



The Impact of Travel Influencers' Credibility and Congruency on African Travel and Tourism Intentions

*Research submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the
Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Management in Strategic Marketing*

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Date: 9th of June 2025

Abstract

Travel influencers are rapidly changing the tourism marketing landscape. By showcasing travel destinations and personal experiences on their digital platforms, travel influencers have become essential sources of information for travellers worldwide. Although research on influencers' impact on tourism and consumer intentions is growing, there remains a gap in studies focusing on their influence on African travel and tourism. The purpose of this research was to (1) investigate the roles of credibility and congruency characteristics in travel influencer marketing within African tourism markets, and (2) understand the impact of these travel influencer characteristics on destination image perceptions and visit intentions within these markets. The results of this research indicate that high travel influencer credibility (in terms of trust, expertise, and physical attractiveness) and high travel influencer self-congruity (across all forms to include actual, ideal, social, or ideal social), significantly impact destination image perceptions and visit intentions towards South African travel and tourism on a global scale. This study found that enhanced perceptions of South Africa's destination image significantly mediate the relationships between (1) travel influencer credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa, and (2) travel influencer self-congruity with their audience and visit intentions towards the country. This research provides valuable insights for tourism stakeholders on the roles of credibility and self-congruity characteristics within travel influencer marketing. Additionally, the study findings contribute to understanding how building a positive perception of African destinations through partnerships with travel influencers can enhance the appeal of these destinations and increase the likelihood of attracting global tourists.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Travel Influencer, Travel & Tourism, Source Credibility, Self-Congruity, Africa, Destination Image, Visit Intention

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context of the Study

Formed in 1992, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional development community located within sub-Saharan Africa (Southern African Development Community, 2022a). Comprised of 16 member states (or countries) the SADC region includes the countries of Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Southern African Development Community, 2022c). The mission of this regional economic community is to move the region, and its member states, towards becoming a competitor amongst the world's top economies by leveraging its possibilities across industries to include tourism (Southern African Development Community, 2022b).

According to the Southern African Development Community (2022c), within its member states travellers can find 18 trans-frontier conservation areas (TFCA). These areas which consist of significantly high conservations status areas, include national parks, private game reserves, communal natural resource management areas and hunting concession areas where bordering lines between member states and the barriers between humanity and wildlife oftentimes do not exist (Department of Forestry Fisheries & The Environment: Republic of South Africa, 2022). In addition, the region houses 43 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and world heritage sites (UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1999 - 2022c). These sites, which are verified and backed by the UNESCO world heritage convention, contain a mixture of globally protected sites that hold significant natural and cultural value towards the collective global existence (UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1999 - 2022a). It is places like these and many other mustsee, must-do

attractions within the SADC region that make it a traveller's paradise for any type of tourist from the active adventure seeker to the less active tourist longing for relaxation from the strains of everyday life. This destination and experience variety is what gives the SADC region its potential to take up several spots on any traveller's bucket list. The significance of these sites within the global tourism sector is also of note as more than 90% of UNESCO natural sites contribute towards the creation of jobs and tourism income for the member states and/or regions where they are located (UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1999 - 2022b).

As global tourism markets return to normal after the COVID 19 pandemic, destinations across the SADC continue to move towards addressing the challenges of building sustainable economies within its underdeveloped nations. According to the Southern African Development Community (2022c) the tourism sector within the SADC is a key driver towards accomplishing this goal as often times, tourism growth can spark overall economic growth. The tourism sector of the SADC region includes a wide variety of industries and services such as accommodations, tour operator services, small-medium sized businesses (which according to current rankings are the largest employers within the SADC region) and more (Lehloenya, 2017).

African tourism studies have shown that a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can be impacted by as little as a 10% increase in international tourism spending alone (Fayissa et al., 2008). In 2015, the SADC region welcomed approximately 25 million international tourists (Lehloenya, 2017). Pre-COVID- 19 projections for international tourist arrivals within the region were predicted to increase to 38.6 million by 2025 (Lehloenya, 2017), unfortunately, the events of COVID-19 had a negative effect on these projections for the region's tourism sector growth. In 2016, the SADC region constituted 47% of the combined total of Africa's tourist visits in that year, with the member state of South Africa taking in more than half the region's total share (Lehloenya, 2017). The Southern African

Development Community (2022c) notes that the total tourism contributions towards its GDP for 2017 saw an impact of as much as 8% or the equivalent of 56 billion USD. Post-COVID-19 era projections for 2027 global tourism markets suggest that with the increase in tourism worldwide, due to the world continuing to re-open its doors to visitors, Africa has the potential to grow its tourism sectors by up to 58% more (Southern African Development Community, 2022c). With a few tactical moves targeted towards its digital marketing strategies, the region can be repositioned to benefit from the impact of sustainable tourism economy growth, in the post-COVID era.

Influencer marketing is an emerging strategy within digital marketing. Sammis et al. (2015) define influencer marketing as the online marketing practice where sponsored content is delivered by people of influential status to engage audiences while displaying a particular brand message. The concept of influencer marketing is one built on the traditional marketing concept of utilising celebrity endorsement as a mechanism for brand awareness and persuasion (Sammis et al., 2015). Influencer marketing thrives on a curated partnership between the brand and the influencer and is presented in a digital (or social media) setting (Geyser, 2022). Although this form of marketing is still in its infancy and lacking a solid formal definition, most scholars who offer up a definition for this marketing phenomenon are unified in the fact that influencer marketing is an online practice that involves sender and receiver participation which leads to an influence on perceptions and/or consumer behavioural change.

The “celebrities” of influencer marketing are none other than the influencers or social media influencers (SMIs) themselves. SMIs are defined as the new opinion leaders of today’s digital landscape (Gretzel, 2017). Through various forms of online communication such as blogs, tweets and other social media platforms, SMIs can influence their audience’s attitudes and perceptions regarding a product, service, or brand (Freberg et al., 2011). Their perceived

accessibility and everyday personable demeanours aid them in successfully transforming their audience's (or follower's) perceptions and behavioural intentions towards the brands and/or services they market (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). Due to an SMIs perceived authority, positioning, and the relationships they curate with their following, within a specified niche topic, SMIs become instrumental in the purchase decision journey of their followers (Geyser, 2022).

The impact of influencer marketing and the emergence of SMIs can be seen across all industries, including travel and tourism (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020). The rise of influencer marketing within the travel and tourism industry has given birth to a new subset of SMIs called travel influencers (TI). TIs are increasingly utilised for their audience reach and power of persuasion in attracting potential visitors to the destinations they feature (Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020). Their personable touch and potential for “celebrity-like” influential power have become a recently trending topic of digital marketing and travel and tourism research studies. A recent study on the impact of TIs on Thai tourism shows that TIs influenced over 92% of Thai tourist in their travel decision-making process (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). With statistics like these beginning to surface around the globe, many destination marketing managers and travel brand marketers have begun to see TIs as key partners in the growth of tourism and tourism by-products worldwide (Asan & Yolal, 2022).

In summary, influencer marketing and its subsequent by-product, TIs, have created a new lane for the marriage between a destination and its tourist. As a result, TIs expose potential travellers to new travel experiences and receive first-hand accounts of possible attractions available within a specific destination in an innovative way (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). Cholprasertsuk et al.'s (2020) research reveals that SMIs (or TIs) are not only influential in destination choice but are now also the go-to source for advice on what to see and what to do once you arrive.

It is against this industry background that this research intends to investigate the effects of TI personal brand characteristics on international travel consumer (TC) behaviour within the SADC region member state of South Africa. Within a consumer-to-TI brand influence context, the study will investigate TC behavioural intention by understanding the influence of the TI characteristics, credibility and self-congruity, their influence on the formation of consumer perception and how these variables ultimately impact TC behavioural intentions.

1.2 Problem Statement

There is currently a lack of research (a research gap) regarding the impact of TIs on global tourism marketing, destination imagery, and visit intentions within the African context. As a result, various tourism stakeholders, within regions such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are potentially underutilising TIs within their tourism marketing strategies, and underestimating the positive impact TI credibility and self-congruity may have on regional tourism; leading the region's member states to remain largely unexplored and misunderstood by global TCs, continually misrepresented by non-tourism related media, undergoing a loss of potential tourism revenue, and consequently, experiencing delayed development opportunities within African tourism markets.

The Southern African Development Community (2022c) acknowledges that the region suffers greatly from an underdeveloped and misrepresented tourism sector across many of its member states. Even within one of the region's top member states, South Africa, where tourists can find some of the world's most notable attractions, landscapes, and cultural experiences found nowhere else in the world, its chronic issues in destination branding, and image building remain among the top reasons why tourism within the member state currently sits at a level well below its potential. This missed potential leaves member states, like South Africa, widely untapped throughout the global TC population (Southern African

Development Community, 2022c). Intergate Immigration (2005-2022) suggests that the top three nationalities of international tourists visiting from outside Africa into the SADC member state of South Africa, for example, are from the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States of America (USA). Unfortunately, this listing still leaves much of the rest of the world's possible tourism receipts on arrivals into the popular SADC member state, largely unexplored.

As previously mentioned, the challenges faced by the South African tourism sector affect the region's economic development and GDP potential, which means that unsustainable tourism development within the region ultimately affects its local community residents, culture, and environment (Lehloenya, 2017). In addition, it also affects the region's competitiveness within the global tourism market. The SADC region's 2017 average receipts per tourist arrival was \$334USD less than the global average in that year (Southern African Development Community, 2022c). Continuing to remain in an underdeveloped state without proper sustainable solutions towards tourism growth will undoubtedly find the SADC region failing to attract tourist over more widely developed tourism regions around the world (Lehloenya, 2017).

Less commonly recognised, the lack of sustainable resolutions to these problems also affects the TC because of some of the SADC region's challenges with brand and image building via online methods (Southern African Development Community, 2022c), TCs are faced with a very limited, and often misinformed view of this particular part of the globe. This limitation then places further restraints on the expansion of the TC's future travel itineraries, causing them to overlook countries like South Africa as a highly desirable travel destination. By not being properly targeted within the global travel market, they are unknowingly missing out on some of the world's once-in-a-lifetime experiences found only in this region.

The emergence of TIs and the proper leveraging of their key characteristic traits, which impact their influence over global digital audiences, and allow them to be uniquely positioned to become a key component in addressing some of the issues faced by the region's tourism development. TIs who choose to use their brand and online social platforms to positively display destinations within the SADC region may ultimately be able to address the information gap issue, and the brand/image building issue across global online audiences and help to spearhead a significant increase in tourism visit intention for the SADC region. These digital-era travel guides have begun to take the lead in informing their audience of where to go, what to do and what to see around the world. In contrast to the traditional celebrity endorser, TIs build their audience through the popularity of their online presence as everyday relatable travel enthusiasts (Sesar et al., 2021). This skill to gain credibility as a go-to travel source and the TI's ability to present their personal brands and content congruent to their audience's self-image may become a key marketing strategy for SADC countries like South Africa. This study contributes to the lack of current research on the impact of TIs on South African destination image improvement and international tourism visit intentions.

1.3 Aim of Study, Research Purpose, and Questions

This research aims to quantitatively test the validity and significance of TI credibility and self-congruity on destination image formation and tourism visit intention within South Africa. This research study aims to objectively measure/manipulate the study's two independent variables, TI credibility and self-congruity; while identifying the strength or weakness of destination image as a mediator; and ultimately measure the outcome of a dependent variable, visit intention. This approach will be utilised for this research in order to scientifically identify and describe the effects of characteristics, averages and patterns; investigate the relationships between all variables; and test the effectiveness of the applied treatment of manipulated variables.

The purpose of this research is to aid TIs, social media managers and destination marketing managers in understanding the key factors by which TI may positively impact their audience's cognitive perceptions and behavioural outcomes towards Southern African travel and tourism. This research seeks to help various tourism stakeholders understand the contributing factors of a TI's ability to build positive perceptions of SADC region destinations and how they in turn, encourage the visit intention of international tourists who may have never thought to explore the region prior to TI exposure.

Key research questions are as follows:

1. Does travel influencer credibility and/or self-congruity significantly impact destination image perception and visit intention within South African travel and tourism?
2. Does travel influencer self-congruity significantly impact destination image perception and visit intention within South African travel and tourism?
3. Does destination image significantly mediate the relationships between travel influencer credibility or self-congruity and visit intentions towards South Africa?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

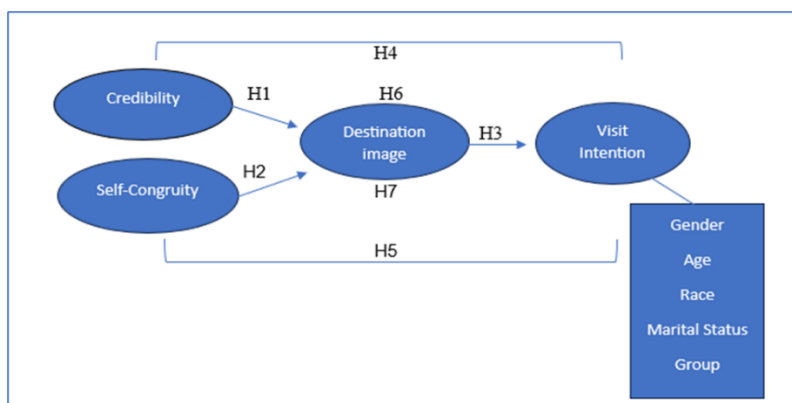
2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the conceptual model specifically formulated for this research study. In addition, this chapter will conduct a review of literature from thought leaders within the theories of source credibility, self-congruity, destination image, and visit intention, both within and outside of the travel influencer marketing genre. From theoretical foundations with well-established roots in Aristotle's source credibility theory (Umeogu, 2012), to more recent research studies which highlight self-congruity within travel (Cifci, 2022), this chapter will investigate the range of current knowledge of the variables within the conceptual model for this research study.

2.2 Conceptual Model

The concept of this research study was developed from established theories surrounding (2) independent variables (credibility and self-congruity), (1) dependent variable (visit intention), and (1) mediating variable (destination image). Based on these variables, a total of 7 hypotheses were formed for the research. In this section, we will discuss a theoretical review of all variables listed within the conceptual model for this research study. See the conceptual model below for details.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



2.2 Source Credibility Theory and Travel Influencer Marketing

Source credibility theory is a popular topic within academia and is centred around the effects of influence and persuasion. Its foundation is rich with research, definition, and dimensional aspects. The theory's philosophical concept dates back to its early development by Aristotle (Umeogu, 2012). Source credibility theory suggests that message receivers evaluate the presence of credibility, or lack thereof, within a message source, and it is only when the message source displays characteristics deemed as credible, that persuasion becomes successful (Hovland et al., 1953).

The determination of credibility characteristics is oftentimes utilised by the message receiver as a tool in determining information accuracy when the receiver has little to no first-hand experience with the information presented (Nadarevic et al., 2020). This determination then allows those message sources who possess credible characteristics to be deemed as truthful, and thereby, allows them to effectively influence the beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of their audience (Nadarevic et al., 2020). A recent study by Nadarevic et al. (2020) that conducted experiments on the effects of high vs low manipulated credibility on truth judgement within fake news sources found that undoubtedly, information presented by credible sources was perceived as truthful over those sources deemed as non-credible. In short, what Nadarevic et al. (2020) found through their experimental study is that source credibility often equates to believability and truth. Moreover, another high vs low manipulated source credibility experiment by Heinbach et al. (2018) that studied the participant's attitudes and perceptions towards superfoods within German news website articles found that, again, high source credibility conditions had a significantly higher influence on the change of its participant's attitude and perceptions towards superfoods. Although, the results of these studies showed that high credibility characteristics are more influential over a source's level of persuasiveness, Ohanian (1990) notes that sources which

display high credibility dimensions must still compete with alternative sources of low credibility for effectiveness in the marketing arena.

Many researchers have studied source credibility in order to pinpoint its individual characteristics and dimensions of measurement. Various source credibility studies have tested credibility scales in terms of a variety of dimensions to include, but not limited to, authoritativeness, character (McCroskey, 1966), safety, qualification, and dynamism (Berlo et al., 1969). However, none have the high reliability and validity demonstrated by the Ohanian (1990) research which studied the dimensions of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise within celebrity endorsement marketing. The Ohanian (1990) study resulted in the development of a 15-item scale of measurement for source credibility. These dimensions validated by Ohanian's study are still relevant when defining source credibility in modern-day marketing.

Across all marketing categories, source credibility ultimately translates to sales (Umeogu, 2012). Influencer marketing within the travel and tourism industry is no different, although travel and tourism marketing, oftentimes, also has a bottom-line outcome of travel or visit intention in addition to purchasing intent. A recent study by Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) investigated the impact of Ohanian's source credibility dimensions on Instagram TIs on Gen Y and Z Turkish travel intentions. The results of that study showed that the trustworthiness dimension of credibility had a consistent and significant impact on the travel intentions of TI followers within the study (Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021).

In summary, source credibility within TI marketing is a construct of considerable notation. Testing this theory within the context of TI marketing within the SADC region's tourism economy can provide evidence, backed by research, which can validate TI source credibility as a determining factor of the success of TI marketing strategies within the region. In accordance with the source credibility theory and TI background above, the following

hypotheses were developed for this research study (please see the conceptual model on page 13).

Hypothesis #1: High vs. low credibility of travel influencers positively affects the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #4: High vs. low credibility of travel influencers positively and directly affects visit intentions towards South Africa.

2.3 Self Congruity Theory and Travel Influencers

Self-congruity is another popular academic topic rich in research, definition, and dimensions. The consumer behaviour topic has been researched across a variety of industries for more than five decades (Sop, 2020). The theory, which is developed around the concept of self, suggests that consumers partake in a process of evaluating a brand's personality or a brand-user's image in comparison to their own self-concept, and it is only when the match is high that consumer behaviour and intention is positively impacted (Sirgy et al., 2016). The match or mismatch of consumer self-concept with brand or brand user imagery has the potential to effect consumer behaviour and intention in both the pre-purchase and post purchase phases of consumption (Sirgy et al., 2016).

Self-congruity theory studies have shown that a consumer's self-concept acts as a highly influential and cognitive predictor of behaviour as product or brand preference are often times an investment of self-expression (Sop, 2020). Self-congruity theory states that a consumer's self-concept can be expressed in a variety of four dimensions of self (Sirgy, 1982). Actual self (how consumers see themselves), ideal self (how consumers would like to see themselves), social self (how consumers think society sees them), and ideal social self (how consumers would like society to see them) are all dimensions of self-congruity measurement within consumer behaviour studies (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 1991; Sirgy et al.,

2018; Sirgy et al., 2016; Sirgy et al., 2014; Sirgy & Su, 2000). Therefore, self-congruity, and its corresponding self-concept dimensions include actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity and ideal social self-congruity (Kim, 2015).

The application of self-congruity theory originally focused on brand/product and purchase intention across a variety of industry contexts including automobile, cosmetics and alcoholic beverages to name a few (Sop, 2020). This means that congruency can be considered as a theory regarding products, brands, and services across multiple contexts to include travel destinations and even TIs. It was researchers, Sirgy and Su (2000) who developed an integrated model of self-congruity specific to the travel and tourism industry that focused on destination congruity and visit intentions. In the context of travel and tourism, self-congruity refers to the suggestion that there is a “process of matching (some dimension of) a tourist’s self-concept with the destination” (Sirgy et al., 2018; Sirgy et al., 2014; Sirgy & Su, 2000). According to Sop (2020), the most popular tourism context within self-congruity study is destination. However, the main focus within any self-congruity theory study is the evaluation of self-concept (actual, ideal, social, or ideal social) towards a product of consumption. According to Sop (2020), the top variables linked to studies of congruity within tourism include behavioural intention, brand personality, and consumer/brand attitude, to name a few.

Research has begun to surface regarding the theory of self-congruity and its impact on TI marketing. A recent study of the application of self-congruity theory within TI marketing in China, found that ideal self-congruency between the TI image and the TC positively contributed to visit intention, but the ideal self-congruency between the two did not result in a positive impact on the consumer’s attitude towards the destination (Xu & Pratt, 2018). The uniqueness of this study is the online social platform, and the specified age demographic used to conduct the study. The study used two social platforms unique to China, WeChat and

Weibo, and targeted their sample population towards Generation Y participants only (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Research suggests that ideal self-congruity attitude and behavioural intentions are motivated by self-esteem as this dimension of self-congruity allows consumers to make purchases that bring them into becoming who they would ultimately like to be in life (Sirgy, 1982; Wille et al., 2018).

According to Sop (2020) actual self-congruity is the most popular dimension of self-congruity studied within travel and tourism. Research notes that the underlying motivating factor for a consumer's alignment with purchases that speak to their actual self is the desire for consistency, personal identity protection and comfort zone maintenance (Wille et al., 2018). The dynamic of cultural identity, which relates mostly to one's view of themselves in real life, can be a motivating factor that influences a tourist's visit intention to a specific destination that they view as being similar to their actual self (Prentice et al., 1998; Sirgy et al., 2018). A recent study outside of tourism which examined actual and ideal self-congruity within organisational recruitment research found that job applicants' intention to apply for a position within a company increased when their organisational congruity matched both their actual and ideal self-congruity perceptions (Wille et al., 2018).

Some studies have identified an interesting caveat within self-congruity theory. Recent research suggest that not all forms of self-congruity have a direct impact on behavioural intention, instead it must sometimes live through a specified mediator in order to be effective in tourism (Cifci, 2022). The study by Cifci (2022), which examined self-congruity and its relationship to revisit intention within the Bektashi faith destination in Turkey, found that memorable tourist experience and destination attachment both play notable roles in mediating the relationship between actual or ideal self-congruity and revisit intention of tourists in the area.

In summary, self-congruity and its four dimensions are a timeless topic in consumer behaviour and attitude studies. The tendency of consumers to favour brands, products or services that feed their sense of self in varying ways under a variety of industry contexts has given validation to the self-congruity theory over the years. Nonetheless, the digital era has created a new context of self-congruity worth researching. With the advent of influencer marketing and TIs within travel and tourism, more research that examines self-congruity effectiveness between TIs and TCs is needed in order to better predict TI effectiveness in tourism marketing. This research intends to examine self-congruity in the specific context of SADC region TIs. Based on the previous research noted above, TIs (and their destination content), have the potential to influence all forms of self-congruity within the SADC region's travel and tourism sector. In accordance with the self-congruity theory and TI background above, the following hypotheses have been developed for this research study:

Hypothesis #2: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #5: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions towards South Africa.

2.4 Destination Image and Travel Influencers

Destination image is a construct that has been extensively researched within travel and tourism. It is a complex construct that has been defined by many scholars in a variety of ways (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Kim and Richardson (2003) define destination image as “a totality of impressions, beliefs, ideas, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards a place over time.” Similarly, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) suggest that a destination's image “is not only the individual traits or qualities but also the total impressions an entity makes on the minds of others.” Hunt (1975) describes destination image in simpler terms by stating it as a prospective tourist's opinion about a particular destination. Although many researchers have

defined destination image in their own terms, the sum of all definitions suggests that destination image forms as a result of a combination of cognitive and emotional processing of a tourist's perceptions regarding a particular location.

Previous research on destination image has also been known to contribute to a variety of singular and multi-dimensional studies of the construct including cognitive, affective, conative, and overall image (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Sirgy et al. (2018) note that cognitive destination image references a tourist's beliefs, and knowledge of destination attributes, while affective destination image refers to a tourist's feelings or emotionally charged responses towards the features of a destination. Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) note that the conative dimension of destination image study refers to a tourist's ability to actively reference a destination's image as a viable travel choice. The overall destination image, which features both cognitive and affective image dimensions combined, is often defined as the total evaluation which represents a tourist's opinion of a destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). While conative image studies have been linked only to the intention to revisit a destination, cognitive, affective, and overall destination images are variables that have been linked to behavioural intention outcomes including the intention to recommend, revisit, and visit (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

In addition, destination image studies have also categorised the higher-order construct into three additional processes of study including organic, induced, and complex imagery (Byon & Zhang, 2010). Byon and Zhang (2010) note that organic destination images are those that form as a result of communication media unrelated to tourism efforts, for example, television news reports, political newspapers, textbooks, or even word-of-mouth sources digital or traditional in nature (Tomaž & Walanchalee, 2020). In contrast, induced destination imagery is a direct result of tourism marketing efforts, with the differentiating factor between the two types of destination imagery being intent and motivation for travel (Byon & Zhang,

2010). Lastly, Byon and Zhang (2010) note that complex destination image only comes as a result of direct and prior experience with a destination. This means, whether a tourist is simply a digital tourism window shopper, an active researcher on the hunt for their next new destination adventure, or a tourist experienced within a particular location, destination image formation can derive from each of these experiences through differing processing channels, i.e. sources.

Tourism location imagery is often difficult to alter (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Unlike a film production set, for example, tourist locations are often curated sites shown as they are in real life. For reasons such as this, the use of popular endorsers (Xu & Pratt, 2018) or user-generated content (Tomaž & Walanchalee, 2020) can become an effective strategy to help potential tourists form a positive destination image. Study research by Tomaž and Walanchalee (2020), which examined internet memes as a representation of Thailand's destination image, suggests that user-generated content via social media can be an effective representation tool for destination image formation in today's digital society. In contrast, Xu and Pratt (2018) research findings did not reveal a significant impact on the prediction of tourist attitudes towards a destination, even when the tourist destination is endorsed by popular TIs they view as similar to their ideal self. This could suggest that research currently exists disputing TI significance in destination image formation and/or that TI popularity is not a stand-alone factor of significance in TI marketing and tourist destination image formation.

In summary, destination image is a multi-dimensional variable which may lead to a variety of behavioural outcomes, and a TI is a rare tangible spokesperson with the ability to reach a (sometimes large) segmented audience already predisposed to the idea of travel. Because their audience potentially follows and ranks them as credible and self-congruent, their potential effectiveness on destination image formation is an area ripe for further study

across various locations. In the case of destinations that may greatly benefit from the promotion of positive destination imagery due to various factors like lack of experience or inaccurate knowledge of a destination, TIs are positioned to change the narrative and influence tourism visit intentions within the SADC region, and aid in creating a positive influence within the region's image formation and its potential tourist's destination image processing. This research intends to examine the relation between destination imagery and TI characteristics within the SADC region. In accordance with previous studies on destination image and TI background above, the following hypotheses have been developed for this research study:

Hypothesis #3: The destination image presented by travel influencers positively affects visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #6: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between travel influencer credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #7: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between self-congruity towards a travel influencer and visit intentions towards South Africa.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 The Research Methodology Process

Critical to any research process, the methodology process allows completed research studies to be sufficiently evaluated for trustworthiness and legitimacy. The Scribbr (2020b) 4-step research methodology process was utilised to satisfy those requirements for this research study. The Scribbr (2020b) 4-step process states that research methodology that satisfies the criteria for research validation and legitimacy contains the following 4 parts: (1) an explanation of the methodological approach, (2) a description of the methods of data collection, (3) a description of the methods of data analysis, and (4) an evaluation and justification of the methodological choices. The following sections of this chapter contain further details of the criteria above as it pertains to this research study.

3.2 The Methodological Approach

A quantitative approach was used to address this study's research problem and aims. The research problem established for this research study was developed from the emergence of influencer marketing within the travel marketing sector. This emerging genre of tourism and destination marketing signals the necessity of gaining a deeper understanding of TIs' impact on tourism. Specifically, it is essential to establish the cause-and-effect relationships between the characteristics of TIs and their audience's cognitive responses and behavioural intentions regarding travel and tourism. This research chose to focus its efforts on investigating the effects of TIs on African tourism, as currently there is a lack of research (a research gap) regarding the impact of TIs on global tourism marketing, destination imagery, and visit intentions within the African context. As a result, various tourism stakeholders, within regions such as the SADC, are potentially underutilising TIs within their tourism marketing strategies, and underestimating the positive impact TI credibility and self-

congruity may have on regional tourism; leading the region's member states to remain largely unexplored and misunderstood by global TCs, continually misrepresented by non-tourism related media, undergoing a loss of potential tourism revenue, and consequently, experiencing delayed development opportunities within African tourism markets. In order to sufficiently explore this problem, this research took a statistical approach to its data collection by establishing a quantitative experiment analysed between subject groups. Furthermore, a primary data collection method was utilised to achieve the aims of the research mentioned above.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

This research involved manipulating and measuring two independent variables, (1) credibility and (2) self-congruity, and thereafter, measuring (1) mediating variable, destination image, and (1) dependent variable, visit intention. This research focused on exploring the South African destination image perceptions, and travel intentions of potential international tourism consumers. Therefore, we tested our hypotheses on a simple randomised sample population of United States of America (USA) based participants who had no prior experience visiting South Africa. USA-based was defined as a person currently residing in the USA. Additional criteria for this study required participants within the sampled group to be aged 18 years and older, and from multiple genders, relationship statuses, and races in order to take part in the online questionnaire used for this study's data collection.

The online questionnaire was created using Qualtrics software and distributed to USA-based participants using Prolific, an online distribution partner. Although no specific timeframe was required to complete the questionnaire, it was distributed during a single time period, and participants were only allowed a single questionnaire entry into the study. The questionnaire consisted of questions regarding participant demographic information, consent

confirmation, two video assets, and 40 total multiple-choice items which used a 7-point Likert scale response. Scales from previous research studies were used to help create the items within the questionnaire. The video assets used within the questionnaire were designed and produced by the researcher for use in this study. In total, the questionnaire collected 308 responses. After data filtering took place, a total of 263 completed responses were included in the data analysis for this research study.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Before the data analysis began, the dataset was checked in order to identify and extract responses containing missing data and outliers. This filtration revealed that from the 308 total responses collected, 27 responses indicated they had previously travelled to South Africa, as a result, these responses were excluded from the analysis for this research study. Furthermore, respondents who failed the bot check (4), respondents who failed the attention-check question (4), respondents with incomplete questionnaires (3), and respondents with identical responses across multiple item sets were excluded from the data analysis. This filtering left a total of 263 qualified responses for analysis.

Sample size estimation for a path model was based on the detection of a medium effect size (0.3) with 3 latent and 22 observed variables with 80% power at the 5% significance level, for which a minimum sample size of 137 is required (Soper, 2020). Therefore, the total sample size of 263 qualified respondents proved more than sufficient for data analysis for this research study.

The data analysis was carried out in SAS software using a 5% significance level. To begin, a descriptive analysis was performed on all study variables in order to gain a clear picture of the makeup of the study's sample groups. A comparison of all study variables between demographic variables was done using the independent samples t-test. The following

5 descriptors were identified within the dataset for this research study: (1) group (control and experimental), (2) age, (3) gender, (4) race, and (5) relationship status.

Additionally, the data analysis plan for this research study used a variety of methods for analysis including; (1) the independent samples t-test, (2) the chi-squared test, (3) the mediation model (structural equation model - SEM), and (4) the two-way ANOVA.

Comparison of all study variables between experimental and control groups was done by the independent samples t-test for continuous variables, and the chi-squared test for categorical variables (Fisher's Exact test was used for 2x2 tables or where the assumptions of the chi-squared test were not met). The use of mediation model analysis allowed the data collected from this research to be analysed from three types of variable perspectives, (1) the direct effect, (2) the indirect effect, and (3) the total effect of the data collected (Gunzler et al., 2013). The mediation model SEM was chosen as one of the primary data analysis techniques for this research due to its consideration of mediating variables within a path model (Gunzler et al., 2013). Assessment of the mediation models was done using path analysis. This type of analysis assisted this research in identifying the pathway by which TI characteristics play a role in impacting the South African destination image and subsequently lead to an increased desire to visit intentions towards the country for travel and tourism (Gunzler et al., 2013).

Additionally, two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also used as a data analysis technique within this research to provide further confirmation of the results. Assessment of the relationship between all variables was done using two-way ANOVA with an interaction term between credibility and self-congruity. Where the interaction term was not significant, it was removed for model parsimony. The ability of the two-way ANOVA to examine the main effects of multiple independent variables within a study (Kim, 2014) allowed for more definitive research results.

Scale reliability was assessed by Cronbach's alpha, with alpha values ≥ 0.7 regarded as acceptable (Hair et al., 2012). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability coefficients were also calculated, with values ≥ 0.5 and ≥ 0.6 respectively considered acceptable according to the established criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981). The correlation between scales and sub-scales was assessed by Pearson's correlation coefficient. Credibility (CR) and self-congruity (SC) were each categorised as High: ≥ 4.5 and Low: < 4.5 , based on consideration of the interpretation of the 7-point scale.

3.5 Experimental Study

In order to determine the cause-and-effect outcomes of the independent variables (TI credibility and self-congruity) on the dependent variables (destination image and visit intention), we conducted a study that considered multiple experimental designs, including a simple 2-group and 2x2 factorial design. Both designs were analysed between subjects using an online questionnaire structured into 5 parts. In addition, they both featured the use of measured and manipulated variables assessed on a high versus low scale. Scales from previous research studies were used to guide the manipulation of group conditions. In total, the questionnaire collected 263 respondents for analysis.

Part 1 of the questionnaire randomly assigned participants into 1 of 2 group conditions, experimental or control. The questionnaire then asked participants to view travel video content similar to what can be found posted on any social media platform and answer the questions that followed. All video assets used within this questionnaire featured the same travel activities and attractions, within the same cities in South Africa. Additionally, all video assets utilised the same background music, video editing style, and length of video time (3 minutes and 35 seconds). Each video asset used in this questionnaire was created by the researcher to represent high vs. low levels of TI credibility and self-congruity for use within this study. These similarities across all video assets helped to maintain experimental balance

and highlight only the independent variables within the study. In group 1, the experimental condition, participants viewed travel video content featuring measurable TI credibility and self-congruity. This condition was further manipulated by the presence of a TI within the content who sufficiently represented a measurably high level of each of the study's independent variables. The experimental condition collected a total of 133 respondents for data analysis. In group 2, the control condition, participants viewed travel video content featuring low/no measurable TI credibility or self-congruity. The absence of a TI within the video content helped to achieve the manipulation of this condition. The control condition collected a total of 130 respondents for data analysis. See the chart below for more 2 group design details.

Table 1: Design Chart

Travel Influencer Characteristics			
Levels	Credibility		Self-Congruity
	High	High Credibility	High Self-Congruity
	Low	Low Credibility	Low Self-Congruity

The group conditions for the 2 (Credibility: high versus low; manipulated and measured factor) x 2 (Self-Congruity: high versus low; manipulated and measured factor) design were subsequently collected from the measured respondent data for each independent variable. The collected data confirmed the presence of four separate conditions: (1) high credibility/high self-congruity, (2) high credibility/low self-congruity, (3) low credibility/high self-congruity, and (4) low credibility/low self-congruity. Each condition for the 2x2 factorial design consideration collected a relatively equal number of respondents for data analysis. The high CR/high SC condition was measured by a total of 65 respondents (24.7%), high CR/low SC was measured by 69 respondents (26.2%), low CR/high SC was measured by 57

respondents (21.7%), and low CR/low SC was measured by 72 total respondents (27.4%).

See the chart below for more 2x2 factorial design details.

Table 2: Design Chart

Self-Congruity (SC)	Travel Influencer Characteristics Credibility (CR)	
	High	Low
	High	Low
High	High CR/High SC	Low CR/High SC
Low	High CR/Low SC	Low CR/Low SC

After obtaining consent from all participants, Part 2 of the questionnaire then assessed the participant's visit intentions (VI) towards South Africa, after TI video exposure. This section used a three-item, seven-point scale derived from a study on the perceived effects of travel blogger relevance by Chen et al. (2014). This scale asked participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree, "If I get a chance to travel, I intend to visit South Africa," "When I go on a trip, the probability of visiting South Africa is high," and "I want to go on a trip to visit South Africa."

Next, Part 3 assessed participants' cognitive impact towards South Africa's destination image (DI) after travel content exposure. Using the same Likert scale as the previous section, the destination image was assessed using a scale developed and validated by (Byon & Zhang, 2010). Byon and Zhang (2010) broke down the variable into four separate dimensions which included (1) infrastructure (DI-INF), (2) attractions (DI-ATTR), (3) value for money (DI-VFM), and (4) enjoyment (DI-ENJ). The Byon and Zhang (2010) scale used by this study features 18 items in total.

Part 4 of the questionnaire then assessed the perceived credibility (CR) level of TIs by using a scale developed by Ohanian (1990) where credibility was measured by a 15-item

scale that featured 3 separate dimensions, (1) expertise (CR-EXP), (2) trustworthiness (CR-TRUST), and (3) attractiveness (CR-ATTR). This scale was chosen within this study due to the high reliability and validity scoring that the scale received within the research conducted by Ohanian (1990) which measured celebrity endorsers' perceived credibility to effectively influence participants' purchase intent and product quality perception.

Finally, Part 5 of the study's questionnaire assessed participant's perceived self-congruity (SC) towards the TI featured within the travel content by using the 'new method' of measuring self-congruity. This method measures self-congruity directly by allowing participants to rate their level of self-congruity experienced by a product-user image holistically (Sirgy et al., 1997). Participants were given the following instructions: 'Take a moment to think about the video you watched previously in this questionnaire. Think about the kind of person you see featured in the video as a TI/tourist in South Africa. Using information from the video you watched as a reference, describe the featured TI using one or more personal adjectives such as adventurous, relaxed, fun, cool, stylish, or whatever personal adjective you can use to describe her as a TI/tourist in South Africa.' Using the same Likert scale as all previous sections of the questionnaire, participants rated their level of agreement or disagreement with their perceived self-congruity towards the TI across all four dimensions of self, including, (1) actual self (SC-AS), (2) ideal self (SC-IS), (3) social self (SC-SS), and (4) ideal social self (SC-ISS).

3.6 Practical Considerations of Research

All practical considerations regarding participant recruitment, timing, standardised procedures, and record-keeping for this research study were verified through an ethical clearance certificate obtained by the researcher's university institution. Other practical considerations like pilot testing were conducted online by similar means as the full study test procedures in order to ensure all procedures worked as planned. Pilot testing was conducted

to confirm the clarity of the questionnaire's video assets and concepts. In addition, pilot testing also served as a manipulation check on all conditions to include the presence and/or absence of a featured TI. Pilot testing concluded that all conditions and manipulations were sufficient, and all video assets and concepts were clearly understood for this experimental design.

3.7 Methodological Evaluations & Justifications

The quantitative approach was used within this research because its overall process of numerical data collection, and analysis was deemed suitable to help gain knowledge regarding the research questions and answer the hypotheses built from the literature review. Although the experimental design has its challenges, including, difficulty controlling all variables within a study, an experimental design was chosen for this study, because of its strong ability to help validate and test the cause-and-effect relationships between independent variables and dependent variables, and its ability to extract a significant amount of data from a small sample of the population investigated within research (Kirk, 2009) For this research study, this approach will help to contribute new knowledge and understanding regarding future TI marketing campaigns and help destination marketers identify the influential factors behind TI partnerships.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the questionnaire's data set was conducted. This was done to accomplish the following: to identify the demographic features of each sample group, to confirm the even distribution of respondent numbers between the control and experimental groups, and to confirm the even distribution of respondent measurements of the combined independent variable conditions low CR – low SC, low CR – high SC, high CR – low SC, and high CR – high SC, in order to subsequently assess the relationships between the measured/manipulated groupings and to conduct a 2-way ANOVA based on a 2x2 factorial design. After data filtration of the initial 308 questionnaire respondents, the analysis concluded that between the control and experimental groups, respondent numbers were evenly distributed. Control $n = 130$ and experimental $n = 133$, which left a total of $n = 263$ responses for further data analysis.

The study's demographic features identified within the descriptive analysis included gender, age, race/ethnicity, and relationship status. This analysis revealed that, in terms of gender, the highest percentage of questionnaire respondents identified as female (60.5%), followed by male (38.4%), and concluded with non-binary (1.1%). In terms of age, the descriptive analysis found that the highest percentage of respondents fell within the 25-34 years age group (37.3%), followed by the 35-44 years age group (25.9%), next the 45+ years age group (24%), and lastly, the questionnaire's smallest age group of respondents was also its youngest, 18-24 years age group (12.9%). In terms of race/ethnicity, the majority of respondents identified as White (67.7%), followed by Black or African American respondents (12.2%), Asian respondents (11%), respondents who identified as other (6.8%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1.5%), and lastly Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

respondents (0.8%). Interestingly, the 2023 racial demographic breakdown of the USA population was reported as 58% White, 20% Hispanic or Latino, 13% Black or African American, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% Other (*Is the US becoming more diverse?*, 2024). Therefore, this questionnaire's respondents are notably within close range of the current racial demographic makeup of the USA. It should also be noted that respondents who identified as other for this questionnaire, may presumably fall mostly within the Hispanic and Latino race as this classification was not included as an option within the questionnaire. The final demographic category within the questionnaire's data findings uncovered the respondent's relationship status. It was revealed that a large majority of respondents classified their relationship status as single (51.7%), followed by married (38.8%), divorced (6.5%), and engaged (3%).

Rounding out the descriptive analysis findings was the confirmation of an even distribution of respondent measurements of the combined independent variables conditions. The analysis confirmed that the 2x2 factorial design concept could be reasonably studied in further analysis as the four conditions required within this study for a 2-way ANOVA (low CR – low SC, low CR – high SC, high CR – low SC, and high CR – high SC) was reasonably met based on respondent measurements of the independent variables manipulated within the TI videos, and was evenly distributed in total number between all conditions. N = 72 respondents measured within the low CR – low SC condition grouped at a total of 27.4%, n = 57 respondents measured within the low CR – high SC condition grouped at 21.7% total, n = 69 respondents measured within the high CR – low SC condition grouped at 26.2% total, and n = 65 respondents measured within the high CR – high SC condition with a group totalled at 24.7%.

In summary, the descriptive analysis of the dataset collected for this research study revealed that the majority of the questionnaire respondents were single White females

between the ages of 25-34 years old. In addition, an even distribution of qualified questionnaire response numbers was collected between experimental and control groups. Lastly, between all four 2x2 factorial conditions within the study, the number of qualified questionnaire response measurements was also evenly distributed across all respondents.

Table 3: Demographics Results

Characteristic	Category	N = 263	%
Group	Control	130	49,4
	Experimental	133	50,6
Age category (grouped)	18-24y	34	12,9
	25-34y	98	37,3
	35-44y	68	25,9
	45y+	63	24,0
Gender	Male	101	38,4
	Female	159	60,5
	Non-binary	3	1,1
Race	White	178	67,7
	Black or African American	32	12,2
	Asian	29	11,0
	American Indian or Alaska Native	4	1,5
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0,8
	Other	18	6,8
Race (grouped)	White	178	67,7
	Black or African American	32	12,2
	Asian	29	11,0
	Other	24	9,1
Relationship status	Single	136	51,7
	Married	102	38,8
	Divorced	17	6,5
	Engaged	8	3,0
Relationship status (grouped)	Single	153	58,2
	In a relationship	110	41,8

4.2 Reliability Assessments

All scales and subscales within this research demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.7). The alpha coefficients for the variable scales within this study

were as follows, credibility = 0.954, self-congruity = 0.921, destination image = 0.926, and visit intention = 0.887. A regularly utilised statistic within scientific research, Cronbach's alpha determines the reliability and internal validity of the instruments used within a research study, ensuring that they are constructed with high quality, and are fit to address the research's aims and purposes (Taber, 2018). Therefore, achieving a scoring of Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.7 across all scales used within this research revealed that the scales used to build the questionnaire for this research study were of high reliability in determining the outcomes and impact of TI credibility and self-congruity on the destination image and visit intentions towards South Africa.

For additional confirmation of research instrument reliability and internal validity, this research also measured the AVE and the Composite Reliability for all variable scales used. All scales and subscales achieved the appropriate threshold for the composite reliability ($CR > 0.70$) and average variance extracted ($AVE > 0.50$) (Hair & Alamer, 2022). There were only three outliers of note within these statistics. The AVE for the destination image (DI) scale was 0.45, which was slightly below the recommended minimum of 0.5. Both the AVE (0.48) and Composite Reliability (0.53) of the destination image-attractions (DI-ATTR) subscale were somewhat below the recommended minimum of 0.5 and 0.6 respectively. However, as noted by Taber (2018), even when there may be issues with an instrument's scale, Cronbach's alpha may still be regarded as acceptable. Therefore, Cronbach's alpha results provide sufficient evidence of the reliability and validity of the questionnaire used within this study. See the Cronbach's alpha chart below for more details.

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha for all scales and subscales

Scale or subscale	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Visit Intention (VI)	3	0,887	0,930	0,816
Destination Image (DI)	18	0,926	0,925	0,454
DI Infrastruture (DI_INF)	5	0,887	0,916	0,691
DI Attractions (DI_ATTR)	6	0,782	0,532	0,481
DI Value for Money (DI_VFM)	3	0,819	0,703	0,734
DI Enjoyment (DI_ENJ)	4	0,886	0,857	0,755
Credibility (CR)	15	0,954	0,940	0,616
CR Trust (CR_TRUST)	5	0,947	0,960	0,826
CR Expertise (CR_EXP)	5	0,921	0,941	0,760
CR Attractivness (CR_ATTR)	5	0,902	0,929	0,724
Self-Congruity (SC)	4	0,921	0,880	0,809

CR = Composite Reliability Coefficient, AVE = Average Variance Extracted

In summary, the Cronbach's alpha test confirmed the reliability and internal validity of the questionnaire instrument used within this research study. Although the additional reliability test revealed that the variable destination image and its subscale attractions were slightly below recommended measurements of acceptability, the strength of the Cronbach's alpha results still confirmed reliability and validity for all scales and subscales within the study's questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire constructed for this research study was found to be useful for the study's research purposes.

4.3 Correlation Between Scales and Subscales

This study utilised the Pearson correlation formula to analyse and measure the linear relationships between all variables within the research, in order to determine the strength and direction of each correlational relationship. Obilor and Amadi (2018) note that correlation refers to the measurement of the association or relationship between two variables to determine whether they are positively related, negatively related, or not related at all. Two variables are considered related if changes in one variable affect or influence changes in the other. To assess the relationship between variables, we use correlation coefficients, which express the degree of association. These coefficients measure both the strength (direction and magnitude) of the relationship between two variables.

Results can be read in the Pearson correlation coefficient r which can be high or low in magnitude and negative or positive in direction, and ranges from -1 to +1, with -1 indicating a perfect negative correlation and +1 indicating a perfect positive correlation (Obilor & Amadi, 2018). A correlation coefficient of 0 implies no correlation at all. Additionally, correlation coefficients lower than 0.40 (whether negative or positive) are considered low, those between 0.40 and 0.60 are moderate, and coefficients above 0.60 are classified as high (Obilor & Amadi, 2018).

All variable relationship pairings within this study were measured as positively related. However, there were a few correlational relationships that displayed positively high correlational values ($r > 0.6$), signifying that, the more respondents measured positive changes in one variable, a highly positive change was reported in the other variable. These correlational relationships of note within this study were as follows: the relationship between visit intention and destination image-enjoyment ($r = 0.608$), the destination image pairwise correlational relationships between destination image-infrastructure and destination image-attractions ($r = 0.717$), destination image-infrastructure and destination image-enjoyment ($r = 0.658$), destination image-attractions and destination image-enjoyment ($r = 0.714$), the credibility pairwise correlational relationships between credibility-trust and credibility-expertise ($r = 0.774$), credibility-trust and credibility-attractiveness ($r = 0.658$), credibility-expertise and credibility-attractiveness ($r = 0.631$), the self-congruity pairwise correlational relationships self-congruity-actual and self-congruity-ideal ($r = 0.785$), self-congruity-actual and self-congruity-social ($r = 0.827$), self-congruity-actual and self-congruity-ideal social ($r = 0.661$), self-congruity-ideal and self-congruity-social ($r = 0.726$), self-congruity-ideal and self-congruity-ideal social ($r = 0.827$), self-congruity-social and self-congruity-ideal social ($r = 0.643$), and lastly, the relationship between credibility and self-congruity-ideal social ($r = 0.605$). See below for the correlation table for this research study.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficients Table

Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 263															
Prob > r under H0: Rho=0															
	VI	DI	DI_INF	DI_ATTR	DI_VFM	DI_ENJ	CR	CR_TRUST	CR_EXP	CR_ATTR	SC	SC_A	SC_I	SC_S	SC_IS
VI	1														
DI	0,562	1													
DI_INF	<.0001		1												
DI_ATTR	0,453	0,874		1											
DI_VFM	<.0001	<.0001			1										
DI_ENJ	0,457	0,895	0,717			1									
CR	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001				1								
CR_TRUST	0,317	0,647	0,393	0,495				1							
CR_EXP	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001					1						
CR_ATTR	0,608	0,869	0,658	0,714	0,470					1					
SC	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001						1				
SC_A	0,381	0,587	0,521	0,486	0,371	0,547						1			
SC_I	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001							1		
SC_S	0,321	0,550	0,489	0,457	0,372	0,492	0,916							1	
SC_IS	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001								1
	0,365	0,496	0,397	0,419	0,319	0,499	0,900	0,774							
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001							
	0,334	0,522	0,504	0,419	0,296	0,471	0,853	0,658	0,631						
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001						
	0,385	0,428	0,319	0,360	0,302	0,444	0,559	0,474	0,521	0,499					
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001					
	0,340	0,377	0,277	0,317	0,288	0,381	0,425	0,352	0,398	0,387	0,904		1		
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001			1	
	0,376	0,417	0,327	0,363	0,233	0,440	0,582	0,503	0,548	0,505	0,932	0,785			1
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0,0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001			
	0,302	0,299	0,194	0,246	0,252	0,323	0,380	0,308	0,369	0,340	0,883	0,827	0,726		1
	<.0001	<.0001	0,0015	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001		
	0,364	0,439	0,340	0,362	0,312	0,444	0,605	0,524	0,545	0,549	0,877	0,661	0,827	0,643	1
	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	

In summary, all correlational relationships between study variables were measured as having a positive effect or influence on one another. However, there were a few notable correlational relationships of highly positive affect and influence, these were found across the following variables: credibility (and its pairwise dimensions), self-congruity (and its pairwise dimensions), and destination image (and its pairwise dimensions). Visit intention was only measured as highly positive with one dimension of destination image (enjoyment), and credibility was measured as highly positive with only one variable dimension outside of its pairwise counterparts, self-congruity-ideal self.

4.4 Assessment of Demographics vs. Study Variables

The comparison of all study variables (credibility, self-congruity, destination image, and visit intention) between demographic variables was done using the independent samples t-test. The demographics assessed within this section included the following: age (categorised as 18-24 yrs, 25-34 yrs, 35-44 yrs, and 45 yrs plus), gender (categorised as male, female, and

non-binary), race (categorised as White, Black, Asian, and Other), and relationship status (categorised as single or in a relationship).

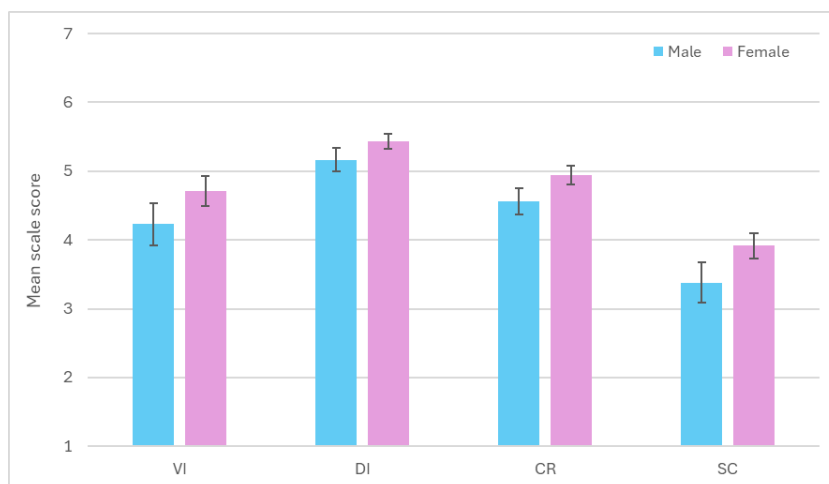
The results revealed that there were no significant differences in the mean scores for all study variables (self-congruity, credibility, destination image, and visit intention) between the different age categories. However, the age 18-24 yrs group showed the higher mean score (standard deviation) results across the variables of visit intention with a mean score of 4.8(4.3), destination image with a mean score of 5.7(0.5), and credibility with a mean score of 5.0(0.8). The highest mean score in the comparison of self-congruity vs. the demographic variable of age was shown within the 35-44 age group with a mean score of 3.8(1.3).

Additionally, across all study variables, females scored significantly higher than male respondents. Regarding the dependent variable, visit intention towards South Africa, males reported a mean score of 4.2(1.6) compared to females who scored 4.7(1.4). This result revealed a significant difference between male and female visit intention effects calculated as a P-value of 0.016. Regarding the mediating variable destination image, males reported a mean score of 5.2(0.8) compared to females who scored 5.4(0.7). This result revealed a significant difference between male and female destination image effects calculated as a P-value of 0.021. Regarding the independent variable credibility, males reported a mean score of 4.6(1.0) compared to females who scored 4.9(0.9). This result revealed a significant difference between male and female credibility effects calculated as a P-value of 0.0040. Moreover, regarding the independent variable self-congruity, males reported a mean score of 3.4(1.5) compared to females who scored 3.9(1.2). This result revealed a significant difference between male and female self-congruity effects calculated as a P-value of 0.0057. See the illustrated table and chart below for more details.

Table 6: Gender vs. variables mean

Gender	Scale or subscale	Mean
Male	VI	4,2
	DI	5,2
	CR	4,6
	SC	3,4
Female	VI	4,7
	DI	5,4
	CR	4,9
	SC	3,9

Figure 2: Gender vs. variables mean chart



Regarding race/ethnicity, the mean score for visit intention was the only score of significance. The results revealed that Black respondents, above all others, had a better mean score regarding visit intention effects with a score of 5.2(1.5). This result revealed a significant difference between Black respondents and all other races' visit intention effects calculated as a P-value of 0.0057. Also, of note within the race demographic comparisons, Black respondents scored a higher mean score across all other variables, although the P-values for those scores revealed no significance, i.e. calculated as P-value >0.05.

Lastly, rounding out the comparisons of demographics vs all study variables was the reporting of respondent's relationship status. In this category, there were no significant

differences within the mean scores between those respondents who reported being single or in a relationship (of any kind). The P-values across all study variables within this demographic category were calculated as P-value <0.05 .

In summary, although no significant differences in the mean scores of all study variables within the demographic categories of age and relationship status were found within the dataset, there were findings of note within the age demographic category. These findings included the discovery that respondents who belonged to the 25-34 years old age group were more positively influenced by credibility, and in turn, experienced a more positive impact on destination image and visit intentions towards South Africa. Moreover, the age group 35-44 years old was more positively influenced by the independent variable self-congruity in comparison to all other age groups. Additionally, although the race/ethnicity demographic category revealed no significant difference in the mean scores for credibility, self-congruity, and destination image across all races, it was revealed that Black respondents were more influenced across all study variables (including visit intentions) in comparison to other races. Furthermore, Black respondents experienced a more significantly positive impact on visit intentions towards South Africa. The most notable findings within the demographic analysis were found within the gender category. The analysis of study variables between genders discovered that females were more significantly influenced by all study variables. In conclusion, Black females were more significantly influenced towards visit intentions to South Africa, and females (regardless of age, race, or relationship status) were more significantly influenced by the independent variable's credibility and self-congruity, and in turn, experienced a more significant impact on destination image and overall visit intentions toward South Africa.

4.5 Comparison of All Study Variables Between Experimental and Control Groups

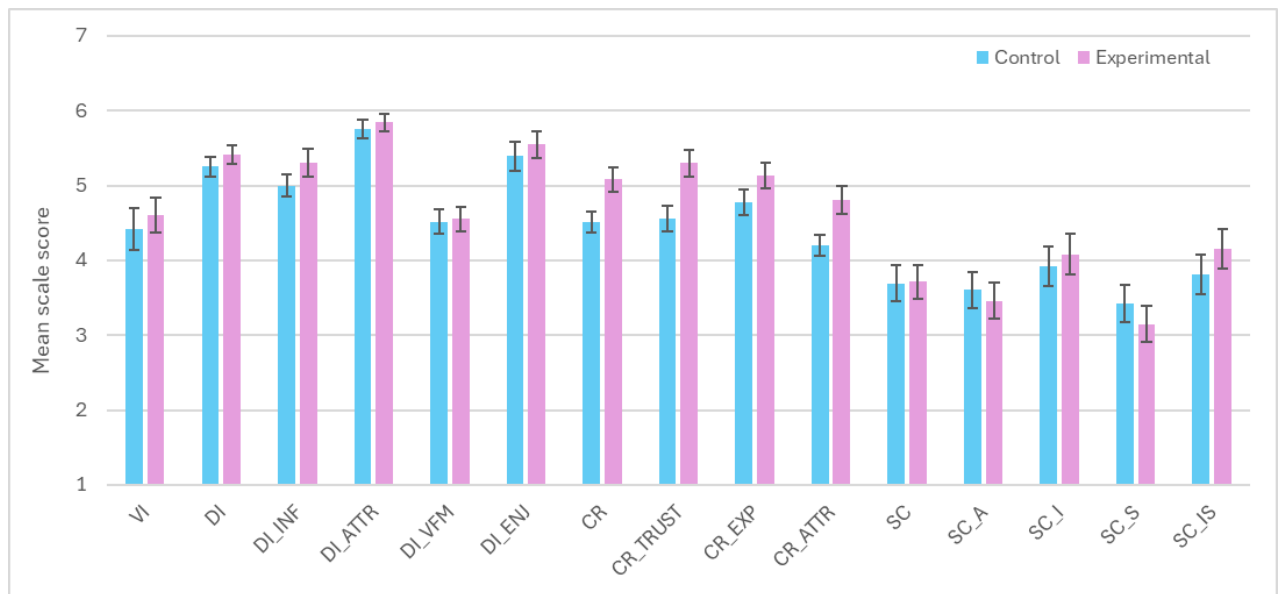
Following an analysis of all study variables between the experimental and control groups, no significant differences were found between experimental and control group demographics as all P-value calculations were reported as > 0.05 . This result was as expected since random assignment was used to place the questionnaire participants into groups. Between the experimental and control groups the leading demographic make-up of respondents within this research study was reconfirmed to be single White females within the age range of 25-34 years old.

Regarding the categorised (high vs. low) credibility and self-congruity groups, where the goal was to manipulate the questionnaire's travel content in order to achieve a significant difference in respondent measurements, categorised TI credibility differed significantly between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group, the condition in which a TI was present within the travel content, contained a higher portion of respondents who measured the video asset as having high TI credibility (56.4%) compared to the control group (27.7%). Reversely, the control group, the condition in which a TI was not present within the travel content, contained a higher portion of respondents who measured the video asset as having low TI credibility (72.3%) compared to the experimental group (43.6%). These findings were calculated as a P-value < 0.0001 . Unfortunately, regarding the self-congruity groupings, no significant differences were found between the experimental and control group measurements of TI self-congruity. These findings were calculated as a P-value > 0.99 , indicating that measurements of self-congruity between the two groups were almost statistically identical with low TI self-congruity measuring the highest between both groups (experimental 79.7% and control 79.2%).

Regarding the research's study variables, an analysis of results found that the mean scores for the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group

for the following variable scales: destination image-infrastructure (experimental = 5.3(1.0) vs. control = 5.0(1.0) where P-value was calculated as 0.001), TI credibility (experimental = 5.1(0.9) vs. control = 4.5(0.8) where P-value was calculated as < 0.0001), TI credibility-trust (experimental = 5.3(1.1) vs. control = 4.6(1.0) where P-value was calculated as < 0.0001), TI credibility-expertise (experimental = 5.1(1.0) vs. control 4.8(1.0) where P-value was calculated as 0.0047), and TI credibility attractiveness (experimental 4.8(1.1) vs. control = 4.2(0.8) where P-value was calculated as < 0.0001). Although no other significant differences between groups were found in the mean scores for any other scales, the experimental group did score slightly higher in all other scales except self-congruity and its subscales self-congruity actual and self-congruity social. Interestingly, the mean scores for the self-congruity scales were identical at 3.7(1.3) where P-value was calculated as 0.90. This result revealed that self-congruity overall did not shift one way or the other between experimental and control groups. Furthermore, mean scores for the self-congruity subscales self-congruity-actual and self-congruity-social revealed higher scores for the control groups (self-congruity-actual control = 3.6(1.4) vs. experimental = 3.5(1.4) where P value was calculated as 0.39; self-congruity-social control = 3.4(1.4) vs. experimental = 3.2(1.4) where P-value was calculated as 0.12). See the experimental vs. control variables bar chart below for more details.

Figure 3: Experimental vs. Control means chart



*Error bars denote the 95% confidence interval for the mean.

In summary, demographic analysis between the experimental and control groups revealed that between groups, respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, and relationship status showed similar patterns of measurement. Additionally, between experimental and control groups, there was a significant difference in respondent measurements of TI credibility and not a significant difference in respondent measurements of TI self-congruity. Furthermore, within the control group, (respondents who viewed the travel video without a TI, manipulated to indicate low TI credibility and no measurable self-congruity), low TI credibility and low TI self-congruity were significantly detected. Reversely, within the experimental group, (respondents who viewed the travel video featuring a TI with high credibility and measurable self-congruity), TI credibility was more significantly detected. However, also within the experimental group, TI self-congruity was more significantly measured as low by group respondents.

In addition, regarding the between-groups analysis of all study variables within this research study, the experimental group reported experiencing a slightly higher influence across all study variables (except self-congruity and its subscales self-congruity-actual and

social). It was regarding the mediating subscale variable destination image-infrastructure, the independent variable credibility, and its subscales (trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness) where the experimental group reported a significant difference in impact between groups. In conclusion, when the TI was present respondents reported a significantly higher destination image perception in terms of infrastructure, and overall credibility in terms of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. When the TI was not present, more respondents also reported a lower level of self-congruity in terms of actual and social self.

4.6 Assessment of the Relationship Between Credibility and Self-Congruity (High vs. Low), Destination Image and Visit Intention

This study used the opportunity to assess the relationships between the categorised independent variables, credibility and self-congruity (high vs. low), on the dependent variables, destination image, and visit intentions by analysing the independent variables from a 2x2 factorial groupings perspective. As previously mentioned, the CR x SC groupings were categorised by respondent measures of each variable manipulation. They were found to be evenly distributed into their respective categorical groupings (low CR – low SC at 27.4%, low CR – high SC at 21.7%, high CR – low SC at 26.2%, and high CR – high SC at 24.7%). Using these groupings to assess the relationships between categorical credibility and self-congruity, the research dataset was further analysed. However, the analysis results concluded that CR x SC interaction results were insignificant in all models.

Nonetheless, the assessment of the relationship between credibility and self-congruity (high vs. low) on destination image and visit intention independently did result in some significance within the models. Regarding the dependent variable destination image, the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 24% of the variance in the DV. Although this percentage of explained variance in the DV is not considered great, it was found to be the

highest of all the model assessments. Additionally, it was enough for the results to show that the main effects of both credibility and self-congruity were significant:

- High credibility (vs. low) was associated with a 0.6-point increase in the DV ($p < 0.0001$).
- High self-congruity (vs. low) was associated with a 0.3-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.0079$).

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 4: Destination Image and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

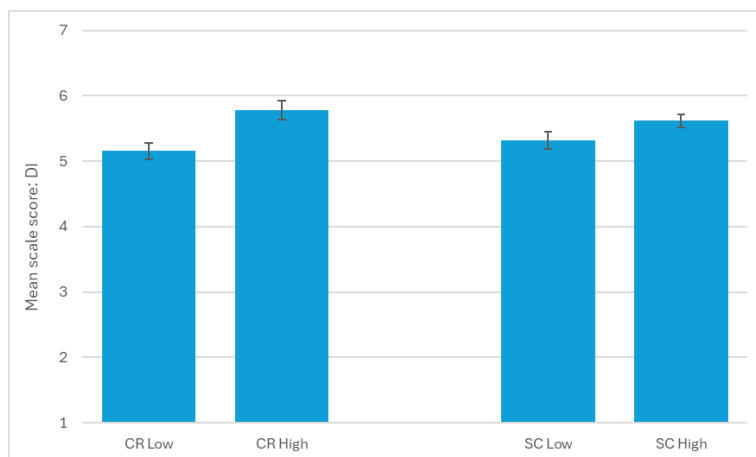


Table 7: Destination Image and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	5,2	5,0	5,3
CR High	5,8	5,7	5,9
SC Low	5,3	5,2	5,4
SC High	5,6	5,4	5,8

In terms of the dependent variable dimension DI-INF, the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 16% of the variance in the DV. Resulting in the main effect of CR showing significance:

- High CR (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.7-point increase in the DV ($p < 0.0001$).

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 5: Destination Image-Infrastructure and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

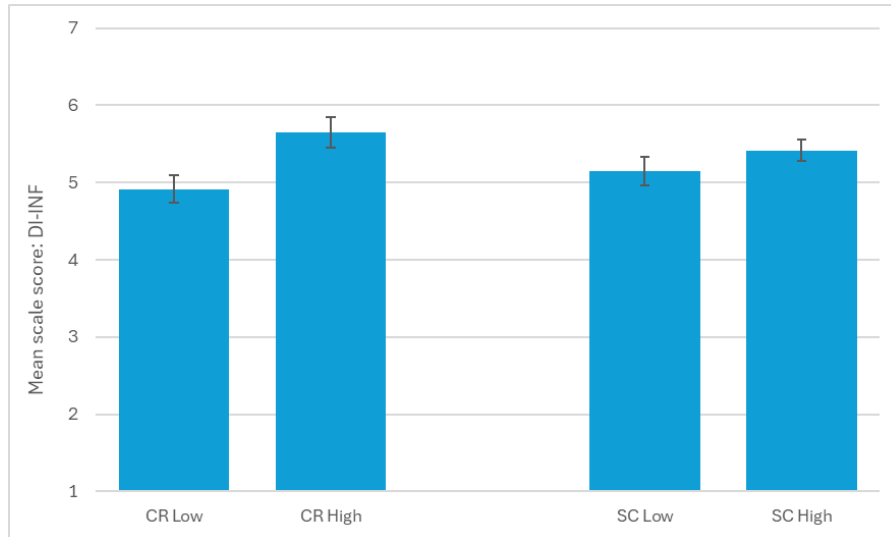


Table 8: Destination Image-Infrastructure and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	4,9	4,7	5,1
CR High	5,6	5,5	5,8
SC Low	5,1	5,0	5,3
SC High	5,4	5,2	5,7

The dependent variable dimension DI-ATTR results showed the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 19% of the variance in the DV. The main effects of both CR and SC were significant:

- High CR (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.5-point increase in the DV ($p < 0.0001$).
- High SC (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.3-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.0019$)

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 6: Destination Image-Attractions and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

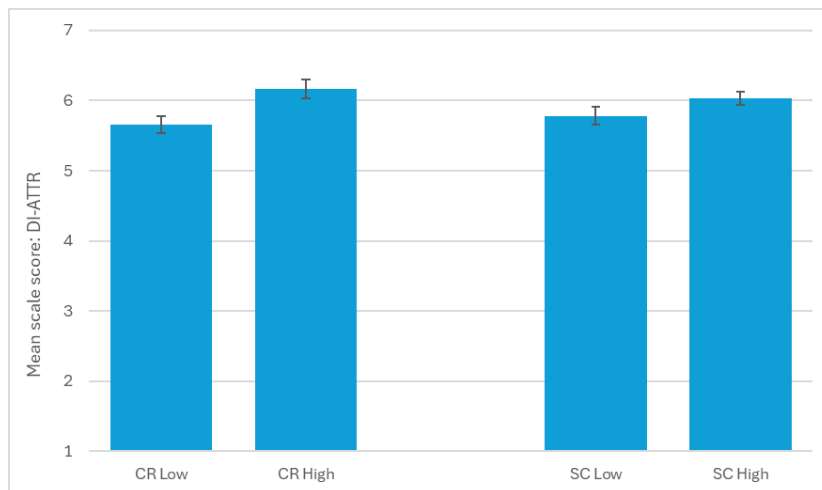


Table 9: Destination Image-Attractions and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	5,7	5,5	5,8
CR High	6,2	6,0	6,3
SC Low	5,8	5,7	5,9
SC High	6,0	5,9	6,2

The independent variable dimension DI-VFM results showed the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 12% of the variance in the DV. The main effects of both CR and SC were significant:

- High CR (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.5-point increase in the DV ($p < 0.0001$).
- High SC (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.3-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.021$).

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 7: Destination Image and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

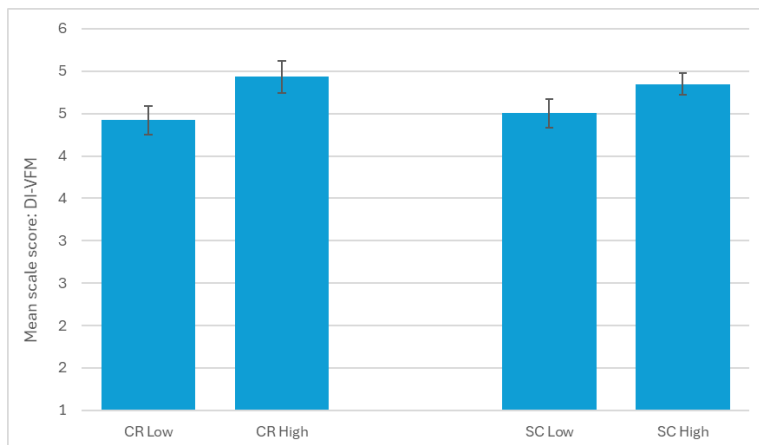


Table 10: Destination Image and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	4,4	4,2	4,6
CR High	4,9	4,8	5,1
SC Low	4,5	4,4	4,6
SC High	4,8	4,6	5,1

The dependent variable dimension DI-ENJ results showed that the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 18% of the variance in the DV. The main effects of both CR and SC were significant:

- High CR (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.8-point increase in the DV ($p < 0.0001$).
- High SC (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.4-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.020$).

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 8: Destination Image-Enjoyment and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

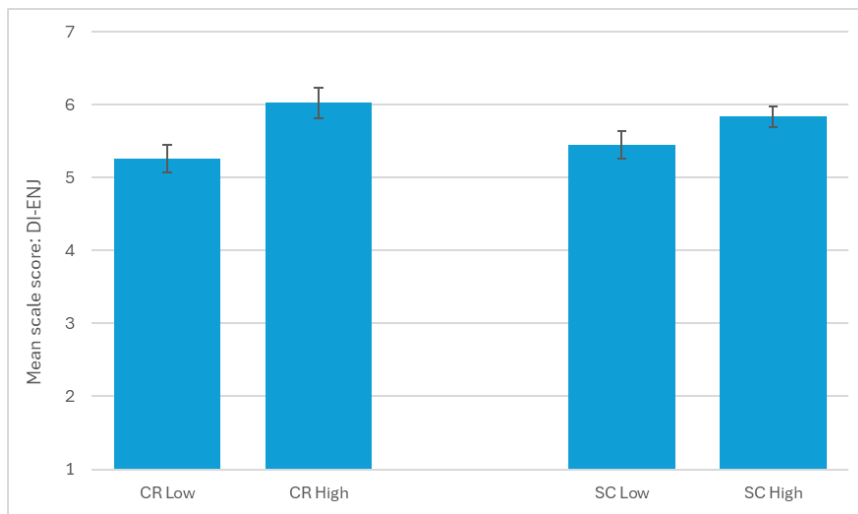


Table 11: Destination Image-Enjoyment and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	5,3	5,1	5,5
CR High	6,0	5,8	6,2
SC Low	5,5	5,3	5,6
SC High	5,8	5,6	6,1

Lastly, the independent variable VI results showed the model was significant ($p < 0.0001$) and explained 12% of the variance in the DV. The main effects of both CR and SC were significant:

- High CR (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.7-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.0002$).
- High SC (vs. Low) was associated with a 0.6-point increase in the DV ($p = 0.009$).

See the results illustrated below.

Figure 9: Visit Intention and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity Illustration of Results

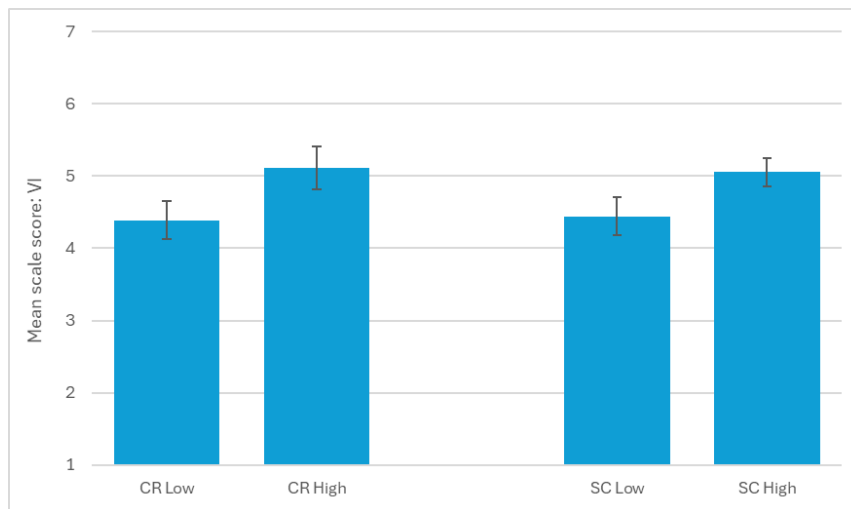


Table 12: Visit Intention and High/Low Credibility and Self-Congruity

	DI LSMEAN	95% Confidence Limits	
CR Low	4,4	4,1	4,7
CR High	5,1	4,8	5,4
SC Low	4,4	4,2	4,6
SC High	5,1	4,7	5,4

In summary, although the interaction effects between credibility and self-congruity were not significant in any of the models constructed for this research, the main effects of both credibility and self-congruity were significantly higher in all the models, except for the case of the destination image-infrastructure model. The model that received the highest explained variance in the DV was the destination image. This simply means that when higher credibility or self-congruity was detected by respondents, more significant improvement was measured in their overall perceptions of destination image and visit intention towards South Africa. The results for the destination image-infrastructure model revealed that although high self-congruity slightly improved the respondent's perception of the South African destination image in terms of infrastructure within the country, those results were not significantly higher.

4.7 Assessment of the Path Models to Address Hypotheses 1-7

In order to address the hypotheses formed based on this study, credibility (CR), self-congruity (SC), destination image (DI), and visit intention (VI) were all analysed in three ways to verify findings. The results below were analysed as continuous measures using all subscales, and categorical (high vs. low) measures. Study results show significance with a 95% confidence interval when the P value is less than 0.05. The results of the path model (shown below) exclude covariates for clarity of the overall results.

Figure 10: Path Model 1 – CR & SC (global measures) as continuous variables. Illustration of Results

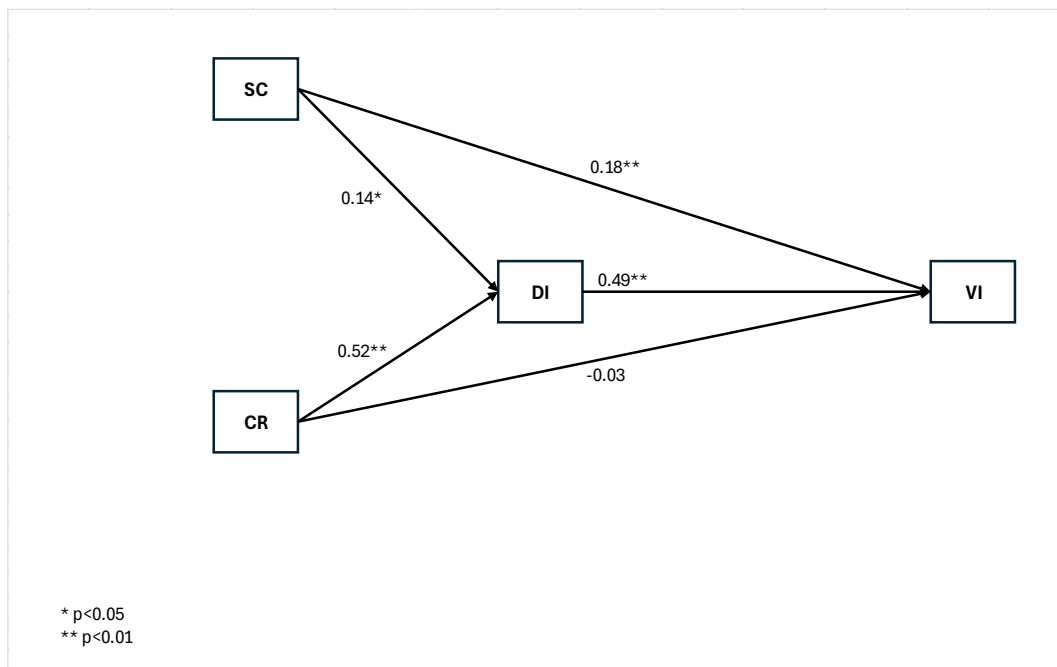


Table 13: Path Model 1 – CR & SC (global measures) as continuous variables

Standardized Effects of SC			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,24	0,18	0,07
	0,07	0,07	0,03
	3,47	2,64	2,22
	0,0005	0,0083	0,026
% of total effect mediated:			27%

Standardized Effects of CR			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,23	-0,03	0,25
	0,08	0,08	0,04
	2,99	-0,34	6,26
	0,0027	0,74	<.0001
% of total effect mediated:			100%

Results of the path model in which credibility (CR) and self-congruity (SC) were measured as continuous measures were as follows. Hypothesis #1 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively affects the destination image (DI) of South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.52 with a P value <0.01. Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high credibility can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #2 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.14 with a P value of <0.05. Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #3 states: The destination image presented by a travel influencer positively affects visit intentions (VI) to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.49 with a P value of <0.01. Meaning, that destination image, when presented by TIs, can significantly affect visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #4 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be not true and of no significance. Results showed a path coefficient of -0.03 with a P value of >0.05 . Meaning, that high TI credibility does not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions toward South Africa.

Hypothesis #5 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.18 with a P value of <0.01 . Meaning, that TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience can have a significant direct effect on visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #6 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between travel influencer credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path coefficient of 0.25 with a P value of <0.01 . In addition, destination image was shown to mediate 100% of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates all of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #7 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between self-congruity towards a travel influencer and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path coefficient of 0.07 with a P value of <0.05 . In addition, destination image mediated 27% of the relationship between self-congruity towards a TI and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates the relationship between TI self-congruity with their audience and visit intentions towards South Africa.

In summary, these hypothesis findings concluded that the standardised effects of credibility on South African visit intentions were both totally and indirectly significant. However, the direct effect was reported to be of no significance. The standardised effects of self-congruity in this path model analysis reported that the independent variable was totally, directly, and indirectly significant toward South African visit intentions. In this path model, higher TI credibility and self-congruity positively affect South African destination image. The destination images presented by TIs positively affect South African visit intentions. However, higher TI credibility does not positively and directly affect South African visit intentions. Higher TI self-congruity positively and directly affects South African visit intentions. the destination image presented by TIs positively mediates the relationship between TI credibility and audience visit intentions towards South Africa 100% of the time. Lastly, when analysed as continuous variables, the destination image presented by TIs positively mediates the relationship between TI self-congruity and audience visit intentions towards South Africa 27% of the time.

Next, results for credibility and self-congruity as continuous measures using all subscales of credibility trust (CR-TRUST), credibility expertise (CR-EXP), credibility attractiveness (CR-ATTR), self-congruity actual (SC-A), self-congruity ideal (SC-I), self-congruity social (SC-S), and self-congruity ideal social (SC-IS) were calculated. Study results show significance with a 95% confidence interval when the P value is less than 0.05. The results of the path model (shown below) exclude covariates for clarity of the overall results.

Figure 11: Path Model 2 – CR & SC as continuous variables with subscales, also subscales for DI & Illustrated Results

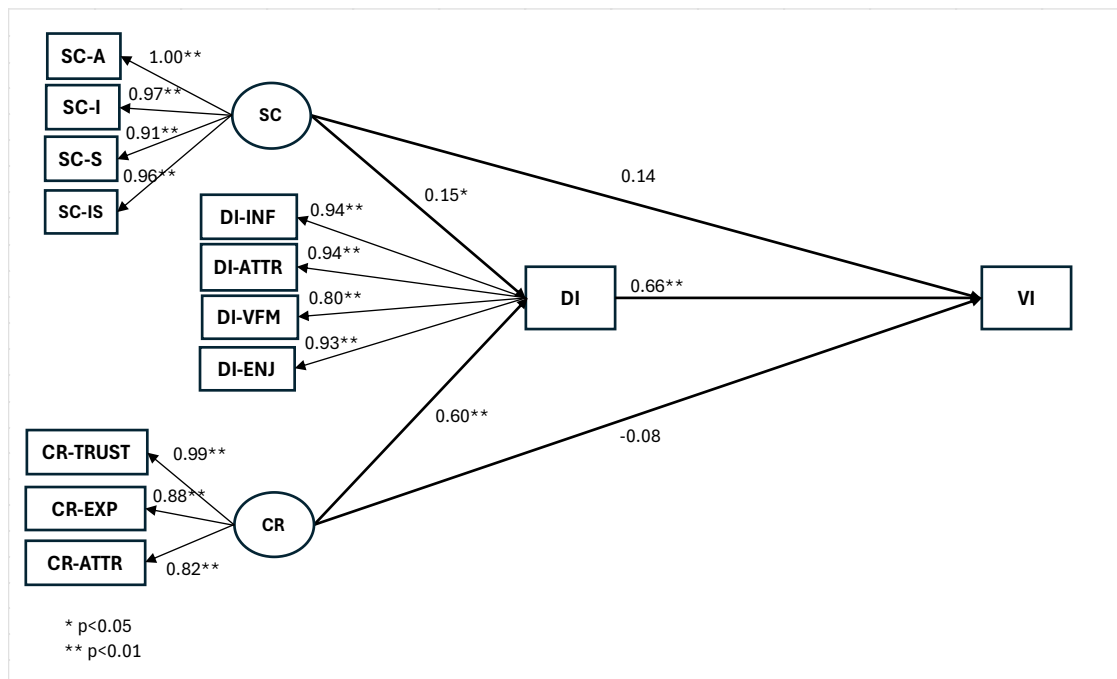


Table 14: Path Model 2 – CR & SC as continuous variables with subscales, also subscales for DI

Standardized Effects of CR			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,32	-0,08	0,40
	0,08	0,08	0,05
	3,96	-0,92	8,52
	<.0001	0,36	<.0001
% of total effect mediated:			100%

Standardized Effects of SC			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,24	0,14	0,10
	0,09	0,08	0,05
	2,77	1,74	2,13
	0,0057	0,082	0,033
% of total effect mediated:			41%

Hypothesis #1 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa. Assessment of the path model in which credibility and self-congruity were measured as continuous variables using subscales found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.60 with a P value of <0.01. Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high credibility can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #2 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.15 with a P value of <0.05 . Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #3 states: The destination image presented by a travel influencer positively affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.66 with a P value of <0.01 . Meaning, that destination image, when presented by TIs, can significantly affect visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #4 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be not true and of no significance. Results showed a path coefficient of -0.08 with a P value of >0.05 . Meaning, that high TI credibility does not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions toward South Africa.

Hypothesis #5 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be not true and of no significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.14 with a P value of >0.05 . Meaning, that TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience do not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #6 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between travel influencer credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path

coefficient of 0.40 with a P value of 0.01. In addition, destination image was shown to mediate 100% of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates all of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #7 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between self-congruity towards a travel influencer and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path coefficient of 0.10 with a P value of <0.05 . In addition, destination image mediated 41% of the relationship between self-congruity towards a TI and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates the relationship between TI self-congruity with their audience and visit intentions towards South Africa.

In summary, when analysed as continuous measures using the subscales of credibility, self-congruity, and destination image, the results of the path model showed slightly similar findings as without using subscales. The standardised effects of both credibility and self-congruity on South African visit intention were also totally and indirectly significant. However, although both the total and indirect effects were reportedly significant for both independent variables, the direct effects of both were not significant on South African visit intentions. In this path model, higher credibility and self-congruity positively affected the destination image of South Africa. Additionally, destination image positively affected visit intentions. Furthermore, higher credibility and self-congruity did not positively and directly affect visit intentions. However, in this path model, the destination image once again reported a 100% mediation rate between TI credibility and South African visit intentions. In terms of the relationship between self-congruity and South African visit intentions, the mediating percentage increased to 41% within this path model analysis.

Lastly, results for the path model where credibility and self-congruity were measured as categorical (high vs. low), measures were calculated. Study results show significance with a 95% confidence interval when the P value is less than 0.05. The results of the path model (shown below) exclude covariates for clarity of the overall results.

Figure 12: Path Model 3 – CR & SC (global measures) as categorical variable. Illustration of Results

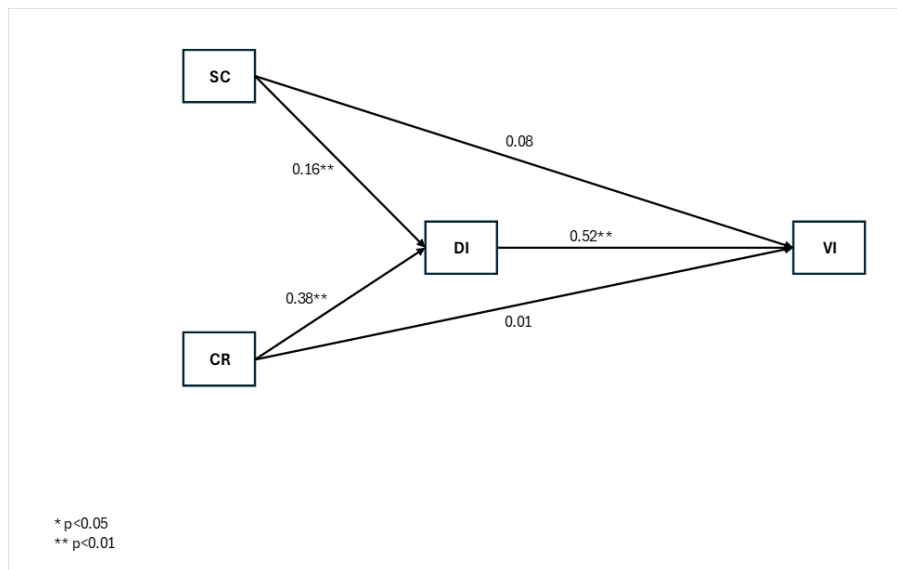


Table 15: Path Model 3 – CR & SC (global measures) as categorical variables

Standardized Effects of CR			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,21	0,01	0,20
	0,06	0,06	0,03
	3,39	0,23	5,75
	0,0007	0,82	<.0001
% of total effect mediated:			93%

Standardized Effects of SC			
Effect / Std Error / t Value / p Value			
VI	Total	Direct	Indirect
	0,16	0,08	0,08
	0,06	0,05	0,03
	2,67	1,42	3,04
	0,0075	0,16	0,002
% of total effect mediated:			52%

Hypothesis #1 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.38 with a P value <0.01.

Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high credibility can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #2 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively affects the destination image of South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.16 with a P value of <0.01 . Meaning, TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience can significantly influence the destination image of South Africa.

Hypothesis #3 states: The destination image presented by a travel influencer positively affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.52 with a P value of <0.01 . Meaning, that destination image, when presented by TIs, can significantly affect visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #4 states: High vs. low credibility of a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be not true and of no significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.01 with a P value of >0.05 . Meaning, that high TI credibility does not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions toward South Africa.

Hypothesis #5 states: High vs. low self-congruity towards a travel influencer positively and directly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be not true and of no significance. Results showed a path coefficient of 0.08 with a P value of >0.05 . Meaning, that TIs who are perceived to have high self-congruity with their audience do not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #6 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between travel influencer credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path coefficient of 0.20 with a P value <0.01 . In addition, destination image was shown to mediate 93% of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates a majority of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa.

Hypothesis #7 states: Destination image positively mediates the relationship between self-congruity towards a travel influencer and visit intention to South Africa. Assessment of the path model found this hypothesis to be true and of significance. Results showed an indirect effect path coefficient of 0.08 with a P value of <0.05 . In addition, destination image mediated 52% of the relationship between self-congruity towards a TI and visit intention to South Africa. Meaning, that destination image significantly mediates the relationship between TI self-congruity with their audience and visit intentions towards South Africa.

In summary, the path model that analysed credibility and self-congruity as categorical (high vs. low) measurements was identical to the previous path analysis. In this path model, the standardised effects of credibility and self-congruity on South African visit intention were totally and indirectly significant. As in the previous model, the standardised direct effects of both credibility and self-congruity on visit intention were not significant. Additionally, in this model, higher credibility and self-congruity both positively affected the destination image of South Africa. Destination image positively affected visit intentions. Furthermore, similar to the previous model, higher credibility and self-congruity did not positively and directly affect visit intentions. Destination image positively mediated the relationship between credibility and visit intentions by 93%. Lastly, destination image positively mediated the relationship between self-congruity and South African visit intentions by 52%.

Chapter 5: Discussions

5.1 Introduction to the Discussion

The purpose of this research study's discussion will be to accomplish the following: explain and evaluate the findings of the research, show how the findings relate to the literature review and research questions, and construct an argument in support of the overall conclusions of the research (Scribbr, 2020a). Using the Scribbr (2020a) 4-step organisational method for the research discussion, which will (1) give interpretations of research results, (2) discuss implications, (3) acknowledge limitations within the research, and (4) provide recommendations for future research studies.

To begin the discussion, we will look back on the problem which prompted this study's research, its aims, and the questions formulated thereafter. The problem explored within this research study stated that there is currently a lack of research (a research gap) regarding the impact of TIs on global tourism marketing, destination imagery, and visit intentions within the African context. As a result, various tourism stakeholders, within regions such as the SADC, are potentially underutilising TIs within their tourism marketing strategies, and underestimating the positive impact TI credibility and self-congruity may have on regional tourism; leading the region's member states to remain largely unexplored and misunderstood by global TCs, continually misrepresented by non-tourism related media, undergoing a loss of potential tourism revenue, and consequently, experiencing delayed development opportunities within African tourism markets. This research aimed to quantitatively test the validity and significance of TI credibility and self-congruity on destination image perceptions and tourism visit intention outcomes towards South Africa.

5.2 Interpretations of Research Results

The results of this research indicate that when TIs are able to successfully convey characteristics of high credibility (in terms of trust, expertise, and physical attractiveness) and high self-congruity (across all forms to include actual, ideal, social or ideal social), they can effectively influence destination image perceptions and visit intentions towards South African travel and tourism on a global scale. Additionally, results indicate that TI credibility and self-congruity alone may not always provide a direct pathway toward a significant increase in their audience's visit intentions towards the country. Results indicate that more often, it is increased destination image perceptions of South Africa that play a crucial role in explaining the relationships between TI credibility and self-congruity on South African visit intentions. Increased destination image perceptions completely explain (fully mediates) how TI credibility impacts visit intentions, meaning there is no increase in South African visit intentions without the increase in destination image perceptions. Furthermore, increased destination image perceptions only partially explain how TI self-congruity impacts visit intentions, meaning that destination image perception explains a significant portion of the relationship between TI self-congruity on South African visit intention, but not the entire relationship.

5.2a The Effects of Travel Influencer Credibility on Visit Intention to South Africa

In line with this research study's hypothesis, high credibility significantly affects the destination image of South Africa. Contrary to what we hypothesised, high credibility does not have a significant direct effect on the destination image of the country. The study by Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) which was cited within the literature review of this research discovered that the trustworthiness dimension of credibility had a consistent and significant impact on travel visit intentions. Furthermore, another study by Faisal and Dhusia (2022) which researched the role of source credibility on TI attributes and travel intention found that

expertise and trustworthiness had a significant effect on TI credibility. The combined results of both studies mentioned above would suggest insignificance regarding the dimension of attractiveness. However, the results of this research indicate that credibility across all dimensions, including trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have a consistent and significant impact on travel visit intentions. Moreover, the research conducted by Faisal and Dhusia (2022) indicates that credibility has a direct effect on travel intentions, while this research indicates that credibility overall does not have a significant direct effect on travel visit intentions when in the presence of a valid mediating factor like destination image. Therefore, this research both supports and challenges some existing research on the effects of TI credibility on visit intention. The findings from this experimental research study support the suggestion that credibility is a significant characteristic factor of TIs' ability to impact travel, however, it challenges the suggestion that their physical attractiveness does not hold an equally significant influence on the behavioural outcomes of TI audiences. Because of this, the experiment provides, not only a new insight into the relationship between TI credibility and visit intentions but also some new insight into the impact of their dimensions as well. The findings of this research help TIs and destination marketers more comprehensively understand the effect and reach of credibility in order to conclude the understanding that all of its dimensions play a part in the effectiveness of the variable as a whole.

5.2b The Effects of Travel Influencer Self-Congruity on Visit Intentions to South Africa

In line with this research study's hypothesis, high self-congruity significantly affects the destination image of South Africa. Contrary to what we hypothesised, high self-congruity does not have a significant direct effect on visit intentions towards the country. The Chinese study by Xu and Pratt (2018), which was cited within the literature review for this study, found that ideal self-congruency between the TI image and the TC positively contributed to

visit intention, but the ideal self-congruency between the two did not result in a positive impact on the consumer's attitude towards the destination. The findings of this research study support the previously researched theory that TI self-congruity from the ideal self-dimension significantly contributes to visit intention. Furthermore, because this study chose to examine all dimensions of self-congruity, this research can go further to indicate that all dimensions of self (actual, ideal, and ideal social) significantly contribute to visit intention. However, contrary to the findings of Xu and Pratt (2018), this study found that ideal self-congruity does result in a positive impact on destination image perceptions. Also noted within the literature review, was research that suggests that not all forms of self-congruity always have a direct impact on behavioural intention, instead it must sometimes live through a specified mediator in order to be effective in tourism (Cifci, 2022). Since the findings of this research study indicate that self-congruity (in all its forms) does not directly impact visit intention, but it does indirectly impact visit intention through the mediator destination image perception (which will be further discussed in the next section), this research agrees with existing studies regarding the indirect effects of the variable.

Another key finding of this research, which may speak to the power of self-congruity is the discovery that within the experiment, female respondents were more significantly influenced across all study variables. Additionally, the Black respondents were significantly influenced towards visit intention. These findings may also speak to the self-congruity significance of TIs as the TI depicted within the video asset used within the experiment was also a Black female. All things considered, this research study both supports and challenges existing research theories on the effects of TI self-congruity on destination image and visit intention. The findings of this study help influencers and destination marketers gain an in-depth understanding of how the potential of seeing one's self within the TI images displayed via social media can encourage tourism within South Africa. Additionally, these findings can

help marketers understand how to best target and build potential tourism customer profiles for future destination marketing campaigns.

5.2c Destination Image as a Mediating Effect

In line with this research study's hypothesis, the destination image presented by TIs significantly affects visit intentions to South Africa. Furthermore, destination image positively mediates the relationship between both credibility and visit intention, and self-congruity and visit intention. The literature review for this study discovered that there may currently be conflicting discoveries regarding the impact of destination image as seen through TI content. The research by Tomaž and Walanchalee (2020), which examined internet memes as a representation of Thailand's destination image, suggests that user-generated content via social media can be an effective representation tool for destination image formation in today's digital society. In contrast, Xu and Pratt (2018) research findings did not reveal a significant impact on the prediction of tourist attitudes towards a destination. This research study's findings support the findings of Tomaž and Walanchalee (2020) as similar results were found within this research study that indicate that the destination image presented by TIs significantly affects the outcome of visit intentions (to South Africa).

Another study by Laurance et al. (2023), which analysed the effects of YouTube influencers' source credibility on destination image and youth traveller's visit intent found that destination image significantly mediated the effects of source credibility. Additionally as noted in the literature review and the previous section's discussion, the study by Cifci (2022) notes that self-congruity must be processed through a mediating variable. This research study supports the findings of both existing studies mentioned above. The results of this research also indicate that destination image plays a significant role in mediating the relationships between TI credibility, self-congruity, and visit intentions to South Africa. This experiment provides a confirmatory insight into the power that destination image perception formation,

curated through TI content has on tourism behavioural outcomes of visit intentions towards South Africa. The findings of this study help destination marketers understand the positive impact TI characteristics can have on destination image branding. Additionally, this impact may help balance out the negative image issues plagued by countries like South Africa and help tourists understand that the country is not only structurally intact, but also an enjoyable experience with a variety of attractions that hold value for the money spent.

5.3 Acknowledgments and Direction for Future Research

As mentioned in a previous section, experimental designs often come with unique limitations regarding the ability to control all variables involved. This study proved to be no different. The unique limitations found within this study include (1) the study design manipulations for both experimental and control groups, (2) a small data collection error, and (3) survey participant geographic limitations.

The experimental study design for this research breaks down the independent variables credibility and self-congruity into separate high vs. low manipulations. This study used the Ohanian scale of credibility and the New Method scale for self-congruity measures to help guide the manipulation of the independent variables. In addition, the presence and absence of a TI within the conditions was manipulated in order to differentiate between high vs. low manipulation levels as seen through a TI. Although the study's outcome sufficiently determined that the participants were able to notice the way in which the manipulation of presence vs. absence occurred, the research data may be limited in the true possibility of its outcomes given the fact that the control group manipulation videos did not have a TI present to measure all other study variables against. Additionally, self-congruity measurement showed no significant difference between groups, and within each group, low self-congruity was more significantly measured. In future studies, this can be addressed by choosing a different approach to the manipulation. For example, one where both the experimental and

control group videos contain a TI; yet the experimental group features a TI displaying a level of credibility and a specified congruity category within travel, and the control group videos featuring a TI displaying a level of credibility and specified congruity within a different influencer category, such as food blogging.

The small data collection error presented within this research is found within the age demographic data collection. The age category of 55-64 years was mistakenly removed from the options under the demographics section of the survey. This error caused participants who may have fallen within those ages to possibly choose the age group above (65 years old +) or below (45-54 years old) in order to complete the survey. Therefore, middle-aged to senior adults were grouped within the study's findings. Future studies should be sure to meticulously perform checks of survey information prior to release, in order to avoid this error within the research study.

Although the study centred around global tourism research, the participant's geographic location was limited to those within the USA only. This creates an obvious limitation on global tourism findings as this study only collected from USA-based participants, which means that other outbound tourist populations cannot be sufficiently addressed within this study's findings. Future studies may want to include a wider reach of participants within other countries worldwide in order to more significantly speak to the effects of TI characteristics on a global scale and from a variety of cultural perspectives.

5.4 Conclusions

By measuring/manipulating credibility and self-congruity, identifying the strength or weakness of destination image as a mediator, and ultimately measuring the outcome of visit intention, this research sought to scientifically answer the questions (1) Does TI credibility and/or self-congruity significantly impact destination image perception and visit intention towards South African travel and tourism? and (2) Can destination image significantly

mediate the relationships between TI credibility and/or self-congruity and visit intentions towards South African travel and tourism? Based on a quantitative analysis of the impact of TI credibility and self-congruity on destination image perception and visit intentions to South Africa, it can be concluded that TIs who display significant characteristics of credibility and audience self-congruity can significantly impact destination image perceptions and visit intentions towards South African travel and tourism. Additionally, it can be concluded that destination image is a significant mediator of the relationship between TI credibility and visit intentions towards South Africa, as well as the relationship between TI self-congruity and visit intentions towards the country. Meaning, TIs who can significantly and positively impact the destination image of South African travel and tourism by displaying significant credibility and self-congruity, are also able to significantly impact visit intentions amongst their audiences.

This research clearly indicates the significance of TI credibility and self-congruity on destination image and visit intention towards South African travel and tourism but also raises the question of whether or not these results can be duplicated across the African continent or even globally. Additionally, the results of this research study also raise the question of whether or not destination image is the best mediator between credibility, self-congruity, and visit intentions towards countries like South Africa that may suffer significant misrepresentation from alternative media sources. Is there a more significant mediator that can dictate the relationships between TI characteristics and visit intentions? Other questions raised by the findings of this research include the following:

- Can gender or ethnicity be a comparable mediator of these relationships? Man vs. Woman. Black vs. White.
- Can congruity towards culture or customs be a causality or mediating variable for tourism visit intent? Strict Cultures vs. Liberal Cultures.

- Does attractiveness (or lack thereof) as an element of TI credibility have a significant impact? Attractive vs. Unattractive.
- Is infrastructure the most significant element of destination image to determine visit intention? Poverty Tourism vs Luxury Tourism (Soweto vs. Sandton).

The chosen methodology for this research study was effective in answering the questions posed within this study. The quantitative experiment process utilised within this research brought to light new questions and insights that can be adopted in future research studies on the subject of TI marketing. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could confirm these findings through the context of other countries. Specifically, countries tasked with addressing misrepresentation, underdevelopment, or economic hardships would be the best candidates to confirm and enrich the findings of this research study.

The contributions of this research study include aiding destination marketers in building a comprehensive understanding of the potentially significant impact of TI partnerships on destination marketing campaigns goals of increased tourism visitation, exploration, and understanding of South African tourism on a global scale. By addressing this research gap, surrounding TIs, this research study helps marketers understand that it is not about the variables of credibility and self-congruity alone, but more about the effects of those variables as seen through a TI.

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Appendix

Questionnaire Instrument

Part 1 – Travel Content Viewing

Instructions: In this section, we ask you to view a short video and answer the questions that follow.

- Participants are randomly selected to view 1 of 2 group conditions videos.
 - Experimental Group = High Credibility & Self-Congruity (Travel Influencer displaying Ohanian scale)
 - Control Group = Low Credibility & Self-Congruity (No Travel Influencer Present)

Part 2 - Visit Intention Assessment

Instructions: Using information from the video you watched previously as a reference, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about South Africa as a tourist destination.

1. If I get a chance to travel, I intend to visit South Africa.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
2. When I go on a trip, the probability of visiting South Africa is high.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
3. I want to go on a trip to visit South Africa.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Part 3 – Destination Image Assessment

Instructions: Using information from the video you watched previously as a reference, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about South Africa as a tourist destination.

Infrastructure

1. South Africa has quality infrastructure (roads, airports, and utilities).
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
2. South Africa has suitable accommodations.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
3. South Africa has a good network of tourist information (tourist centers).
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
4. South Africa has a good standard of hygiene and cleanliness.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
5. South Africa is safe.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Attractions

1. South Africa has good shopping facilities.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree

- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
- 2. South Africa has beautiful natural attractions (parks, forests, and/or trails).
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
- 3. South Africa has beautiful scenery.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
- 4. South Africa has a good climate.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
- 5. South Africa offers interesting cultural events (festivals and/or cultural).
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
- 6. South Africa offers interesting historical attractions (museums and/or art centers).
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree

Value for Money

1. South Africa has accommodations that are reasonably priced.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
2. South Africa is an inexpensive place to visit.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
3. South Africa good value for my travel money.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree

Enjoyment

1. South Africa is a pleasing travel destination.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
2. South Africa is an enjoyable travel destination.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
 - ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat Agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
3. South Africa is an exciting travel destination.
 - ☐ Strongly Disagree

- Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
4. South Africa is a novel travel destination.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Attention check:

- Select 'Somewhat agree' from the questions below.
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Part 4 - Credibility Assessment

Instructions: Using information from the video you watched previously as a reference, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

Trustworthiness

1. The travel influencer in the video is dependable.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
2. The travel influencer in the video is honest.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

3. The travel influencer in the video is reliable.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
4. The travel influencer in the video is sincere.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
5. The travel influencer in the video is trustworthy.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Expertise

1. The travel influencer in the video is an expert.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
2. The travel influencer in the video is experienced.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
3. The travel influencer in the video is knowledgeable.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree

- Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 4. The travel influencer in the video is qualified.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 5. The travel influencer in the video is skilled.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Attractiveness

- 1. The travel influencer in the video is attractive.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 2. The travel influencer in the video is classy.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 3. The travel influencer in the video is Beautiful.
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

4. The travel influencer in the video is elegant.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

5. The travel influencer in the video is sexy.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Part 5 – Travel Influencer Self-Congruity Assessment

Instructions: Take a moment to think about the video you watched previously in this survey. Think about the kind of person you see featured in the video as a travel influencer/tourist in South Africa. Using information from the video you watched as a reference, describe the featured travel influencer using one or more personal adjectives such as adventurous, relaxed, fun, cool, stylish, or whatever personal adjective you can use to describe her as a travel influencer/tourist in South Africa. Use the text box below to write your descriptions.

1. The travel influencer in the video is consistent with how I see myself.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

2. The travel influencer in the video is consistent with how I like to see myself.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

3. The travel influencer in the video is consistent with how I believe others see me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

- Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
4. The travel influencer in the video is consistent with how I would like others to see me.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Questionnaire Video Assets



Link #1: [Experimental Video](#)



Link #2: [Control Video](#)