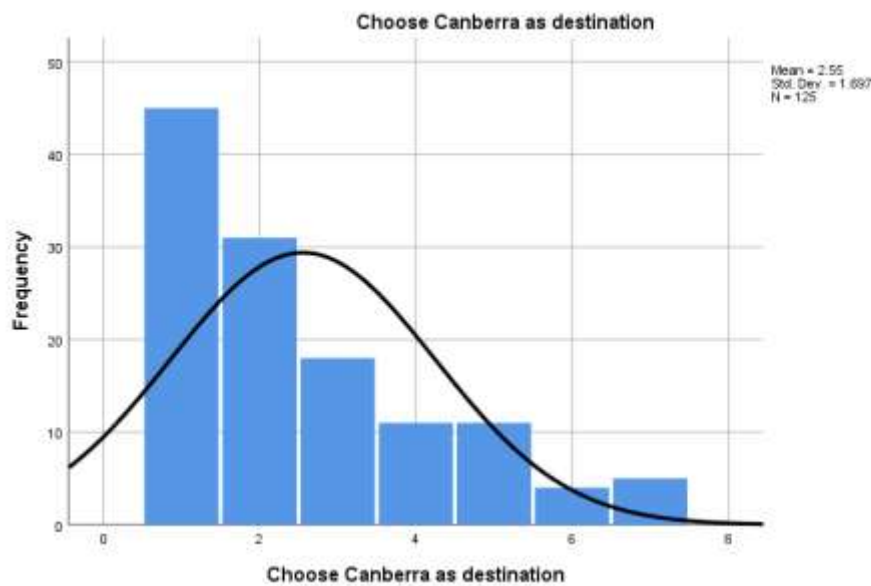
For Attitude about Canberra, the histogram (Figure 4) is bimodal with one peak at 1 and another smaller peak at 4 suggesting that there are two groups of subjects, each of whom has responded differently to this item due to one or other experimental conditions.

Figure 7 – Intend to visit



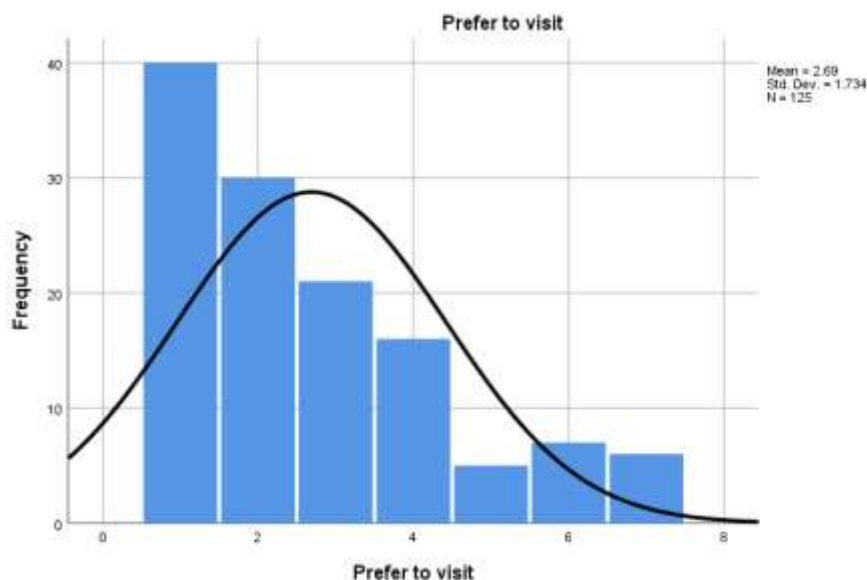
For Intend to visit, the histogram (Figure 5) has a concentration of data towards 0. It is also bimodal with one peak at 1 and another smaller peak at 4 suggesting that there are two groups of subjects, each of whom has responded differently to this item due to one or other experimental conditions.

Figure 8 – Choose Canberra as destination



For choose Canberra as destination, the histogram (Figure 6) is concentrated near the mode of 1. The rest of the data is spread out across the graph. Suggesting that the majority of subjects are unlikely to choose Canberra as a destination.

Figure 9 – Prefer to visit



For Prefer to visit (Figure 7), the histogram is concentrated near the mode of 1. The rest of the data is spread out across the graph, suggesting that the majority of subjects would not prefer to visit Canberra.