

From Scrolling to Social Capital: How Followers' Behavioral Engagement Shapes Their Commitment to Travel Vloggers

Journal of Travel Research

1–23

© The Author(s) 2026



Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
 DOI: 10.1177/00472875261434211
journals.sagepub.com/home/jtr



Fereshte Rasty¹ , Linda D. Hollebeek^{2,3,4,5,6,7},
 Weng Marc Lim^{2,8,9,10,11} , and Oliver Parts⁴

Abstract

Despite the growth of travel vloggers, little is known about how they cultivate sustained follower relationships. Grounded in social capital theory, this article examines how followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers' content contributes to vloggers' social capital (trust, social interaction ties, and shared values) and followers' vlogger commitment. Data from 527 travel vlogger followers were analyzed using consistent partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLSc-SEM). We find that followers' behavioral engagement enhances social capital, boosting followers' vlogger commitment. Moreover, homophily (i.e., followers' perceived similarity to the vlogger) amplifies the effect of behavioral engagement on their trust in and shared values with the vlogger. Conversely, heterophily (i.e., followers' admiration of vloggers who have traits they lack and idealize or desire) only strengthens the effect of followers' behavioral engagement on trust, indicating that followers' aspirational dissimilarity from travel vloggers can likewise bolster trust. Consequently, both relatability and aspiration reinforce travel vloggers' influence albeit through distinct psychological routes.

Keywords

travel vloggers, behavioral engagement, commitment, social capital, homophily, heterophily

Introduction

Travel vloggers are increasingly shaping the destination choices of their followers, as their perceived attractiveness, expertise, and/or trustworthiness position them as influential informational sources (Bastrygina et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025). Unlike vlogging in other contexts, travel vlogging centers on immersive storytelling about destinations, with vloggers acting simultaneously as content developers and destination representatives.

Through showcasing destinations, experiences, and ideas, travel vloggers guide how audiences plan their travel (Bastrygina & Lim, 2023), which, in turn, facilitate the development of destination brands (Hernández-Méndez & Baute-Díaz, 2024). Such influencers, when perceived as authentic, tend to deepen their followers' engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2019; Lim et al., 2022), as travel vlogging involves complex, experiential, identity-expressive, memorable, and self-discovery-oriented content (Rather et al., 2024) that differentiates it from influencing in other domains. More specifically, travel vloggers often balance viewers' familiarity with specific destinations and the perceived novelty of discovering new places to shape how followers imagine and evaluate their future travel—an influence

that predominantly unfolds through followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers' content.

When followers like, comment on, share, or save travel vloggers' content, they are exposed to different travel options, allowing them to mentally simulate those experiences (Rasty & Filieri, 2024). These interactions may stimulate *parasocial relationships*, where followers feel they personally know specific travel vloggers (Weiger et al., 2025). Though prior literature has linked these to shifts in

¹Yazd University, Iran

²Sunway University, Selangor, Malaysia

³Vilnius University, Lithuania

⁴Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia

⁵Umeå University, Sweden

⁶University of Johannesburg, South Africa

⁷Jaipuria Institute of Management, Jaipur, India

⁸Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, India

⁹Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, Gyeonggi, Republic of Korea

¹⁰Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, VIC, Australia

¹¹Arizona State University, Tempe, USA

Corresponding Author:

Weng Marc Lim, Sunway Business School, Sunway University, Sunway City, Selangor 47500, Malaysia.
 Email: lim@wengmarc.com

individual preferences or intentions, understanding of the wider implications of these for followers' relationships with travel vloggers lags behind, exposing an important gap. This gap is potentially consequential because those experiencing stronger (vs. weaker) parasocial relationships may respond differently to travel vloggers' content, as the intensity of these relationships shapes perceptions, emotions, and behavioral responses to influencers (Farivar et al., 2026).

The tourism literature increasingly reports how influencers shape travelers' attitudes, engagement, and decision-making processes through content strategies and interaction formats (Nguyen et al., 2025; S. Roy & Attri, 2026; Sharma et al., 2025). For instance, prior studies show that influencer-generated content design, such as gamified messages (Kapoor et al., 2026), information format (Luo, Wang, & Liu, 2026), and storytelling in travel vlogs (Li et al., 2026), as well as influencer–destination fit (Luo, Chang, et al., 2026), can shape followers' engagement and destination-related responses, underscoring the importance of experiential cues, message framing and design, and influencer attributes in driving travelers' digital engagement. However, despite these advances, prior studies have predominantly focused on content features, message effectiveness, or relatively immediate attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, offering limited insight into the mechanisms through which engagement converts into enduring (vs. fleeting) relationships between travel influencers and their followers. The role of followers' behavioral engagement as a relational investment that builds relational resources—such as trust, social interaction ties, and shared values—and, in turn, sustains commitment remains underspecified, warranting a more theory-driven account of engagement as a social capital formation process.

Addressing this gap, we adopt *social capital theory* (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) to explore how followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers shapes three key social capital dimensions—their trust in, social interaction ties with, and shared values with the travel vlogger. We argue that social capital (i.e., “resources embedded in a social structure [that] are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions”; Lin, 1999, p. 35) emerges from repeated relational interactions. Given its focus on relational dynamics, the theory offers a compelling lens for understanding how followers' behavioral engagement fosters the predicted effects, in turn influencing followers' vlogger commitment (Bowden et al., 2018). Therefore, followers' engagement with travel vloggers is not merely transactional but comprises a core relational aspect, progressively building the social capital that sustains follower commitment.

Engagement is widely conceptualized as individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in their interactions with specific objects (e.g., travel vloggers; Hollebeek et al., 2019, 2023; Lim et al., 2022). While all three are important, behavioral engagement—through followers' activities including liking, commenting, sharing, and saving specific content—uniquely addresses followers' observable

actions, while cognitive and emotional engagement remain latent (Bastrygina & Lim, 2023; Bozkurt et al., 2025; Groeger et al., 2016). We thus focus on behavioral engagement as a key driver of social capital formation in the travel vlogging context.

Moreover, prior research has predominantly examined individual-level outcomes of engagement, including brand attitudes or purchase intentions (Clark et al., 2020), with fewer studies considering more systemic outcomes (Alexander et al., 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2018). Little is known about how travel vloggers' content may reshape relational dynamics in follower communities (e.g., by influencing peer perceptions and, in turn, community cohesion). This gap is particularly prevalent in travel vlogging, where the experiential, socially co-constructed nature of travel requires a more in-depth understanding of engagement as a relational process. Therefore, the relational outcomes of followers' engagement with travel vloggers' content remain underexplored, despite their key role in shaping destination decision-making.

Bridging this gap, this article considers how the effects of followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers' content may differ depending on followers' perceived alignment between themselves and the vlogger, thus proposing follower–influencer congruence as a key boundary condition. Drawing on *congruency theory* (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), we posit that followers' behavioral engagement is more likely to foster social capital under followers' perceived high (vs. low) alignment with the travel vlogger. This perceived fit may manifest as homophily, where followers perceive themselves to have shared values, beliefs, and/or lifestyles with the influencer, bolstering their trust in them (Jaiswal et al., 2024).

However, followers' perceived congruency with travel vloggers may also take a more aspirational form. Followers tend to engage with influencers whose traits and/or lifestyles they admire, which may differ from their own, reflecting *aspirational heterophily* (Deutschmann et al., 2018). While the homophily effect has received prior exploration (e.g., Bozkurt et al., 2021; Koay & Lim, 2025), understanding of aspirational heterophily lags behind, warranting further investigation. For example, travel vloggers like *Kara and Nate* or *The Bucket List Family*, who live a digital nomad lifestyle, may be viewed as interesting, aspirational, or congruent with the ideal self, leading individuals to follow these vloggers. We thus propose that perceived homophily and aspirational heterophily (hereafter referred to as *heterophily*) may not only co-exist with followers' behavioral engagement but may also strengthen it by evoking trust in travel vloggers embodying aspirational differences.

This article makes two main contributions to the influencer marketing and travel literature. First, we show that travel vloggers may act as digital tourism intermediaries shaping their followers' destination choices through more relational (vs. purely transactional) means. Drawing on

social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), we frame established social capital dimensions (trust, social interaction ties, and shared values) as key linking mechanisms between followers' behavioral engagement and their commitment to travel vloggers. These mechanisms allow travel vloggers to create enduring relationships that not only influence their followers' travel choices but also their loyalty to the travel vlogger.

The unique features of travel, particularly its experiential, identity-expressive, and often shared nature (Huang et al., 2017), render social capital theory suitable in this context. *Social capital* refers to the unique resources, experiences, and benefits that individuals receive from/through their social interactions and connections (e.g., information, support, or cooperation; Ellison et al., 2007). From a social capital perspective, travel vloggers' social interactions with their followers help them achieve their goals while also shaping followers' travel behavior (Li & Zhou, 2024), thus exerting a dual effect. Our analyses are expected to uncover valuable insight for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) seeking to build enduring influencer partnerships that extend beyond one-off promotions to support longer-term competitiveness. While prior research has focused on more attitudinal and transactional outcomes of influencer engagement (Joshi et al., 2025), this research extends social capital theory to explain the *relational* mechanisms underpinning travel influencer–follower dynamics.

Moreover, by applying congruency theory (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), we investigate how both homophily and heterophily may moderate the proposed effects. While some prior studies have examined both actual and ideal self-congruence (e.g., Jaiswal et al., 2024; Zogaj et al., 2021), these constructs are rarely conceptualized as relational mechanisms that jointly shape social capital in influencer–follower relationships. It is thus important to investigate homophily and heterophily simultaneously, as their co-occurrence reflects the dual forces of relatability and aspiration that often operate together. Specifically, homophily (followers' perceived similarity to a travel vlogger; McPherson et al., 2001) is expected to strengthen the impact of followers' engagement on their trust in, and ties and shared values with, the travel vlogger (e.g., by reinforcing their shared experience; Shan et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), whereas heterophily (followers' admiration of vloggers who possess traits that they lack themselves but which they idealize or desire; Escalas & Bettman, 2015; Jaiswal et al., 2024) is proposed to help them build ideal self-congruence (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970), generating a predicted *similar* (vs. opposing) effect for heterophily to that of homophily.

Unlike prior studies that have treated homophily and heterophily as static individual characteristics or purely as antecedents of brand-related outcomes (Jaiswal et al., 2024; Zogaj et al., 2021), we take a more relational view. Specifically, we suggest that both homophily and heterophily may shape the social capital inherent in travel vloggers' follower

relationships, with each serving as a relational catalyst through distinct psychological pathways. This observation reflects a “similarity–difference paradox,” where followers are drawn to vloggers who are simultaneously relatable (i.e., confirmation of who they are) and inspirational (i.e., who they could become). Therefore, while homophily affirms shared identity and mutual understanding, heterophily fosters admiration, credibility, and symbolic trust. We thus expect, from a social capital–congruence perspective, that followers' behavioral engagement would bolster their commitment to travel vloggers. In line with the typologies of theory development (Lim, 2026), our work is positioned as a theoretical extension of social capital theory and congruency theory to influencer–follower relationships in travel vlogging, with the similarity–difference paradox providing a paradoxical and noteworthy lens on how homophily and heterophily jointly generate social capital and, in turn, follower commitment.

Literature Review

Social Capital Theory

Given our focus on followers' engagement as a relational process, social capital theory provides the primary lens for explaining how engagement translates into durable influencer–follower relationships. Social capital, “the aggregate of actual or potential resources, which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248), encompasses the relational structures, shared norms, and trust-based exchanges that facilitate cooperation and value creation in and across social networks. In influencer marketing, social capital has been shown to influence how individuals perceive the influencer's credibility, form judgments, and engage in specific actions (Leung et al., 2022). Influencers who are able to build and sustain social capital with their audiences are typically perceived as more trustworthy, persuasive, and emotionally resonant, thereby not only raising their own influence but also that of the brands they endorse (Bastrygina et al., 2024).

Central to the development of social capital in influencer–follower (e.g., vlogger–audience) relationships is *behavioral engagement*, followers' investment of effort, energy, and time in their interactions with the influencer (Bozkurt et al., 2025; Hollebeek et al., 2014). These resource investments enable the exchange of perspectives, experiences, and meanings, fostering mutual recognition and value co-creation (Rather et al., 2022; S. K. Roy et al., 2024). Therefore, behavioral engagement not only implies followers' consumption of influencers' content but also their active participation in the influencer's narrative (Brodie et al., 2013), rendering it a key mechanism for the accumulation of social capital.

Social capital comprises three interrelated components: (i) *trust*, followers' perception of the influencer's (e.g., vlogger's) integrity and reliability, (ii) *social interaction ties*, the

strength, depth, and frequency of followers' exchanges with a particular vlogger (Bourdieu, 1986), and (iii) *shared values*, a follower's perceived alignment with the influencer's principles and beliefs. Here, shared values capture the normative alignment between influencers and their followers (e.g., shared beliefs, relational expectations; Chaney & Martin, 2017)—an alignment that is conceptually distinct from homophily and heterophily, which focus on perceived similarity (McPherson et al., 2001) and aspirational differences (Escalas & Bettman, 2015; Jaiswal et al., 2024), respectively, between followers and vloggers.

Overall, social capital theory provides a suitable lens to explore how followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers' content accumulates relational resources. The three components of social capital (trust, social interaction ties, and shared values) represent the relational infrastructure that, once established, can bolster followers' vlogger commitment, taking a more systemic perspective that extends beyond viewing engagement as followers' individual acts (Alexander et al., 2018). Correspondingly, we explore the mediating role of social capital in the effect of followers' behavioral engagement on their commitment to travel vloggers.

Congruency Theory

Where social capital theory explains how engagement generates relational resources (Bourdieu, 1986), congruency theory clarifies when these mechanisms are likely to be stronger or weaker (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965). Noteworthy, the congruence between influencers and their followers has been described as the perceived fit between these stakeholders (e.g., regarding their projected identity, lifestyle, aspirations, or values; Koay et al., 2023). Rooted in congruency theory (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), the concept of follower–influencer congruence holds that greater perceived alignment enhances followers' assessment of the influencer and deepens their relational bond. In travel vlogging, where lifestyle, identity, and self-concept significantly drive content appeal (Guan et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2025), perceived congruence thus emerges as a critical boundary condition that shapes how engagement translates into social capital.

This congruence can manifest through two complementary pathways: Homophily and heterophily. *Homophily* captures followers' tendency to associate with others they perceive as being similar to themselves in terms of their experiences, preferences, and values (McPherson et al., 2001). Such perceived similarity reinforces mutual understanding, trust, and shared values (Belanche et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022), suggesting its capacity to strengthen social capital. Conversely, *heterophily* refers to one's attraction to others who are perceived as being different to oneself (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970). Influencers may, for example, portray interesting lifestyles that their followers wish to mimic (i.e., aspirational differences; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

From an ideal-self congruence perspective, which focuses on followers' perceived congruence of the influencer with their ideal (vs. actual) self (Ekinci & Riley, 2003), such aspirational differences may foster admiration and raise followers' engagement with and commitment to influencers who represent a desired future self.

Importantly, while prior research has typically treated homophily and heterophily as mutually exclusive concepts (Hu et al., 2023; Shan et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), we argue that followers may *simultaneously* identify with travel vloggers' relatable aspects while also aspiring to their other desirable qualities. Therefore, influencers who manage to concurrently trigger perceived homophily *and* heterophily among their followers are likely to be particularly engaging, given this *dual* basis of attraction. This dual pathway implies that travel vloggers' perceived homophily and heterophily jointly moderate how behavioral engagement builds social capital, offering a more refined view of how mixed-cue congruence strategies sustain relationships in travel vlogging.

Theoretical Integration

Social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) explains *how* followers' behavioral engagement can accumulate relational resources that sustain influencer–follower relationships while congruency theory (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965) explains *when* this conversion is likely to be stronger or weaker. This pairing assigns each theory a distinct role, which strengthens explanatory clarity. More specifically, social capital theory specifies the mediating mechanism, namely that repeated engagement behaviors can foster trust, social interaction ties, and shared values that, in turn, raise follower commitment. Whereas, congruency theory specifies the boundary condition, namely that followers' perceived alignment with the vlogger shapes how engagement behaviors are interpreted and internalized, strengthening or weakening the formation of social capital through homophily and heterophily.

The integration of the two theories herein aligns with the *IMPACT* criteria for theory selection (Hollebeek et al., 2025). *Interestingness* is supported as the integration shifts engagement from being treated mainly as a content-response variable toward being treated as a relational investment that builds durable relational resources while also allowing the study to theorize a similarity–difference paradox in which relatability and aspiration can each support trust through different psychological routes. *Matching* is achieved through the theoretical co-infusion of engagement as a focal meso-level construct with social capital's core premise that relational resources arise through repeated interaction, alongside congruency theory's premise that perceived fit shapes evaluation and relational bonding. *Parsimony* is maintained through a clear division of labor between theories, with social capital theory explaining the mechanism and congruency theory explaining moderation, which limits redundancy

and avoids adding further lenses that would inflate the model without improving explanation. *Applicability* follows from the integration's actionable implication that vloggers and destination stakeholders can strengthen commitment not only by stimulating engagement, but also by shaping perceived congruence cues that make engagement more likely to translate into trust and value alignment. *Conceptual rigor* is strengthened through explicit differentiation between shared values as a social capital dimension and homophily and heterophily as perceived congruence cues, which reduces construct overlap and clarifies scope conditions. *Testability* is supported as the integrated logic yields directional and moderated predictions that can be empirically examined through the proposed model, including moderation of the engagement-to-social-capital links and the downstream effects on commitment.

Hypothesis Development

Behavioral Engagement

Building on the above theoretical foundations, we first consider followers' behavioral engagement as the starting point of social capital formation in travel vlogging. Followers' *behavioral engagement* refers to their effort, energy, and time spent on interacting with the travel vlogger (e.g., by liking, commenting on, tagging, or sharing specific content; Bastrygina & Lim, 2023; Hollebeek et al., 2014) and serves as the cornerstone of influencer–follower relationships (Weiger et al., 2025).

Engagement unlocks followers' access to content they perceive as relevant or inspiring and, in doing so, helps build trust in the influencer (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). These interactions are also conducive to *parasocial relationships*, where followers feel they know the influencer personally (Giertz et al., 2022; Rasty et al., 2023). For influencers, elevated follower engagement translates into extended reach and enhanced credibility (Weiger et al., 2025). For instance, comments, shares, and tags serve as social proof, signaling content value to new audiences (Rasty & Filieri, 2024) and generating potential network effects by influencing others' travel decision-making.

While prior research has linked behavioral engagement to outcomes including trust, behavioral intention, and loyalty (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), the effect of these public displays of engagement on the development of social capital that sustains enduring relationships remains less well understood. While prior literature notes that more frequent interactions deepen relational bonds and sustain engagement (Viswanathan et al., 2017; Xie-Carson et al., 2023), understanding of the specific effects of behavioral engagement on trust, social interaction ties, and shared values lags behind. We suggest that in travel vlogging, behavioral engagement not only reflects individual actions but also fosters deeper relationships. Through repeated interactions with travel

vloggers' content, followers are likely to perceive the vlogger as dependable, socially connected to them, and aligned with their values, raising social capital.

Trust

We consider trust as a core component of the social capital that underpins influencer–follower relationships. In influencer marketing, the key role of followers' trust in the influencer is widely recognized (Weiger et al., 2025). *Trust* refers to followers' expectancy that the word or promise of a travel vlogger can be relied upon (credibility) and their confidence in the vlogger's motives (benevolence; Ganesan & Hess, 1997). In travel vlogging, trust is particularly critical, as followers often rely on influencers to filter information, interpret experiences, and make recommendations (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Therefore, when followers trust a vlogger, they are more likely to view their content as authentic and valuable.

As trust develops gradually (D. Kim & Kim, 2021), travel vloggers typically build their followers' trust by consistently producing high-quality content that aligns with followers' expectations (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019)—a process that is enabled *through* their engagement. As followers repeatedly engage with a travel vlogger's content, the vlogger's perceived credibility and benevolence will tend to grow, at least for favorably perceived content. While prior influencer marketing research has explored the role of trust in shaping outcomes such as behavioral intentions (e.g., purchase/recommendations) and loyalty (e.g., Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2024), understanding of how followers' behavioral engagement (with a travel vlogger) influences their trust remains limited. We hypothesize:

H1: Followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger's content positively influences their trust in that vlogger.

Social Interaction Ties

Social interaction ties represent a further component of the social capital underpinning influencer–follower relationships. *Social interaction ties* are enduring, patterned relationships between individuals that feature repeated exchanges (D. Kim & Kim, 2021). In influencer marketing, these ties reflect the extent to which followers engage with influencers' content and to which the influencer engages with followers' comments. Strong interaction ties are essential in building social capital, as they signal active participation, shared meaning, and a sense of belonging.

For influencers, cultivating strong interactions can enhance community formation and influence (Farivar & Wang, 2022). Followers who consistently engage reinforce their connectivity and identification with the influencer's ecosystem (Rasty

& Filieri, 2024). Influencers who acknowledge, respond to, and build on these interactions signal attentiveness and commitment, bolstering perceived bonds. Social interaction ties can also affect downstream behavior, including electronic word-of-mouth and peer influence, magnifying the influencer's credibility and reach. While tie-strength has long been studied in offline networks (Marsden & Campbell, 2012), its role in digital influencer relationships, particularly in travel vlogging, remains under-explored. We posit:

H2: Followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger's content positively influences their social interaction ties with that vlogger.

Shared Values

Shared values, a further component of the social capital underpinning influencer–follower relationships, refer to the “extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals, and policies are important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 25). As a dimension of social capital, shared values represent the joint values, beliefs, principles, and norms of travel vloggers and their followers (Chaney & Martin, 2017). In influencer–follower relationships, shared values provide a foundation for the relational alignment that is essential to sustained engagement (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Weiger et al., 2025).

In travel vlogging, followers' sustained behavioral engagement can facilitate their recognition of shared values with the travel vlogger, including shared beliefs (e.g., a shared appreciation for sustainable travel), personality traits (e.g., curiosity about other cultures), or lifestyle preferences (e.g., adventure travel; Hollebeek et al., 2017). Repeated interactions, in particular, help develop and reinforce shared values between influencers and their followers. Shared values are also domain-specific and content-laden, as they concern followers' and vloggers' travel-related beliefs, practices, and preferences, among others. Over time, as followers engage more with the travel vlogger, they may internalize or reaffirm these values, boosting their sense of connection and shared identity with the influencer.

Though prior studies have explored how shared values raise engagement (Bowden et al., 2018), engagement may also serve as a catalyst for value co-creation and alignment in its own right. For example, when followers comment on travel vloggers' posts, share their experiences with them, or engage with their content, their active contributions to that content are conducive to meaning-making (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Through these interactions, followers help co-construct a shared narrative that can be leveraged to affirm and amplify their perceived alignment with the vlogger. For instance, followers who consistently engage with a vlogger's sustainable travel content will not only perceive stronger value alignment but also raise their commitment to the vlogger. This process identifies shared values as a relational

mechanism that deepens *through* engagement (vs. merely the follower's static perception of their similarity to the vlogger). We postulate:

H3: Followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger's content positively influences their shared values with that vlogger.

Commitment

After establishing how behavioral engagement can build social capital, we now consider how its components shape followers' vlogger commitment. *Commitment* refers to “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). In influencer–follower relationships, commitment reflects the extent of followers' resolve to continue interacting with an influencer (M. Kim & Baek, 2022), where committed followers are more likely to accept the vlogger's recommendations, promote them to others, and defend them against criticism (M. Kim & Kim, 2020).

Trust plays a foundational role in shaping followers' commitment to the influencer (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). When followers perceive an influencer as trustworthy, they are more likely to remain emotionally invested in, and loyal to, the relationship (Chen et al., 2022). In travel vlogging, influencers who consistently provide reliable, transparent, and relevant information (e.g., by offering authentic destination reviews/clear disclosures of sponsored content; Lim, Koay & Cheah, 2025), signal trustworthiness, reinforcing commitment. We postulate:

H4: Followers' trust in a travel vlogger positively influences their commitment to that vlogger.

Social interaction ties represent another core pathway to commitment. Relational exchanges generate a particular perceived value level (Blau, 1964), prompting individuals to invest in and sustain those relationships that offer greater perceived benefits (vs. costs; Hollebeek, 2011). In influencer–follower relationships, frequent, meaningful interactions can strengthen the emotional bond between influencers and their followers (Giertz et al., 2022; S. Roy & Attri, 2026). This reciprocal engagement may not only bolster relational ties but also enhance followers' vlogger commitment (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). We propose:

H5: Followers' social interaction ties with a travel vlogger positively influence their commitment to that vlogger.

Shared values serve as a key relational anchor (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) in the pathway to commitment. When followers

perceive elevated alignment between their own values and those of the influencer, their identification with and loyalty to the influencer strengthens (Chaney & Martin, 2017). For example, travel vloggers advocating for sustainable tourism may attract and retain followers with similar environmental values. This alignment deepens relational meaning and encourages followers' ongoing vlogger commitment. We propose:

H6: Followers' shared values with a travel vlogger positively influence their commitment to that vlogger.

Homophily

We next consider the boundary conditions under which the proposed effects are likely to be stronger or weaker. We first focus on homophily. In essence, *homophily*, which entails followers' perceived similarity between themselves and the influencer, may encompass both surface-level (e.g., age/occupation) and deeper (e.g., attitudes/beliefs) attributes (McPherson et al., 2001). Unlike shared values, which capture specific substantive beliefs that relational partners hold in common, homophily reflects followers' more general sense that the influencer is "like them" (Weiger et al., 2025).

Congruency theory suggests that individuals are more likely to be influenced by sources that are perceived as being similar to, or congruent with, themselves (Shan et al., 2020). Followers tend to connect more readily with influencers whom they perceive as being *like them*, bolstering trust (D. Kim & Kim, 2021). For example, followers may perceive high similarity to vloggers based on their comparable demographic and/or lifestyle characteristics. Here, followers' engagement with, and trust in, vloggers whom they perceive as being similar tends to increase (Bozkurt et al., 2025), stimulating value co-creation and parasocial relationships (Shan et al., 2020). Overall, homophily tends to intensify the relational impact of followers' behavioral engagement by shaping how they interpret the influencer. Therefore, homophily acts as a relational lens that amplifies the effects of engagement on trust, social interaction ties, and shared values.

When perceived homophily is high (vs. low), the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with the vlogger on their trust in that vlogger, their social interaction ties, and their perceived shared values will be stronger, as perceived similarity fosters social identification and strengthens relational alignment (Fujita et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2023). In particular, when followers perceive high homophily with travel vloggers, this perceived alignment can increase both the credibility (cognitive) and benevolence (affective) dimensions of their trust in the vlogger (D. Kim & Kim, 2021). We thus expect a stronger positive effect of followers' behavioral engagement with the vlogger on their trust under high (vs. low) perceived homophily (Esmaceli et al., 2022). We hypothesize:

H7a: Homophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their trust in that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on trust is observed under high (vs. low) perceived homophily with the vlogger.

Homophily may also magnify the impact of behavioral engagement on perceived social interaction ties. When followers view the influencer as being similar to themselves, the vlogger's actions (e.g., comments/likes) are more likely to foster a perceived reciprocal connection (Bastrygina & Lim, 2023). Under high (vs. low) homophily, behavioral engagement should thus more effectively cultivate social relatedness and informal social bonding with the vlogger. We posit:

H7b: Homophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their social interaction ties with that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on social interaction ties is observed under high (vs. low) perceived homophily with the vlogger.

High perceived homophily is also likely to enhance the salience of perceived value alignment between influencers and their followers (Tran et al., 2025). As followers engage with travel vloggers' content, they are more likely to perceive their attitudes and beliefs to overlap with those of the vlogger (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Therefore, under high homophily, behavioral engagement is more likely to generate perceived shared values. We postulate:

H7c: Homophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their shared values with that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on shared values is observed under high (vs. low) perceived homophily with the vlogger.

Heterophily

We next turn to heterophily as a complementary boundary condition. While heterophily traditionally denotes the presence of salient individual differences (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970), we focus on *aspirational heterophily*, or followers' perceived dissimilarity from travel vloggers that are perceived as desirable or inspiring (Kumar & Shankar, 2024). This conceptualization aligns with aspirational identification research (Escalas & Bettman, 2015; Koay & Lim, 2025), which suggests that followers may be drawn to influencers because those differences represent a desired or ideal future self. Heterophily is thus not a mere contrast but a motivated differentiation driven by upward identification and emulation (Chowdhury & Swaminathan, 2026). Followers may be

drawn to influencers with aspirational qualities, including extensive travel experience, where the aspirational quality of influencers increases followers' engagement as they attempt to emulate desirable traits (Koay & Lim, 2025). For example, followers may engage more with travel vloggers who exemplify demanding yet desirable lifestyles. Through this process, behavioral engagement can build trust, social interaction ties, and shared values over time on the basis of admiration and aspiration (heterophily).

Unlike prior research that has treated homophily and heterophily as opposing forces (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970), this research recognizes their potential *concurrent* effect in influencer–follower relationships. Specifically, followers may simultaneously identify with particular aspects of influencers (e.g., values/interests) while at the same time aspiring to their other characteristics that differ from their own (e.g., jet-setter lifestyles). Rather than compromising followers' engagement, these aspirational differences can attract and inspire followers to view the influencer as an exemplar of a desirable future state (Kumar & Shankar, 2024), raising their engagement. The aspirational aspect of heterophily may thus drive followers' engagement through a desire to learn from and emulate the influencer's admired characteristics (S. Roy & Attri, 2026).

When followers perceive the influencer as being aspirationally different from themselves, they are also likely to develop trust in the influencer, albeit through a distinct route than that under elevated homophily. Previous research indicates that aspirational influencers can enhance their credibility through perceived expertise and admirable traits (D. Kim & Kim, 2021). In this regard, under high heterophily, the effect of followers' behavioral engagement on their trust in the influencer may grow stronger, as they focus on the influencer's admired qualities (Jaiswal et al., 2024). We posit:

H8a: Heterophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their trust in that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on trust is observed under high (vs. low) perceived heterophily with the vlogger.

Perceived aspirational influencers may also strengthen social interaction ties despite, or because of, their perceived dissimilarity. When followers admire an influencer's qualities that differ from their own, they may be more motivated to engage to reduce their perceived distance from, or to increase their perceived proximity to, the admired persona (Kumar & Shankar, 2024). Therefore, under high heterophily, followers' behavioral engagement is likely to yield stronger social interaction ties. We propose:

H8b: Heterophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their social interaction ties with that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on social interaction

ties is observed under high (vs. low) perceived heterophily with the vlogger.

Over time, heterophily may also yield perceived value alignment. While followers may initially differ from the influencer in terms of their lifestyle or status, their repeated engagement may reduce this gap over time (Kumar & Shankar, 2024; S. Roy & Attri, 2026). For instance, followers of minimalist travel vloggers may not originally share that lifestyle but may gradually internalize the vlogger's environmental values and travel philosophy, shifting their own travel behavior. This aspirational learning facilitates a unique path to shared values, moderated by heterophily. We postulate:

H8c: Heterophily moderates the effect of followers' behavioral engagement with a travel vlogger on their shared values with that vlogger, such that a stronger effect of behavioral engagement on shared values is observed under high (vs. low) perceived heterophily with the vlogger.

The research model that encapsulates these hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

Methodology

Instrumentation

We adapted established measures to gauge the modeled constructs using 5-point Likert scales (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). Followers' behavioral engagement with the travel vlogger was measured using the self-report items from Hollebeek et al. (2014), which capture respondents' perceived frequency of engagement behaviors in the follower–vlogger relationship. This operationalization matches the study's person-level unit of analysis and treats engagement as a latent tendency rather than a single observable platform count. More specifically, directly observed platform metrics were *not used* as such metrics provide partial and platform-specific traces, vary across features and privacy settings, and reflect algorithmic exposure and interface design alongside follower behavior, whereas self-report items were *used* as they offer a comparable indicator across platforms and content formats. Nevertheless, we acknowledge potential recall and self-presentation bias and, therefore, position digital trace data as a useful triangulation route for future research. Moreover, the following measures were used: The travel vlogger's social capital, followers' vlogger commitment (Piehler et al., 2016), and homophily and heterophily (Escalas & Bettman, 2015). The questionnaire was developed in Persian. To ensure accuracy, two bilingual marketing scholars translated and back-translated the survey (Lim, 2025). We then performed two pretests: One with two experts to confirm content validity and another with 30 followers of travel vloggers to verify face validity (Lim, 2024).

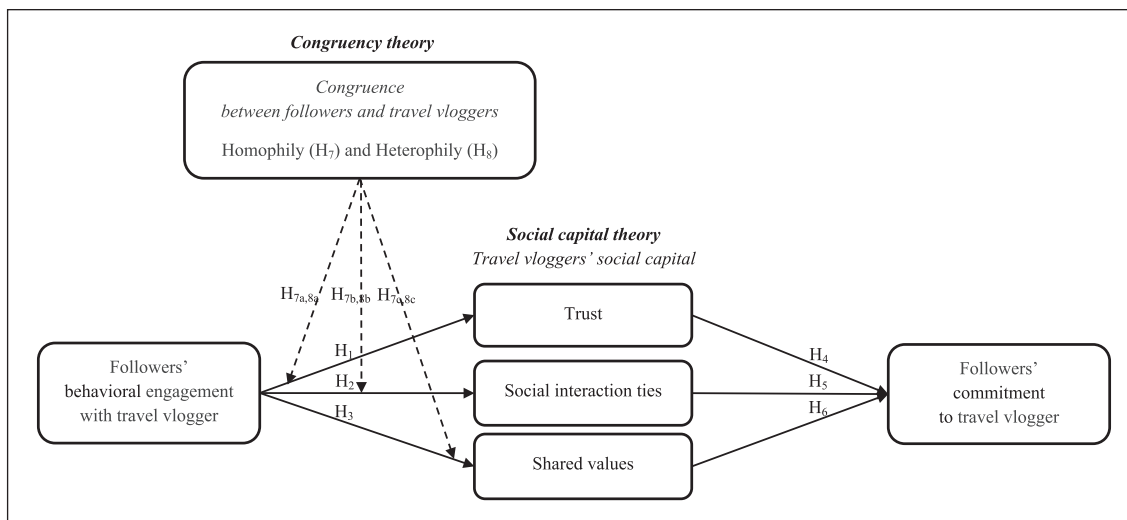


Figure 1. Research model: Followers' behavioral engagement and their commitment to travel vloggers.

Sampling

We used purposive sampling to collect the data from Iranian followers of travel vloggers on Instagram. Instagram was selected for its interactive features, including liking, commenting, tagging, and sharing, which enable different interactions between influencers and their followers (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Data collection occurred from June to August 2024. Eligible participants met three criteria: (1) they were active Instagram users who had followed a travel vlogger for at least 6 months, (2) they had engaged with the vlogger's content in the past 6 months, and (3) the vlogger they followed had consistently posted travel-related content in the same period. Respondents named the travel vlogger they followed to confirm this last criterion. Those failing to meet all criteria were excluded.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, we applied consistent partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLSc-SEM), which delivers reliable parameter estimates for reflective constructs while preserving the flexibility of PLS (Shiau et al., 2019). We adopted Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-stage approach by first assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, followed by an assessment of the structural model using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) in SmartPLS v.4 (Ringle et al., 2024).

Results

Participant Profile

Table 1 outlines the demographic profile of the 527 participants. The sample included slightly more females (49.3%) than males (48.6%; 2.1%: gender undisclosed). In terms of

education, 45.5% held a bachelor's degree, 38.9% had a master's degree or higher, and 15.6% had a diploma or lower. Moreover, 30.4% were aged 18 to 24 years, 28.1% were 25 to 34, 23.0% were 35 to 44, and 18.6% were over 44. Regarding monthly income, 36.2% earned 150 to 300 million Iranian Rials (IRR), 24.7% earned 300 to 500m IRR, 18.6% earned over 500m IRR, 14.8% earned under 150m IRR (5.7%: income not disclosed). Moreover, 38.0% of the respondents visited the travel vlogger's Instagram page 3 to 5 times weekly, 30.7% visited over 5 times weekly, and 31.3% visited 1 to 2 times weekly. Finally, 34.2% had followed the travel vlogger for 1 to 3 years, 33.0% for over 3 years, and 32.8% for under 1 year.

Measurement Model Assessment

The PLSc-SEM results indicate a good fit of the model to the data. At 0.021, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) remains well below the recommended threshold (0.08), suggesting a good fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The unweighted least squares discrepancy (d_{ULS}), at 0.089, indicates that the sum of squared differences between the two matrices is very small (minimal deviation), while the geodesic discrepancy (d_G), at 0.127, demonstrates only a small divergence between the model's estimated correlation space and the actual data structure. These values suggest that the model accurately represents the modeled relationships, supporting its fit to the data (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). At 0.957, the normed fit index (NFI) exceeds the suggested 0.90 cut-off and corroborates the fit of the model (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

The measurement model, which comprises the reflective constructs, was also evaluated for its indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Table 2). Each of the factor loadings surpassed the

Table 1. Profile of Participants.

Characteristics	Frequency (<i>n</i> = 527)	Percentage (% = 100)
Gender		
Female	260	49.3
Male	256	48.6
Not prefer to say	11	2.1
Education		
Diploma or lower	82	15.6
Bachelor	240	45.5
Master or higher	205	38.9
Age		
18–24 years	160	30.4
25–34 years	148	28.1
35–44 years	121	23.0
>44 years	98	18.6
Monthly income (Iranian Rial, IRR)		
<150 million	78	14.8
Between 150–300 million	191	36.2
Between 300–500 million	130	24.7
>500 million	98	18.6
Prefer not to say	30	5.7
Frequency of visiting the travel vlogger's Instagram per week		
1–2 times	165	31.3
3–5 times	200	38.0
>5 times	162	30.7
Length of following the travel vlogger's Instagram		
<1 year	173	32.8
1–3 years	180	34.2
>3 years	174	33.0

Note. USD 1 = ± IRR 1,256,000 on the open market as of December 10, 2025.

0.708 threshold, revealing *indicator reliability* (Hair et al., 2017; Lim, 2025). Additionally, *construct reliability* was attained, as each of the observed Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (ρ_A , ρ_C) scores exceeded the minimum criterion of 0.70 (Ali et al., 2018). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceeded 0.50, establishing *convergent validity* (Henseler et al., 2015). Moreover, *discriminant validity* was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion. All HTMT values remained below the conservative 0.85 threshold (Table 3), signaling discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Common method bias (CMB) was addressed using both procedural and statistical remedies. Procedurally, respondent anonymity was assured (e.g., no identifiable information was collected), which is a common way to reduce CMB (Lim, 2025). Statistically, Harman's (1967) single-factor test indicated that the first factor accounted for a mere 36.91% of the observed variance, remaining below the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003), whereas full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs; Table 2) remained below 5 (Kock, 2015), indicating that CMB is not a concern. Discriminant

validity analysis (Table 3) further revealed no excessively high inter-construct correlations. These results suggest that CMB and multicollinearity are unlikely to pose a serious threat in the data.

Structural Model Assessment

We next assessed the explanatory power (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2_{predict}) of the constructs and compared the PLS estimates with the indicator average (IA) using cross-validated predictive ability testing (CVPAT). Bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples; two-tailed, $p < .05$) was conducted to evaluate the significance of the relationships.

The results reveal that the model demonstrates strong explanatory power for followers' trust in the travel vlogger ($R^2 = .896$) and moderate explanatory power for their shared values ($R^2 = .437$) and commitment ($R^2 = .392$). The high R^2 for trust aligns with the model positioning trust as a proximal relational outcome in the social capital pathway, which tends to be strongly explained by engagement-related antecedents (So et al., 2016). Discriminant validity remains supported, with HTMT ratios below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015), reducing concern that the explanatory power reflects construct redundancy rather than substantive associations. However, the explained variance for social interaction ties is relatively low ($R^2 = .079$), suggesting that additional antecedents beyond behavioral engagement may be required to capture the structural dimension of social capital.

The *effect sizes* (f^2) reveal the relative importance of the predictors. Followers' behavioral engagement significantly impacts their trust in the travel vlogger ($f^2 = 3.089$) and their shared values ($f^2 = 0.219$), underscoring their importance. However, behavioral engagement exerts a relatively small effect on social interaction ties ($f^2 = 0.035$). Followers' homophily with the travel vlogger strongly drove their trust ($f^2 = 4.943$) and shared values ($f^2 = 0.444$), with a negligible effect on social interaction ties ($f^2 = 0.026$), whereas followers' heterophily with the travel vlogger strongly drove their trust ($f^2 = 3.324$) but not on social interaction ties and shared values, which were not significant. Finally, followers' trust ($f^2 = 0.165$), social interaction ties ($f^2 = 0.104$), and shared values ($f^2 = 0.121$) each contributed to their vlogger commitment.

The *predictive relevance* of the model is confirmed by the high Q^2_{predict} values for trust (0.534–0.588) and shared values (0.307–0.312), while the low root mean square error (RMSE) values indicate minimal prediction error (Table 4). Commitment exhibits moderate predictive relevance ($Q^2_{\text{predict}} = 0.113$ –0.136), while social interaction ties have lower predictive relevance ($Q^2_{\text{predict}} = 0.030$ –0.048), as reflected in their higher RMSE values. The CVPAT results further affirm the superior predictive relevance of PLS over the indicator average (IA; Table 5), with an overall loss difference of -0.199 ($t = 10.523$, $p = .001$). The effects of

Table 2. Measurement Model Statistics.

Construct	Item	Indicator reliability	Discriminant validity	Convergent validity	Internal consistency			Descriptive statistics		
					Variance inflation factor	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Mean	Standard deviation	Source
Followers' behavioral engagement with the vlogger	ENG1. I spend a lot of time viewing [this influencer]'s content, compared to other influencers.	0.845	2.347	0.667	.856	.860	.857	2.541	0.707	Hollebeek et al. (2014)
	ENG2. When I follow influencers, I usually engage with [this influencer]'s content.	0.841	2.452							
	ENG3. [This influencer] is one of the influencers I usually engage with on social media.	0.762	1.853							
Vlogger's social capital	TRU1. [This influencer] enthusiastically addresses their followers' problems and concerns.	0.878	2.902	0.743	.896	.897	.896	2.475	0.693	Jeong et al. (2021)
	TRU2. [This influencer] provides trustworthy information on their social media.	0.850	2.702							
	TRU3. In general, [this influencer] is very trustworthy.	0.858	2.60							
Social interaction ties	TIE1. I maintain close connections with [this influencer].	0.965	3.903	0.825	.934	.937	.934	3.229	1.347	
	TIE2. I know [this influencer] on a more personal level.	0.889	4.423							
	TIE3. I frequently communicate with [this influencer].	0.868	3.622							
Shared values	VAL1. I feel [this influencer] shares information that reflects my values.	0.903	4.066	0.813	.929	.929	.929	3.005	0.998	
	VAL2. I agree with what [this influencer] considers important.	0.892	3.266							
	VAL3. The content and activities promoted by [this influencer] align with my personal values.	0.910	4.006							
Followers' commitment to the vlogger	COM1. I really feel as if [this influencer]'s problems are my own.	0.826	2.434	0.667	.889	.889	.889	2.847	0.676	Piehler et al. (2016)
	COM2. I feel like "part of the family" at [this influencer]'s page.	0.793	2.544							
	COM3. I feel "emotionally attached" to [this influencer].	0.835	2.338							
	COM4. [This influencer] has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	0.811	2.174							
Follower-travel vlogger congruence	HOM1. I am a lot like [this influencer].	0.885	3.566	0.851	.918	.922	.919	2.720	1.131	Escalas and Bettman (2009)
	HOM2. [This influencer] and I have a lot in common.	0.959	3.566							
	HET1. I would like to be more like [this influencer] someday.	0.868	2.708	0.795	.885	.887	.886	3.010	1.116	
	HET2. I wish I were more like [this influencer].	0.915	2.708							

Note. "[This influencer]" refers to the specific travel vlogger each participant identified during screening. We used this placeholder instead of "vlogger" because, in the pilot study, participants indicated that "influencer" felt more clear and personal when referring to the individual whose content (including travel vlog) they follow.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations.

Construct	Followers' behavioral engagement with the travel vlogger	Followers' commitment to the travel vlogger	Followers' travel vlogger congruence: Heterophily	Followers' travel vlogger congruence: Homophily	Travel vlogger's social capital: Trust	Travel vlogger's social capital: Social interaction ties	Travel vlogger's social capital: Shared values	Interaction: Heterophily \times Behavioral engagement	Interaction: Homophily \times Behavioral engagement
Followers' behavioral engagement with the travel vlogger									
Followers' commitment to the travel vlogger	.309								
Followers' travel vlogger congruence: Heterophily	.041	.050							
Followers' travel vlogger congruence: Homophily	.040	.318	.463						
Travel vlogger's social capital: Trust	.536	.490	.293	.482					
Travel vlogger's social capital: Social interaction ties	.174	.364	.152	.204	.179				
Travel vlogger's social capital: Shared values	.333	.450	.266	.554	.351	.157			
Interaction: Heterophily \times Behavioral engagement	.070	.033	.022	.010	.009	.006	.050		
Interaction: Homophily \times Behavioral engagement	.035	.069	.012	.032	.045	.030	.058	.398	

followers' trust (-0.324) and shared values (-0.353) reveal the largest loss differences, underscoring the strong predictive capacity of PLS for these constructs. However, social interaction ties show a smaller loss difference (-0.083 , $t=2.054$, $p=.040$), which is consistent with their weaker predictive performance.

Path analysis shows significant positive effects of followers' behavioral engagement on trust ($\beta=.570$, $p=.000$; strongest effect), social interaction ties ($\beta=.181$, $p=.000$), and shared values ($\beta=.353$, $p=.000$; Table 6). The three social capital dimensions significantly influence followers' vlogger commitment, with trust exerting the greatest impact ($\beta=.341$, $p=.000$), followed by shared values ($\beta=.291$, $p=.000$), and social interaction ties ($\beta=.257$, $p=.000$). Therefore, H1–H6 are supported.

The moderation effects reveal that perceived homophily significantly enhances the effect of followers' behavioral engagement on trust ($\beta=.119$, $p=.004$) and shared values ($\beta=.094$, $p=.037$), but not on social interaction ties ($\beta=-.019$, $p=.748$). Conversely, perceived heterophily moderates only the effect of followers' behavioral engagement on trust ($\beta=.080$, $p=.030$), but not on social interaction ties ($\beta=.010$, $p=.862$) or shared values ($\beta=.008$, $p=.853$). Therefore, while H7a, H7c, and H8a are supported, H7b, H8b, and H8c are not, indicating that homophily and heterophily do not uniformly strengthen all behavioral engagement–social capital links.

Post-hoc analysis of the main effects shows that perceived homophily exerts a strong effect on followers' trust ($\beta=.809$, $p=.000$), social interaction ties ($\beta=.176$, $p=.001$), and shared values ($\beta=.565$, $p=.000$). However, perceived heterophily only produces a strong direct effect on followers' trust ($\beta=.663$, $p=.000$), but not on their social interaction ties ($\beta=-.070$, $p=.185$) or shared values ($\beta=-.007$, $p=.880$). Post-hoc analysis of the mediating effects further shows that followers' behavioral engagement positively influences their vlogger commitment through trust ($\beta=.195$, $p=.000$), social interaction ties ($\beta=.046$, $p=.002$), and shared values ($\beta=.103$, $p=.000$), with trust and shared values playing particularly prominent roles.

Discussion, Implications, and Future Research

Discussion

This research shows that followers' behavioral engagement with travel vloggers is associated with the development of distinct facets of social capital, underscoring the multifaceted nature of engagement as a relational construct (vs. a purely transactional one).

First, the findings reveal that followers' behavioral engagement operates through different pathways, wherein behavioral engagement more strongly predicts relational-normative outcomes (trust/shared values) than structural ones (interaction ties), extending the work of Dessart (2017)

Table 4. PLS_{predict} Results.

Item	Q ² _{predict}	PLS-SEM _{RMSE}	LM _{RMSE}
TRU1	0.588	0.521	0.522
TRU2	0.541	0.509	0.519
TRU3	0.534	0.495	0.500
TIE1	0.048	1.410	1.417
TIE2	0.030	1.418	1.417
TIE3	0.043	1.391	1.395
VAL1	0.312	0.904	0.901
VAL2	0.307	0.892	0.893
VAL3	0.309	0.866	0.872
COM1	0.136	0.735	0.740
COM2	0.113	0.762	0.765
COM3	0.132	0.711	0.719
COM4	0.120	0.719	0.726

Note. TRU=Vlogger's social capital: Trust; TIE=Vlogger's social capital: Social interaction ties; VAL=Vlogger's social capital: Shared values; COM=Followers' commitment to the vlogger; PLS-SEM=Partial least squares structural equation modeling; LM=Linear model; RMSE=root mean square error.

and Jang et al. (2021), who focus on engagement's attitudinal and relational brand-related consequences. Our results extend these authors' work by demonstrating that engagement is not only associated with attitudes but also contributes to building relational resources between influencers and their followers. This asymmetry offers a more refined view of social capital theory by suggesting that followers' trust in, and shared values with, travel vloggers can emerge from behavioral engagement because parasocial interactions enable followers to feel connected to vloggers without requiring reciprocal communication, whereas structural social capital relies more on reciprocal, participatory exchanges that may be constrained in parasocial relationships (Weiger et al., 2025).

Second, extending prior research (Zogaj et al., 2021), we conceptualized followers' perceived homophily to, and heterophily from, specific travel vloggers as relational mechanisms rather than static individual attributes. While previous research (e.g., Hu et al., 2023; Shan et al., 2020) has examined homophily and heterophily in isolation, treating them as either similarity- or aspiration-based matching effects that influence persuasion, we examine how *both* perceived similarity and aspirational difference jointly shape relational outcomes. The findings show that both perceived similarity- (homophily) and aspiration-based (perceived heterophily) congruence help build trust and shared values through distinct psychological mechanisms—namely affiliation and admiration. This integrative perspective extends beyond isolated examinations of homophily or heterophily to more comprehensively depict relational travel vlogging dynamics, demonstrating that effective influencer–follower relationships depend on an appropriate balance between familiarity and inspiration.

Third, this research illuminates how digital media affordances and followers' travel aspirations jointly shape the

Table 5. Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Testing (CVPAT) Results.

Construct	PLS loss	IA loss	Average loss difference	t-Value	p-Value
Vlogger's social capital: Trust	0.258	0.583	-0.324	11.029	.000
Vlogger's social capital: Social interaction ties	1.977	2.060	-0.083	2.054	.040
Vlogger's social capital: Shared values	0.788	1.140	-0.353	7.238	.000
Followers' commitment to the vlogger	0.536	0.612	-0.077	4.370	.000
Overall	0.863	1.061	-0.199	10.523	.000

Note. PLS=Partial least squares; IA=Indicator average.

development of travel vlogger relationships. The results suggest that vloggers who balance reliability (e.g., shared lifestyle, values, or motivations) with aspiration (e.g., novel destinations/perceived expertise) may cultivate followers' emotional closeness *and* credibility, potentially deepening their social capital and commitment. This balance helps explain why some travel vloggers generate more enduring engagement and influence, whereby being *both* "like me" and "someone I aspire to," these vloggers activate dual motivational pathways that sustain long-term follower relationships.

These insights clarify *how* and *why* followers' engagement generates different social capital dimensions under differing perceived congruence with the travel vlogger, advancing understanding of influencer–follower dynamics by linking social capital accumulation to congruence-based relationship-building in digital tourism and by showing that the strength of engagement–outcome relationships depends on how followers simultaneously experience similarity and aspiration in their connections with travel vloggers.

Theoretical Implications

This research raises pertinent implications for theory development. To begin, the findings suggest that followers' engagement can build their trust in, and shared values and social interaction ties with, travel vloggers, signaling the development of parasocial vlogger–follower relationships (Weiger et al., 2025). Repeated interactions (e.g., responding to posts) can lead followers to view the influencer as a reliable source, enhancing its perceived authenticity and trustworthiness (Chen et al., 2022). This dynamic is especially impactful in travel vlogging, where shared experiences and vicarious exploration may create strong socio-emotional bonds (Rather et al., 2022).

These insights raise two critical avenues for theory development. *First*, the loyalty shift. As followers' behavioral engagement builds relational bonds with the influencer, they may begin to prioritize allegiance to the individual over the endorsed brand(s; Giertz et al., 2022). Understanding this shift is vital because it determines whether influencer–brand partnerships amplify or dilute that follower–influencer relationship. Future research should ask to what *extent* high

social capital transfers from the travel vlogger to co-branded offerings and under what *conditions* followers' loyalty to the travel vlogger may undermine their receptivity to partner brands. *Second*, the content mechanism. Not all posts are equally effective at generating the different facets of social capital. Specific content features, including behind-the-scenes narratives, interactive questions and answers, or user-generated challenges may differentially activate trust, social interaction ties, and/or shared values. Investigating *which* communication styles and formats most effectively cultivate these relational outcomes should clarify how travel vloggers can tailor their content strategies. For example, story-driven posts may deepen emotional engagement and trust, while collaborative livestreams may be used to strengthen social interaction ties. Unpacking these peculiarities can contribute to social capital theory by linking content characteristics to distinct pathways to relational value creation.

Our findings also demonstrate that the social capital dimensions contribute differently to follower commitment. The results show that followers' trust provides an important psychological foundation for loyalty in social media environments (Shao et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022), while social interaction ties are well-equipped to create perceived relational progression and obligation (H. J. Kim & Chan-Olmsted, 2022), and shared values are particularly adept at forging emotional identification (Chen et al., 2022). These insights underscore that followers' vlogger commitment emerges from deep psycho-social mechanisms (vs. merely transactional exchanges).

This observation highlights a need for further research addressing how each pathway uniquely shapes followers' vlogger commitment. *First*, examining the independent and interactive effects of each social capital dimension can reveal *which* dimension most effectively sustains followers' long-term commitment. For instance, if trust is the strongest predictor, influencers and brands may prioritize credibility (over community)-building activities. *Second*, testing the moderating role of influencer type (e.g., micro-, macro-, or mega-influencers; Weiger et al., 2025) warrants further exploration. Micro-influencers, for example, may cultivate stronger personal ties and leverage social interaction ties more effectively than macro- or mega-influencers, raising understanding of the boundary conditions under which

Table 6. Path Analysis Results.

Effect	Hypothesis	Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	t-Statistic (O/SD)	p-Value
Main effect	H1	Behavioral engagement → Trust	0.570	0.571	0.038	15.113	.000
	H2	Behavioral engagement → Social interaction ties	0.181	0.182	0.049	3.687	.000
	H3	Behavioral engagement → Shared values	0.353	0.353	0.039	9.002	.000
	H4	Trust → Commitment	0.341	0.343	0.042	8.174	.000
	H5	Social interaction ties → Commitment	0.257	0.257	0.041	6.266	.000
	H6	Shared values → Commitment	0.291	0.290	0.041	7.099	.000
	Moderation effect	H7a	Homophily × Behavioral engagement → Trust	0.119	0.120	0.041	2.883
H7b		Homophily × Behavioral engagement → Social interaction ties	-0.019	-0.020	0.060	0.322	.748
H7c		Homophily × Behavioral engagement → Shared values	0.094	0.095	0.045	2.091	.037
H8a		Heterophily × Behavioral engagement → Trust	0.080	0.083	0.037	2.166	.030
H8b	Heterophily × Behavioral engagement → Social interaction ties	0.010	0.009	0.056	0.174	.862	
	H8c	Heterophily × Behavioral engagement → Shared values	0.008	0.011	0.045	0.185	.853
Post-hoc analysis of main effect		Homophily → Trust	0.809	0.810	0.041	19.883	.000
		Homophily → Social interaction ties	0.176	0.178	0.051	3.420	.001
		Homophily → Shared values	0.565	0.566	0.042	13.503	.000
		Heterophily → Trust	0.663	0.664	0.041	16.345	.000
		Heterophily → Social interaction ties	-0.070	-0.068	0.053	1.325	.185
		Heterophily → Shared values	-0.007	-0.005	0.043	0.151	.880
		Behavioral engagement → Trust → Commitment	0.195	0.196	0.028	7.067	.000
Post-hoc analysis of mediation effect		Behavioral engagement → Social interaction ties → Commitment	0.046	0.047	0.015	3.068	.002
		Behavioral engagement → Shared values → Commitment	0.103	0.102	0.017	5.951	.000

particular social capital dimensions are most impactful. *Third*, further exploration of how the depth of social interaction transforms passive followership into active advocacy is expected to illuminate the process by which followers evolve from content consumers to community champions. For example, deep interactions (e.g., by participating in influencer-led initiatives) are likely to shift followers' roles from mere observers to vocal advocates, amplifying relational bonds and outreach. Followers who contribute user-generated travel videos to vloggers' challenges may not only strengthen their mutual engagement but also authentically amplify the vlogger's message. Further unpacking this progression should contribute not only to the theoretical generalizability of social capital theory but also to its theoretical extension by linking interaction intensity to phases of follower commitment (Lim, 2026).

Importantly, this research reveals that followers' perceived similarity to travel vloggers (homophily) more consistently strengthens the impact of behavioral engagement on their trust in, and shared values with, the travel vlogger (vs. aspirational difference/heterophily). Homophily thus acts as a psychological conduit through which engagement can evolve into trust-based commitment, extending the work of Bozkurt et al. (2025), Janssen et al. (2022), and Swann and Ely (1984), among others. Nonetheless, homophily did not moderate the effect of behavioral engagement on social interaction ties. This suggests that tie strength depends less on perceived similarity and more on reciprocal communicative exchange, a pattern consistent with Ahlf et al. (2019), who found that homophily does not drive interpersonal communication. The lack of support for the moderating effect of homophily on social interaction ties thus implies that structural social capital depends less on followers' perceived similarity to the vlogger and more on reciprocal, participatory interaction. Even when followers feel similar to travel vloggers, meaningful communication (e.g., commenting on/co-creating content) requires deliberate engagement and cannot be inferred from similarity alone. Homophily can thus strengthen perception-based relational bonds (e.g., trust/shared values), but not interaction-based structural ties (Ahlf et al., 2019).

This research also shows that followers' aspirational congruence with travel vloggers is a significant moderator of the effect of behavioral engagement on trust, signaling that followers who admire an influencer can develop trust *even* without perceived similarity (Shoenberger & Kim, 2019). This finding extends understanding of trust formation in online influencing *beyond* perceived homophily to include aspirational identification. However, perceived heterophily did not strengthen the path to either social interaction ties or shared values, implying that these depend more on mutual beliefs and familiarity. This differential pattern reveals that while aspirational distance fosters followers' trust by fueling admiration for the travel vlogger, it also hinders the development of social interaction ties and shared values. Notably,

social interaction ties are contingent on bidirectional communication (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), which the asymmetrical nature of followers' aspirational parasocial relationships may hamper.

Similarly, shared values require beliefs that travel vloggers and their followers hold in common (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which aspirational distance may compromise when vloggers' lifestyles feel unattainable. This observation suggests a hierarchy of congruence requirements, whereby trust is particularly compatible with followers' aspirational distance from travel vloggers, while social interaction ties and shared values require perceived similarity, indicating that vloggers that use aspirational positioning may indeed build admiration and trust yet struggle to develop the deeper relational bonds required to foster followers' longer-term commitment. Investigating *which* content formats best mitigate the limitations of heterophily is thus important. As influencers often blend relatable and aspirational cues, understanding how specific mixed-congruence strategies shape trust, social interaction ties, and shared values represents a promising research avenue.

Finally, the findings reveal differential effects across the social capital dimensions. While behavioral engagement and perceived follower-vlogger congruence strongly predict relational-normative outcomes (e.g., trust/shared values), their explanatory power for structural outcomes (e.g., social interaction ties) is weaker. This asymmetry suggests that while relational-normative bonds are more readily cultivated through engagement and perceived similarity, structural ties depend on reciprocal, personalized exchanges that are inherently constrained in one-to-many digital contexts. Structural social capital may also be influenced by additional contextual factors, including community interaction norms, influencer responsiveness, and platform affordances (Penttinen, 2025), which extend beyond individual engagement behaviors. Recognizing these differentiated pathways provides a more granular understanding of how social capital develops in digitally-mediated environments, underscoring that effective follower-vlogger relationships are shaped by specific social capital dimensions *and* interaction context.

Practical Implications

The findings also offer actionable implications for travel vloggers seeking to deepen followers' engagement and commitment. First, travel vloggers should *encourage active participation through interactive content*. Rather than relying on static posts, vloggers should incorporate gamified challenges, polls, quizzes, and user-generated content campaigns, including weekly hashtag challenges (e.g., #TravelPhotoOfTheWeek, where followers share their own travel pictures) or story-polls (e.g., "Which city should I visit?"), to prompt followers to like, comment, tag, and share content, as these visible actions not only increase social proof (Kapoor et al., 2026) but also help strengthen

trust, social interaction ties, and shared values. Organizing content into “hero,” “hub,” and “hygiene” pillars tailored to different traveler segments also ensures a balanced mix of inspirational stories, community-driven updates, and practical tips, respectively (Saleh, 2025). Storytelling techniques, including behind-the-scenes footage, episodic series, and immersive narratives, should further foster authenticity and emotional connection (Li et al., 2026). Moreover, travel influencers should adapt content formats to their archetype, for instance, entertainer influencers might produce short, energetic videos, while informer influencers could focus on listicles, tutorials, or in-depth livestreams (Luo, Wang, & Liu, 2026).

Second, travel vloggers should *prioritize transparency and authenticity to build their followers’ enduring trust*. Travel influencers are advised to clearly disclose sponsored posts (e.g., stating “this trip was sponsored, but all opinions are my own”), provide honest destination reviews (e.g., praising hotel facilities while noting areas for improvement), and correct any misinformation or admit mistakes promptly to reinforce credibility (Hollebeek et al., 2024; Lim, Koay, & Cheah, 2025). Concurrently, travel brands should favor long-term partnerships over one-off promotions to maintain consistent messaging and deepen follower trust. Notably, detailed, transparent reviews and responsible sponsorships signal integrity (Kumar et al., 2025), therefore partnering with travel vloggers who have recognized expertise (e.g., certified guides/industry professionals) should further amplify trust (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Third, travel vloggers should *cultivate reciprocal social interaction ties through two-way dialogue*. They may host collaborative content-creation events, including co-designing itineraries with followers, organizing live Q&A sessions, and facilitating virtual meet-ups to encourage genuine exchanges (Rasty & Filieri, 2024). Personalized responses that feature followers’ contributions in comments or story highlights can demonstrate attentiveness and strengthen perceived closeness. Travel brands can support these initiatives by sponsoring community-focused experiences or fan gatherings, positioning the vlogger as a facilitator of meaningful connections.

Fourth, travel vloggers should *anchor their content in clear value propositions that invite co-creation*. Vloggers should articulate their core travel philosophies, whether centered on budget-friendly adventures, luxury escapes, or sustainable tourism, and invite followers to participate in polls (e.g., “which eco-friendly activity should I try?”) or discussions that reinforce those values (Hollebeek et al., 2017). When followers contribute ideas or vote on topics, they develop a sense of shared ownership that deepens commitment. Travel brands collaborating with these influencers must also ensure that their own values align closely with the influencer’s ethos to maintain authenticity and minimize dissonance.

Fifth, travel vloggers should *balance relatability with aspiration to optimize engagement and commitment*. The

stronger effects of perceived homophily in travel vlogging suggest that relatability often surpasses pure aspiration in driving connections. Travel brands should thus select influencers whose backgrounds, experiences, and interests closely match their target demographics to optimize authentic engagement. Moreover, incorporating aspirational highlights like bucket-list destinations or luxury experiences should help keep content fresh and inspiring. Therefore, by blending shared values and experiences (homophily) with occasional aspirational elements (heterophily), travel influencers should be able to optimize immediate engagement and foster enduring follower commitment. Relatable content, including tips for budget travel, packing hacks, or navigating public transport, helps followers see the travel vlogger as “one of us,” while (occasional) aspirational highlights, including bucket-list adventures (e.g., a hot-air balloon ride/luxury hotel stay) sustain inspiration. This blend of homophily/heterophily can support both immediate engagement and enduring loyalty.

Finally, the findings from Iran’s collectivistic context, coupled with its digital and travel constraints, highlight the *need for context-sensitive influencer strategies* (Lim, Sethuraman, Kathuria & Manrai, 2025). In collectivistic markets (e.g., Asia/the Middle East), destination marketing organizations (DMOs) should prioritize relatable vloggers emphasizing similarity and shared cultural values, as perceived homophily strengthens the impact of followers’ engagement on their trust in and commitment to the vlogger. Campaigns should showcase “one-of-us” positioning through shared lifestyles, budgets, and cultural touchpoints. Conversely, in individualistic markets, aspirational strategies with influencers emphasizing unique experiences and exclusivity are likely to be more effective. In travel-constrained contexts, vloggers provide vicarious travel experiences, making authentic interactions and immersive content (e.g., 360° videos) particularly valuable. DMOs should foster long-term partnerships that produce rich experiential narratives, leveraging follower loyalty. Globally, DMOs are advised to adopt segmented strategies reflecting cultural orientation, digital access, and economic development. Market-specific assessments can guide whether homophily or heterophily is most effective, whether audiences seek vicarious experiences or trip validation, and which platforms to prioritize. Effective global influencer marketing in tourism thus requires culturally informed, strategically differentiated approaches (vs. one-size-fits-all campaigns).

Limitations and Future Directions

This research also has limitations that expose further avenues for investigation. Addressing these limitations through cross-cultural, cross-domain, cross-platform, and causal-longitudinal research should deepen understanding of when, how, and for whom followers’ behavioral engagement translates into enduring social capital and follower commitment.

Cultural Context. The data, which was collected in the Iranian Instagram context, may limit generalizability of the findings, as cultural norms influence how followers engage and form social bonds (Hollebeek, 2018). Therefore, replicating this model across cultural contexts (e.g., specific African, Asian, European, and North/South American markets) would permit testing of cultural moderators, refine theoretical assumptions about social capital formation, strengthening the generalizability of the findings.

Influencer Heterogeneity. This research focused on human travel vloggers without distinguishing between influencer characteristics such as audience scale (micro-, macro-, and mega-influencers), content domain (e.g., food vs. tour), sustainability orientation in content and destination portrayal (e.g., responsible travel cues vs. consumption-oriented cues), or the growing presence of virtual influencers (e.g., Conde & Casais, 2023; Li et al., 2026; Luo, Lim, et al., 2026). These sources of heterogeneity may shape engagement behavior and social capital formation in distinct ways, as follower interpretations of authenticity, credibility, and relational closeness can differ across human and virtual influencers as well as across audience scale and content domains. Future research should thus compare influencer types to clarify boundary conditions and identify how influencer form, domain-specific content strategies, and follower base size moderate the relationships among engagement, social capital, and commitment.

Platform Specificity. The data were sourced from Instagram, where visual storytelling and particular interaction affordances (e.g., likes/stories) drive engagement patterns (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Other platforms, including Facebook's mixed-media environment, LinkedIn's professional focus, or TikTok's bite-sized video format, may yield different social capital and commitment outcomes. Comparative studies across multiple social media channels would reveal how platform features mediate the engagement→social capital→commitment pathways and inform platform-tailored influencer strategies.

Temporal Design and Causal Inference. Our cross-sectional design captures the modeled relationships at a single point in time, which constrains evidence on temporal ordering and causal direction among behavioral engagement, social capital, and follower commitment. Behavioral engagement also reflects followers' perceived frequency of engagement behaviors captured via self-report items, rather than directly observed platform metrics, which supports person-level comparability across platforms and content formats, yet leaves room for recall and self-presentation bias and for divergence between perceived and observed engagement. The proposed relationships are theoretically grounded, yet the findings warrant interpretation as directional associations rather than causal effects. Future research using longitudinal panels, time-lagged field designs, or experiments can test sequencing and change over time. Such research can also combine survey

measures with digital trace data or platform analytics (e.g., comments, likes, shares) to validate engagement and examine how engagement develops into trust, social interaction ties, and shared values that sustain follower commitment across stages of influencer–follower relationships.

Demographic Controls. Demographic variables were excluded as controls, given their limited theoretical centrality to the relational mechanisms of engagement, social capital, and relational alignment that drive followers' commitment (i.e., including them may introduce (unnecessary) noise; Becker et al., 2016). Furthermore, the proposed moderator (perceived homophily) captures subjective demographic and psychographic similarity, rendering additional demographic controls potentially redundant and prone to multicollinearity. Moreover, the follower sample is relatively homogeneous, with followers being primarily aged 18 to 45, digitally active, and education-oriented, minimizing demographic confounding (Spector & Brannick, 2011). Future studies should thus examine whether demographic (dis)similarity shapes these relational processes in more heterogeneous populations.

Measurement Approach. Behavioral engagement was measured using self-report Likert-type items capturing followers' perceived frequency of engagement behaviors (vs. directly observed platform metrics). This operationalization aligns with engagement research that treats behavioral engagement as a latent, person-level tendency expressed through enacted behaviors (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Yet, self-report measures remain susceptible to recall and self-presentation bias while perceived engagement may diverge from platform traces. Therefore, future research could triangulate survey measures with objective analytics, such as likes, comments, shares, saves, and viewing duration, which would, in turn, strengthen measurement credibility and clarify when perceived and observed engagement converge or diverge.

Acknowledgments

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammarly, OpenAI GPT, and Microsoft Editor to check and improve language and readability, including expression, tone, and style of writing. After using these tools/services, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

ORCID iDs

Fereshte Rasty  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4247-8294>

Weng Marc Lim  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7196-1923>

Oliver Parts  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3385-9618>

Author Contributions

Fereshte Rasty: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Writing—original draft; Writing—review & editing. Linda D.

Hollebeck: Conceptualization; Supervision; Validation; Writing—original draft; Writing—review & editing. Weng Marc Lim: Conceptualization; Supervision; Validation; Writing—original draft; Writing—review & editing. Oliver Parts: Writing—review & editing.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Ahlf, H., Horak, S., Klein, A., & Yoon, S. (2019). Demographic homophily, communication and trust in intra-organizational business relationships. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 34(2), 474–487. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jbim-03-2018-0093>
- Alcántara-Pilar, J. M., Rodríguez-Lopez, M. E., Kalinić, Z., & Liebana-Cabanillas, F. (2024). From likes to loyalty: Exploring the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intentions in TikTok. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 78, Article 103709. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103709>
- Alexander, M. J., Jaakkola, E., & Hollebeck, L. D. (2018). Zooming out: Actor engagement beyond the dyadic. *Journal of Service Management*, 29(3), 333–351. <https://doi.org/10.1108/josm-08-2016-0237>
- Ali, F., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Ryu, K. (2018). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in hospitality research. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(1), 514–538. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-10-2016-0568>
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411–423. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-2909.103.3.411>
- Bastrygina, T., & Lim, W. M. (2023). Foundations of consumer engagement with social media influencers. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, 19(2–3), 222–242. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijwbc.2023.131410>
- Bastrygina, T., Lim, W. M., Jopp, R., & Weissmann, M. A. (2024). Unraveling the power of social media influencers: Qualitative insights into the role of Instagram influencers in the hospitality and tourism industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 58, 214–243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.01.007>
- Becker, T., Atinc, G., Breaugh, J., Carlson, K., Edwards, J., & Spector, P. (2016). Statistical control in correlational studies: 10 essential recommendations for organizational researchers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(2), 157–167. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2053>
- Belanche, D., Casalo, L., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 186–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.067>
- Bentler, P. M., & Bonett, D. G. (1980). Significance tests and goodness of fit in the analysis of covariance structures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 88(3), 588–600. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-2909.88.3.588>
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Wiley.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- Bowden, J. L. H., Conduit, J., Hollebeck, L. D., Luoma-aho, V., & Solem, B. A. A. (2018). The role of social capital in shaping consumer engagement within online brand communities. In K. A. Johnston & M. Taylor (Eds.), *Handbook of communication engagement* (pp. 491–504). Wiley.
- Bozkurt, S., Gligor, D., & Hollebeck, L. D. (2021). Ethnicity's effect on social media-based comment intention: Comparing minority and majority consumers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 38(11), 1895–1910. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21549>
- Bozkurt, S., Gligor, D., Hollebeck, L. D., & Sumlin, C. (2025). Understanding the effects of firms' unresponsiveness on social media toward customer feedback on customers' engagement: The impact of ethnicity. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 19(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-09-2023-0317>
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeck, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029>
- Chaney, D., & Martin, D. (2017). The role of shared values in understanding loyalty over time: A longitudinal study on music festivals. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(4), 507–520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516643411>
- Chen, X., Hyun, S., & Lee, T. (2022). The effects of parasocial interaction, authenticity, and self-congruity on the formation of consumer trust in online travel agencies. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 563–576. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2522>
- Chowdhury, F., & Swaminathan, S. (2026). The price of influence: Social media influencers and compensatory consumption among bottom-of-the-pyramid (BOP) consumers. *Psychology & Marketing*, 43(1), 5–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.70039>
- Clark, M. K., Lages, C. R., & Hollebeck, L. D. (2020). Friend or foe? Customer engagement's value-based effects on fellow customers and the firm. *Journal of Business Research*, 121, 549–556. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.011>
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95–S120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>
- Conde, R., & Casais, B. (2023). Micro, macro and mega-influencers on Instagram: The power of persuasion via the parasocial relationship. *Journal of Business Research*, 158, Article 113708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>
- Dessart, L. (2017). Social media engagement: A model of antecedents and relational outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 33(5–6), 375–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2017.1302975>
- Deutschmann, E., Delhey, J., Verbalyte, M., & Aplowski, A. (2018). The power of contact: Europe as a network of transnational attachment. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 963–988. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12261>

- Dijkstra, T. K., & Henseler, J. (2015). Consistent and asymptotically normal PLS estimators for linear structural equations. *Computational Statistics & Data Analysis*, *81*, 10–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csda.2014.07.008>
- Ekinci, Y., & Riley, M. (2003). An investigation of self-concept: Actual and ideal self-congruence compared in the context of service evaluation. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *10*(4), 201–214. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0969-6989\(02\)00008-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0969-6989(02)00008-5)
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends:” Social capital and college students’ use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *12*(4), 1143–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x>
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2009). Self-brand connections: The role of reference groups and celebrity endorsers in the creation of brand meaning. In D. J. MacInnis, C. W. Park, & J. R. Priester (Eds.), *Handbook of brand relationships* (pp. 107–123). M. E. Sharpe.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2015). Managing brand meaning through celebrity endorsement. *Brand Meaning Management*, *12*, 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s1548-643520150000012002>
- Esmaceli, A., Pechmann, C., & Prochaska, J. J. (2022). Buddies as in-group influencers in online support groups: A social network analysis of processes and outcomes. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *57*(2), 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221076144>
- Farivar, S., Wang, F., & Turel, O. (2026). Unraveling threats in parasocial relationships: A study on social media influencers. *Internet Research*, *36*(1), 208–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-01-2024-0075>
- Farivar, S., & Wang, F. (2022). Effective influencer marketing: A social identity perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *67*, Article 103026. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103026>
- Fujita, M., Harrigan, P., Soutar, G. N., Roy, S. K., & Roy, R. (2020). Enhancing member-institution relationships through social media: The role of other-user engagement behavior and similarity perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, *121*, 642–654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.07.050>
- Ganesan, S., & Hess, R. (1997). Dimensions and levels of trust: Implications for commitment to a relationship. *Marketing Letters*, *8*(4), 439–448. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1007955514781>
- Garg, M., & Bakshi, A. (2024). Exploring the effects of audience and strategies used by beauty vloggers on behavioural intention towards endorsed brands. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03133-y>
- Giertz, J. N., Hollebeek, L. D., Weiger, W. H., & Hammerschmidt, M. (2022). The invisible leash: When human brands hijack corporate brands’ consumer relationships. *Journal of Service Management*, *33*(3), 485–495. <https://doi.org/10.1108/josm-06-2021-0211>
- Groeger, L., Moroko, L., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2016). Capturing value from non-paying consumers’ engagement behaviours: Field evidence and development of a theoretical model. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *24*(3–4), 190–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2015.1095223>
- Guan, X., Nie, Z., Khoo, C., Zhou, W., & Li, Y. (2024). Social networks and travel intention: The impact of travel content to consumption, social comparison and envy. *Tourism Review*, *79*(8), 1427–1441. <https://doi.org/10.1108/tr-04-2023-0272>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Harman, H. H. (1967). *Modern factor analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Hernández-Méndez, J., & Baute-Díaz, N. (2024). Influencer marketing in the promotion of tourist destinations: Mega, macro and micro-influencers. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *27*(8), 1332–1342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2214354>
- Hollebeek, L. (2011). Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *19*(7), 555–573. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2011.599493>
- Hollebeek, L. D. (2018). Individual-level cultural consumer engagement styles: Conceptualization, propositions, and implications. *International Marketing Review*, *35*(1), 42–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-07-2016-0140>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *28*(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Jaakkola, E., & Alexander, M. (2018). Beyond the dyadic: Customer engagement in increasingly networked environments. *Journal of Service Management*, *29*(3), 330–332. <https://doi.org/10.1108/josm-05-2018-410>
- Hollebeek, L., Juric, B., & Tang, W. (2017). Virtual brand community engagement practices: A refined typology and model. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *31*(3), 204–217. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-01-2016-0006>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Kumar, V., Srivastava, R. K., Lim, W. M., & Urbonavicius, S. (2025). Guidelines for theory selection: The IMPACT framework. *Psychology & Marketing*, *42*(11), 2789–2806. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.70009>
- Hollebeek, L. D., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital content marketing’s role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: Framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *45*(1), 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Parts, O., Urbonavicius, S., Riisalu, R., Adomaviciute-Sakalauske, K., & Jansson, J. (2024). Consumers’ online brand-related misinformation engagement: A weapons of influence perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *32*(8), 1415–1434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2024.2380657>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Sarstedt, M., Menidjel, C., Sprott, D. E., & Urbonavicius, S. (2023). Hallmarks and potential pitfalls of customer- and consumer engagement scales: A systematic review. *Psychology & Marketing*, *40*(6), 1074–1088. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21797>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Srivastava, R. K., & Chen, T. (2019). S-D logic-informed customer engagement: Integrative framework, revised fundamental propositions, and application to CRM. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *47*(1), 161–185. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0494-5>

- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1998). Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification. *Psychological Methods*, 3(4), 424–453. <https://doi.org/10.1037//1082-989x.3.4.424>
- Hu, Q., Pan, Z., Lu, Y., & Wang, B. (2023). Heterophily or homophily of social media influencers: The role of dual Parasocial relationships in impulsive buying. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 27(4), 558–589. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2023.2255112>
- Huang, Y., Qu, H., & Montgomery, D. (2017). The meanings of destination: AQ method approach. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(6), 793–807. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516663652>
- Jaiswal, A., Vemireddy, V., & Angeli, F. (2024). Social media “stars” vs “the ordinary” me: Influencer marketing and the role of self-discrepancies, perceived homophily, authenticity, self-acceptance and mindfulness. *European Journal of Marketing*, 58(2), 590–631. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-02-2023-0141>
- Jang, W., Kim, J., Kim, S., & Chun, J. (2021). The role of engagement in travel influencer marketing: The perspectives of dual process theory and the source credibility model. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(17), 2416–2420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1845126>
- Janssen, L., Schouten, A., & Croes, E. (2022). Influencer advertising on Instagram: Product-influencer fit and number of followers affect advertising outcomes and influencer evaluations via credibility and identification. *International Journal of Advertising*, 41(1), 101–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1994205>
- Jeong, S. W., Ha, S., & Lee, K. H. (2021). How to measure social capital in an online brand community? A comparison of three social capital scales. *Journal of Business Research*, 131, 652–663. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.07.051>
- Joshi, Y., Lim, W. M., Jagani, K., & Kumar, S. (2025). Social media influencer marketing: Foundations, trends, and ways forward. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 25(2), 1199–1253. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-023-09719-z>
- Kapoor, P., Balaji, M. S., & Maity, M. (2026). Game on: Enhancing customer engagement through influencers’ gamified messages. *Journal of Travel Research*, 65(1), 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875241289565>
- Kim, D., & Kim, H. (2021). Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 223–232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.024>
- Kim, H. J., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2022). Influencer marketing and social commerce: Exploring the role of influencer communities in predicting usage intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 22(3), 249–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2022.2111243>
- Kim, M., & Baek, T. (2022). I’ll follow the fun: The extended investment model of social media influencers. *Telematics and Informatics*, 74, Article 101881. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2022.101881>
- Kim, M., & Kim, J. (2020). How does a celebrity make fans happy? Interaction between celebrities and fans in the social media context. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 111, Article 106419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106419>
- Koay, K. Y., & Lim, W. M. (2025). Congruence effects in social media influencer marketing: The moderating role of wishful identification in online impulse buying intentions. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 34(3), 265–278. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-09-2023-4709>
- Koay, K. Y., Lim, W. M., Kaur, S., Soh, K., & Poon, W. C. (2023). How and when social media influencers’ intimate self-disclosure fosters purchase intentions: The roles of congruency and parasocial relationships. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 41(6), 790–809. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-06-2023-0246>
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach. *International Journal of e-Collaboration*, 11(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64069-3_11
- Kumar, V., Hollebeek, L. D., Sharma, A., Rajan, B., & Srivastava, R. K. (2025). Responsible stakeholder engagement marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 189, 115143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115143>
- Kumar, A., & Shankar, A. (2024). Investigating the role of meta-verse influencers’ attributes for the next generation of services. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 38(7), 816–838. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jsm-09-2023-0320>
- Leung, F., Gu, F., & Palmatier, R. (2022). Online influencer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(2), 226–251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4>
- Li, F., & Zhou, Z. (2024). How does travel social media influencer humour influence viewers’ visit intention? *Current Issues in Tourism*, 27(23), 4148–4164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2291114>
- Li, M., Kim, Y., Liu, A., Scarles, C., & Chen, J. (2026). Storytelling in travel vlogs: Scale development, validation, and application. *Journal of Travel Research*, 65(3), 786–811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875241312178>
- Lim, W. M. (2024). A typology of validity: Content, face, convergent, discriminant, nomological and predictive validity. *Journal of Trade Science*, 12(3), 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jts-03-2024-0016>
- Lim, W. M. (2025). What is quantitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(3), 325–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264622>
- Lim, W. M. (2026). Theory and theory development: Guidelines for establishing theoretical gaps, foundations, contributions, and implications. *Journal of Business Research*, 202, Article 115745. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115745>
- Lim, W. M., Koay, K. Y., & Cheah, C. W. (2025). Commercialization of influencer content on social media: The roles of parasocial relationships and sponsorship disclosures. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 33(5), 658–684. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2025.2510384>
- Lim, W. M., Sethuraman, R., Kathuria, S., & Manrai, A. K. (2025). Guidelines for data collection and analysis: Considerations for informed marketing in a globalized world. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 38(2), 103–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2025.2460278>
- Lim, W. M., Rasul, T., Kumar, S., & Ala, M. (2022). Past, present, and future of customer engagement. *Journal of Business Research*, 140, 439–458. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.11.014>
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a network theory of social capital. *Connections*, 22(1), 28–51.
- Luo, X., Chang, J. Y. S., Cheah, J. H., Lim, W. M., & Lim, X. J. (2026). Antecedents and consequences of digital human avatar-destination fit: The case of cultural heritage tourism. *Journal*

- of *Travel Research*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875251349232>
- Luo, X., Lim, W. M., Suh, A., Idris, I., Soon, P. S., Ma, L., & Cheah, J. H. (2026). Digital human avatars as virtual influencers shape climate engagement and pro-environmental commitment. *Journal of Business Research*, 208, Article 116049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2026.116049>
- Luo, Z., Wang, L., & Liu, H. (2026). Influencer marketing and destination visit intention: The interplay between influencer type, information format, and picture color hue. *Journal of Travel Research*, 65(4), 1123–1144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875251322514>
- Marsden, P. V., & Campbell, K. E. (2012). Reflections on conceptualizing and measuring tie strength. *Social Forces*, 91(1), 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos112>
- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 415–444. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415>
- Morgan, R., & Hunt, S. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(3), 20–38. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1252308>
- Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 242–266. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225>
- Nguyen, P., Pham, X., & Truong, G. (2025). The influence of source credibility and inspiration on tourists' travel planning through travel vlogs. *Journal of Travel Research*, 64(1), 222–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231206538>
- Penttinen, V. (2025). Perfect imperfection: Vulnerability in influencer communications on social media. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 41(5–6), 459–484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2025.2495330>
- Piehler, R., King, C., Burmann, C., & Xiong, L. (2016). The importance of employee brand understanding, brand identification, and brand commitment in realizing brand citizenship behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(9/10), 1575–1601. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-11-2014-0725>
- Podsakoff, P., MacKenzie, S., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Rasty, F., & Filieri, R. (2024). Consumer engagement with restaurant brands on Instagram: The mediating role of consumer-related factors. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 36(7), 2463–2483. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-02-2023-0135>
- Rasty, F., Tabataba'i-Nasab, S. M., Poorrezaei, M., Alhosseini-Almodarresi, S. M., & Saecida-Ardekani, S. (2023). Consumer engagement with restaurant brand pages: A multidimensional categorization of antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 29(7), 1015–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2023.2176964>
- Rather, R. A., Hollebeek, L. D., Loureiro, S. M. C., Khan, I., & Hasan, R. (2024). Exploring tourists' virtual reality-based brand engagement: A uses-and-gratifications perspective. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(3), 606–624. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231166598>
- Rather, R. A., Hollebeek, L. D., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2022). First-time vs. repeat tourism customer engagement, experience, and value co-creation: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 549–564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287521997572>
- Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J.-M. (2024). *SmartPLS 4*. <https://www.smartpls.com>
- Rogers, E., & Bhowmik, D. (1970). Homophily-heterophily: Relational concepts for communication research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34(4), 523–538. <https://doi.org/10.1086/267838>
- Rokeach, M., & Rothman, G. (1965). The principle of belief congruence and the congruity principle as models of cognitive interaction. *Psychological Review*, 72(2), 128–142. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0021702>
- Roy, S., & Attri, R. (2026). I bond, I engage, I visit: Investigating the effects of vloggers' tourist engagement and its outcome on tourist attitudes. *Journal of Travel Research*, 65(1), 57–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875241276546>
- Roy, S. K., Singh, G., Hollebeek, L. D., Shabnam, S., Japutra, A., Van Doorn, S., Ray, S., & Appio, F. P. (2024). Smart service value: Conceptualization, scale development, and validation. *Technovation*, 137, Article 103097. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2024.103097>
- Saleh, M. (2025). Advantaging tourism through influencers: Applying transaction cost theory to recognize top hero, hub, and hygiene content tactics for tourism marketing. *Journal of Travel Research*, 64(2), 408–426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231214727>
- Shan, Y., Chen, K., & Lin, J. (2020). When social media influencers endorse brands: The effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(5), 590–610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1678322>
- Shao, Z., Ho, J., Tan, G., Ooi, K., & Dennis, C. (2024). Will social media celebrities drive me crazy? Exploring the effects of celebrity endorsement on impulsive buying behavior in social commerce. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(3), e13047. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13047>
- Sharma, I., Lim, W. M., & Aggarwal, A. (2025). Virtual reality as a sustainable alternative for authentic and satisfying tourism experiences. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 50(7), 1826–1838. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2024.2413832>
- Shiau, W. L., Sarstedt, M., & Hair, J. F. (2019). Internet research using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). *Internet Research*, 29(3), 398–406. <https://doi.org/10.1108/intr-10-2018-0447>
- Shoenberger, H., & Kim, E. (2019). Product placement as leveraged marketing communications: The role of wishful identification, brand trust, and brand buying behaviours. *International Journal of Advertising*, 38(1), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1391678>
- So, K. K. F., King, C., Sparks, B. A., & Wang, Y. (2016). The role of customer engagement in building consumer loyalty to tourism brands. *Journal of Travel Research*, 55(1), 64–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287514541008>
- Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, Article 101742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>

- Spector, P., & Brannick, M. (2011). Methodological urban legends: The misuse of statistical control variables. *Organizational Research Methods, 14*(2), 287–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428110369842>
- Swann, W., & Ely, R. (1984). A battle of wills: Self-verification versus behavioral confirmation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*(6), 1287–1302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.6.1287>
- Tran, G. A., Aboulnasr, K., & Song, Y. S. (2025). The rise of the deinfluencers: Perceived similarity and anticipated emotions in advocating mindful consumption on social media. *Psychology & Marketing, 42*(11), 3005–3026. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.70024>
- Viswanathan, V., Hollebeek, L. D., Malthouse, E. C., Maslowska, E., Kim, S. J., & Xie, W. (2017). The dynamics of consumer engagement with mobile technologies. *Service Science, 9*(1), 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1287/serv.2016.0161>
- Wang, J., Shahzad, F., Ahmad, Z., Abdullah, M., & Hassan, N. (2022). Trust and consumers' purchase intention in a social commerce platform: A meta-analytic approach. *Sage Open, 12*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221091262>
- Weiger, W. H., Giertz, J. N., Hammerschmidt, M., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2025). Blurred lines? Disentangling the roles of consumers' influencer-and brand engagement in shaping brand performance. *Journal of Business Research, 194*, Article 115280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115280>
- Xie-Carson, L., Magor, T., Benckendorff, P., & Hughes, K. (2023). All hype or the real deal? Investigating user engagement with virtual influencers in tourism. *Tourism Management, 99*, Article 104779. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104779>
- Xu, X., & Pratt, S. (2018). Social media influencers as endorsers to promote travel destinations: An application of self-congruence theory to the Chinese Generation Y. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 35*(7), 958–972. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1468851>
- Xu, J., Wang, Y., & Jiang, Y. (2025). Boosting travel desire through secure attachment: Examining travel influencers' impact via attachment and social comparison theories. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 42*(2), 161–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2024.2437534>
- Zhou, P., Leong, A. M. W., Chen, H., & Luo, J. M. (2025). Effects of travel vloggers' attributes on tourists' intention: The role of cynicism. *Current Issues in Tourism, 28*(11), 1725–1745. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2347406>
- Zogaj, A., Tscheulin, D. K., & Olk, S. (2021). Benefits of matching consumers' personality: Creating perceived trustworthiness via actual self-congruence and perceived competence via ideal self-congruence. *Psychology & Marketing, 38*(3), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21439>

Author Biographies

Fereshte Rasty is a Lecturer in the Department of Management Sciences, Yazd University, Iran. Her research focuses on brand engagement, consumer behavior, digital marketing, and social media.

She has published in international journals such as the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, and *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, among others.

Linda D. Hollebeek is the Teng Yew Huat Endowed Chair of Marketing at Sunway University. She has been named a Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher since 2020, placing her among the top 1% of global researchers by citations in Web of Science. She has published in journals ranked “A*” and “A” such as *European Journal of Marketing*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of Service Research*, *Marketing Theory*, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *Psychology & Marketing*, among others.

Weng Marc Lim is a Distinguished Professor and the Dean of Sunway Business School at Sunway University. He has served as the Editor in Chief of *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*; Deputy Editor of *Journal of Global Marketing*; Associate Editor of *Electronic Commerce Research*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, and *The International Journal of Management Education*; and Regional Editor of *The Service Industries Journal*. He has authored more than 100 manuscripts cited more than 50,000 times in journals ranked “A*” and “A” such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, *Tourism Recreation Research*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, among others. He has also led high-level discussions at the *AppliedHE*, *Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)*, *Association of MBAs (AMBA)*, *Business Graduates Association (BGA)*, *Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)*, *Times Higher Education (THE)*, *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* and *Principles of Responsible Management Education (UNPRME)*, *Nikkei Forum*, and *World Economic Forum (WEF)*. Contact: @limwengmarc on Instagram and Twitter (X), LinkedIn, or his personal homepage at (<https://www.wengmarc.com>).

Oliver Parts is an Associate Professor at Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia. He has published in international journals such as the *Journal of Strategic Marketing* and *Service Industries Journal*, among others.