

THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' ATTRACTIVENESS ON THE TRAVEL DECISION MAKING OF DOMESTIC TOURISTS IN KENYA

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Abstract: In recent years, social media has proven to be a highly influential medium, significantly shaping consumer decision-making. Its growing usage has given rise to prominent individuals with large followings across various platforms—commonly known as social media influencers (SMIs)—who hold considerable sway over public opinions within specific industries. In the tourism sector, the use of SMIs to promote travel-related activities has become increasingly widespread. Today, more tourism businesses are leveraging social media and influencer partnerships to attract customers than ever before. This study focused on exploring the effect of social media influencers' attractiveness in shaping the travel decisions of domestic tourists in Kenya. The research was grounded in two theories: The Theory of Reasoned Action and Attribution Theory. The target population included followers of social media influencers in Nairobi and Kiambu Counties of Kenya. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study gathered data through questionnaires from 399 respondents which was then analyzed to meet the outlined objective. The findings revealed a strong influence between source attractiveness and domestic tourists' decision-making. Drawing from the study's findings, which emphasize the strong impact of source attractiveness—especially in terms of similarity and likability—on the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya, several recommendations are suggested. Firstly, tourism marketers should focus on partnering with influencers who closely align with the cultural background, lifestyle, and demographic characteristics of their intended domestic audience. Secondly, those in the tourism sector should invest in influencer-driven campaigns for domestic tourism in order to effectively capitalize on the role of source attractiveness in influencing domestic tourists' decision-making processes and boost engagement in Kenya's local tourism sector.

Keywords: Social media influencer, source attractiveness, decision-making, domestic tourist, Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background Information

The travel sector is among the most rapidly expanding areas of the global economy (UNWTO 2016). In 2019, the travel and tourism sector added 2.9 trillion US Dollars to worldwide GDP (Statista, 2020). The landscape of travel and tourism has evolved significantly from the time when English travelers would explore nearby nations like France and Italy out of curiosity or for leisure (Gordon, 2017). Travel has become increasingly favored as individuals seek to explore unfamiliar locations and uncover new spots. Ehsan (2022) define tourism as the aggregation of

phenomena and interactions that emerge from the travel and stay of individuals who do not reside permanently and are not engaged in income-generating activities. The tourism sector encompasses various other industries, including hospitality, transportation, attractions, and travel agencies, positioning tourism as a service rather than a commodity. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007).

European locations have attracted many international travelers, with France hosting 89 million foreign visitors in 2018 and Spain accommodating 82 million that same year (Statista, 2020). In 2017, Africa drew 63 million international tourists, making up 5% of the worldwide share (UNWTO, 2018). Kenya stands out as a nation with appealing tourist attractions and receives numerous visitors

from various regions globally. The country is well-regarded by many tourists, particularly those from the United Kingdom (Kyalo and Katuse, 2013).

The expansion of the tourism sector in Kenya has recently been fueled by social media and influencers who raise awareness about different facets of tourism in the nation. The internet is limitless and enables user-generated content. These characteristics make it an ideal platform for exchanging experiences and thoughts on various aspects of life, including travel and vacations. Social media combines two terms: 'social' and 'media.' The word "social" pertains to how individuals interact and also sheds light on their reasons for connecting—whether to acquire knowledge, share experiences, or collaborate on initiatives. (Bedford, 2019). Social networking platforms or social media represent one of the growing methods for promoting tourism-related activities in Kenya (Otieno, 2014; Arika and Moronge, 2017). Facebook, a social networking platform, ranks as the second most popular social media site with over 7.2 million users, following Whatsapp (Bett, & Makewa, 2018). The count of Facebook users constitutes more than 58% of all individuals using social media platforms in Kenya. YouTube and Instagram are also widely utilized, with over 8 million Kenyans on YouTube and 4 million subscribers on Instagram (Githinji, 2018).

Instagram, a platform for social media emphasizing photo sharing, serves as a means for promoting tourism. The platform was established in 2010 and boasts more than a billion active users (Statista, 2020). Users can create profiles and upload pictures accessible to friends, family, and even unfamiliar individuals. The platform employs hashtags, with 511 million posts tagged with travel and 37.5 million posts tagged with tourism (Instagram, 2020). Platforms such as Instagram present travel locations and business proprietors an online identity and a direct link with visitors via their business profiles (The Voice of Travellers, 2018). Social media enables travelers to share their thoughts, experiences, and emotions in a creative manner (Narangajavana et al, 2017). Tourists can explore, obtain, and peruse various information about their prospective destination through feedback left by fellow travelers on various social media sites. These comments found on social media are also referred to as user-generated content (UGC) (Narangajavana et al, 2017). As noted by Xiang and Gretzel (2010), UGC serves as a crucial asset that can aid, enhance tourists' planning, or eventually sway their travel choice.

Consumers do not make buying choices independently. They are affected by multiple interpersonal and non-personal influences. (Rahman & Pial, 2019). These elements encompass a person's culture, sub-culture, social class, and reference groups. Schiffman et al. (2014) characterized reference groups as 'social role models that influence consumer behavior.' Conventional reference groups consist of family, friends, coworkers, club members, etc. (Rahman & Pial, 2019). With an increasing number of individuals online, reference groups now encompass digital communities that are ready to offer information, share experiences, respond to inquiries, and engage in conversations about specific brands, businesses, and products (Bedford, 2019).

For an extended period, celebrities have been included among the reference groups utilized in marketing and promotion. Celebrities are individuals who have a certain level of public awareness and exhibit traits like appeal, reliability, and dependability. (Sari, Hayu, & Salim, 2021). Famous individuals and endorsements from these personalities have been a staple of contemporary marketing

(Mikuláš & Světlík, 2016). Their utilization has been consistently rising in recent years, as marketers recognize their ability to sway consumer buying choices (Zipporah and Mberia, 2014). The growing prevalence and appeal of social media has resulted in the advancement of prominent figures recognized as social media influencers (Abidin, 2016) who possess a substantial following and can sway opinions on issues within a specific industry. These individuals have managed to attract followers over time by producing content that resonates with their audience. The majority of their posts focus on their personal experiences, or their viewpoints and encounters with various brands (Sinn & Syn, 2014). Their views are esteemed by their supporters and all other social media users who visit their profiles.

As local travelers select their vacation spots, they are influenced by various personal characteristics that encompass understanding and exploration, financial issues, location details, family and travel boasting (Mutinda and Mayaka, 2012). Travelers are influenced by technology and data as they determine their travel choices (Rahman & Pial, 2019). The influence of social media figures has been progressively harnessed in the tourism sector in Kenya and various regions worldwide. Different organizations and the business community have increasingly embraced social media due to its capability to showcase individual experiences of those utilizing the services (Burke, 2019). According to Sinn and Syn (2014), various types of social media are genuine and trustworthy and therefore are increasingly serving as an effective tool for promoting the tourism industry. The content created by users in marketing transforms social media into an exceptional platform. Researchers have also noted the cost efficiency of utilizing social media for marketing in the tourism field. (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013). The majority of social media platforms are free, prompting companies to budget for influencer fees, which are considerably less expensive compared to purchasing advertising space in traditional media. Hudson & Thal (2013) further asserts that social media is impactful for promoting the tourism sector due to its worldwide accessibility.

Throughout the years, both companies and marketers have acknowledged the possibilities and chances to connect with a vast audience of potential customers by joining forces with social media influencers. These influencers are now utilized to promote travel destinations and activities. Companies collaborate with these influencers who actively generate content and disseminate it to 'their audience,' which consequently aids in increasing their sales. A social media influencer can significantly benefit the tourism industry when their content is genuine and fosters a positive brand image that resonates broadly within the market. (Gretzel & Yoo, 2013). The social media influencers convey a brand in their activities, allowing the target audience to utilize it for recognition. Conversely, the tourist destination aiming to leverage social media influencers examines the brand they have developed over time and their connection with the audience, then involves the social media influencers to connect with their audiences.

1.2 Source Attractiveness

Another source characteristic that influencer's consumer decision making is source attractiveness. Endorsers who are perceived to be attractive by a message recipient lead to a purchase in the consumer decision making process (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). Source attractiveness refers to the perceived appeal of a message source based on characteristics such as physical appearance, likability, similarity, and familiarity

(McGuire, 1985; Belch and Belch, 2009). Source attractiveness encompasses other characteristics such as personality and athletic ability (Hugh Wilkie, Dolan, Harrigan, & Gray, 2022).

In the context of travel marketing, the attractiveness of a source—be it a celebrity, social media influencer or an ordinary user—can significantly influence a potential tourist's decision-making process. If a consumer finds the source of the message attractive, in this case, a social media influencer, they are more likely to make a purchase decision during the consumer decision making process. Attractive and relatable social media influencers who share travel experiences can create parasocial relationships with followers, thereby increasing destination appeal (Marques et al., 2021). Photos and reviews from similar travelers on platforms like TripAdvisor or Instagram are trusted more than traditional advertising due to perceived authenticity and similarity (Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides, 2012).

According to Lim et al. (2017), the people who stand out and share content that is likable by a majority to the level when they can shape the opinion of their followers are referred to as the social media influencers. A personality should develop a considerable level of relationship with their followers on the social media platforms such that the audience looks forward to getting information from them. Glucksman (2017) also adds that social media influencers would only be critical in an advertisement when they have a relationship with the target audience and, as such, would create an opportunity for the brands to get an association with the consumers.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Utilizing social media influencers has proven to be an effective strategy for promoting tourism activities in Kenya. It is evident that prospective travelers increasingly rely on social media during their trip planning process (Gros, 2012) and are influenced by content shared by social media influencers (Hanifah, 2019). By sharing their travel experiences and related insights, influencers engage in a digital form of word-of-mouth marketing, which can significantly impact tourism businesses—either positively or negatively. Their credibility and relatability, stemming from regular interaction with followers, enhance their persuasive power (Buyer, 2016). Consumers now turn to social media to exchange personal experiences with brands, services, and destinations, seeking more authentic perspectives during their decision-making (Evans & McKee, 2010).

Despite this global trend, Kenya has been slow to adopt social media as a tool for promoting tourism. According to Otieno (2014), only 35% of Kenyan tour operators had a presence on Facebook, and less than 10% maintained active engagement. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of accessible information regarding domestic tourism in Kenya (Kihima, 2015). As noted by Ndivo, Waudu, and Waswa (2012), many potential domestic tourists lack guidance on where and when to travel. Similarly, a study by Okello, Kenana, and Kieti (2012) found that poor marketing and advertising were key factors behind the low visitation rates to Nairobi National Park among urban and semi-urban residents.

This gap in effective digital marketing strategies, coupled with minimal influencer engagement, may be contributing to the low uptake of domestic tourism in Kenya. Moreover, existing studies on the influence of social media influencers have primarily focused on other industries or international contexts, with limited research specific to Kenya's tourism sector. As a result, the extent to which

social media influencers affect the travel decisions of domestic tourists in Kenya remains largely unexplored. Understanding this influence is essential for leveraging digital platforms to enhance domestic tourism marketing efforts and to bridge the information gap for potential travelers within the country. Social media influencers can help grow the domestic tourism industry in Kenya as they form a critical part of travel planning and travel decision making (Terttunen, 2017; Hanifah, 2019). The use of social media influencers to promote tourist destinations is also cheaper for the industry stakeholders making it a sound promotional tool (Gururaja, 2015). This study therefore sought to explore the effect social media influencers' attractiveness on their followers' decision making process when it comes to domestic tourism in Kenya.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design and Target Population

The study applied a mixed method research design, which is useful when qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis are used in a study (Plano, Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires.

The study was conducted in two selected counties. The counties selected were Nairobi and Kiambu counties. These counties were chosen because they represent the population with the highest socio economic ability in Kenya (KNBS, 2019). The residents of these two counties were likely to undertake domestic tourism because higher income is a driving factor in participation in travel (Vanhove, 2005).

The respondents that were useful in the study were the followers of social media influencers were also instrumental in helping this study achieve its objectives. Data collected from these followers was useful in determining whether social media influencers have an effect on the decision making of domestic tourists in Kenya.

To calculate the sample size to be used in this study, the researcher made use of the Yamane Formula which allows inferences and conclusions drawn from the survey to be applied to the complete population from which the sample was drawn.

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

Where:

n is the required sample size from the population under study

N is the whole population that is under study (1,980,099)

e is the precision or sampling error which in this case was 0.05

This yielded a sample size of 399 respondents which was proportionally distributed based on the population of the two counties.

2.3 Research Instrument

This study utilized questionnaires as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire featured open and close ended questions. It was chosen because it is cheap, especially when the respondents are many and widely spread geographically; it is free from interviewer bias and it gives the respondents ample time to answer the questions (Kothari, 2004). The study used questionnaires as a research instrument because it forms the most reliable way of collecting the data from a large number of people (Lloria & Moreno-Luzon, 2014). The questionnaire was designed in order to answer the research question: What is the effect of source

attractiveness of social media influencers on decision making of domestic tourists in Kenya?

The questionnaires were in the English language and were structured with open and close ended questions. The analysis of the responses was useful in analyzing the impact of social media influencer posts on the decision making of domestic tourists.

3.0 Results and Discussions

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

After data collection, the information was grouped and coded. The data was analyzed such that there was both descriptive and the inferential statistics to establish the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. The independent variable of source attractiveness was measured using five-point Likert scale items each, which ranged from Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The means and standard deviation for each item are discussed in the following sections.

In determining the influence of the independent variable of source attractiveness, on the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya, the study conducted a one-sample *t*-test. In order to test the positivity of the influence of the independent variables on the decision-making of the domestic tourists, the test value of 3.4 was arrived at based on the five Likert scale items, which were assigned

codes of 1 to 5 where 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), and 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). To explain the test value $\mu = 3.4$, the following method was used. The four spaces between the five Likert scale items (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, and Strongly Agree = 5) were divided by the five numbers, which equals 0.8. This, therefore, implied that Neutral and below fell below $\mu = 3.4$. The study, therefore, concluded that any value < 3.4 was below the neutral and thus didn't show positivity in the influence on the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya.

3.1.1 Influence of source attractiveness on the decision making of domestic tourists in Kenya

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of source attractiveness on the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya. This was measured using five Likert scale items where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree, and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The scores of disagreeing have been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 0 to 2.4 on the continuous Likert scale; ($0 \leq \text{Mean} < 2.4$). The scores of 'Neutral' have been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 2.5 to 3.4 on the continuous Likert scale ($2.5 \leq \text{Mean} < 3.4$), and the score of both agree and strongly agree have been taken to represent a variable which had a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0 on a continuous Likert scale; ($3.5 \leq \text{S.A.} < 5.0$).

Table 4.7 Source attractiveness

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
If I find an SMI physically attractive, I will travel to a destination they have posted about	3.586	.749
The familiarity of an SMI will make me go on holiday to a destination they have posted about	4.019	.721
When considering an information source, I am likely to be influenced by their likability	4.181	.995
The feeling of similarity between myself and the information source significantly influences my perception of the trustworthiness of the information provided	4.317	.933
The perceived likability of the information source greatly impacts my willingness to follow their advice or recommendations.	4.298	.789
I am likely to trust the advice or recommendations of an information source who shares similar experiences or backgrounds with me	3.998	.849

From the results, the respondents strongly agreed that the feeling of similarity between themselves and the information source significantly influences their perception of the trustworthiness of the information provided. This is supported by a mean of 4.317 (std. dv = 0.933). In addition, as shown by a mean of 4.298 (std. dv = 0.789), the respondents agreed that the perceived likability of the information source greatly impacts their willingness to follow their advice or recommendations.

The respondents also agreed that when considering an information source, they are likely to be influenced by their likability. This is shown by a mean of 4.181 (std. dv = 0.995). With a mean of 4.019 (std. dv = 0.721), the respondents agreed that the familiarity of an SMI would make them go on holiday to a destination they have posted about. The respondents also agreed that they were likely to trust the advice or recommendations of an information source who shares similar experiences or backgrounds with them. This is shown by a mean of 3.998 (std. dv = 0.849). With a mean of 4.22 (std. dv = 0.87), the respondents were undecided if their relationship with SMI can influence travel to a destination they have posted about.

3.1.2 One-sample t-test for source attractiveness

Considering the hypothesis being tested,

H02. Source attractiveness has no significant effect in the decision making of domestic tourists in Kenya

$$H_0 : \mu = 3.4$$

vs

$$H_1 : \mu > 3.4$$

Source attractiveness equally yielded the following findings. Since $t(379) = 95$, $p < 0.000$, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that $\mu > 3.4$, which implies that the mean score of the source attractiveness index is above the neutral position, meaning that source attractiveness can be used to predict the decision making of domestic tourists in Kenya. The analysis of variance also confirms the significance of the model between source attractiveness and decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya F-test p -value < 0.000 as shown in the table below;

Table 3.1 Analysis of variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	3692.52979	25	147.701192	23.36	0.0000
Within groups	2238.46758	354	6.32335475		
Total	5930.99737	379	14.3616394		

3.2 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests were performed to test the assumptions of linear regression. The assumptions tested were normality, autocorrelation, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and linear relationship. In case of violation of the regression assumptions, the confidence intervals, as well as other scientific insights derived from the regression model, may be regarded as misleading, biased, or inefficient. Therefore, the inferences derived are incapable of being generalizable on other data.

3.2.1 Linearity Test

When the value of sig. Deviation from the linearity > 0.05, then in the multiple regression model, it can be said that the predictor variables significantly affect the response variable. If the value sig. Deviation from linearity is < 0.05, then the relationship between the predictor and the response variable is partially significant. In Table 3.2 below, the sig. value of Source attractiveness= 0.555; Concerning these results, the appropriate basis for decision-making in our multiple linear regression model analysis can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between all the variables. Thus, increasing the effect of the predictors improves the response variable.

Table 3.2 Coefficients of Linearity Test

Model	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
Source attractiveness	.555	-19.784	23.728	.192	5.200

3.2.2 Normality Test

A normality test determines whether a dataset is modeled for normal distribution. A normal or nearly normal distribution is a fundamental condition of many statistical functions. Normally distributed data assumes a symmetrical or bell-shaped curve with a higher frequency of scores in the midpoint and lower frequencies towards the extremes.

There are two main methods of assessing normality: graphically and statistically. Tests for normality include; skewness and

Kurtosis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, and the Shapiro-Wilk. This research adopts the Shapiro-Wilk test due to the study's small sample size. The null hypothesis for this test is that the data are normally distributed. The Prob < W value listed in the output is the p-value. If the chosen alpha level is 0.05 and the p-value is less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis that the data are normally distributed is rejected. If the p-value is more significant than 0.05, then the null hypothesis is not rejected. As tabulated in Table 3.3, the p-values of all the study variables are more significant than 0.05, thus confirming that the data is normally distributed.

Table 3.3 Normality Test

Variable	Obs	W	V	z	Prob>z
Source attractiveness	380	0.92945	1.179	0.321	0.37427

3.2.3 Multicollinearity Test

The extensively used statistical tests for identifying multicollinearity are tolerance value and variance inflation factor (VIF). The tolerance value is the proportion of variance in the predictor variable that is not explained by other explanatory variables (Sekeran & Bougie, 2013). A Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) measures the extent to which multicollinearity has increased the variance of an estimated coefficient. When there is a correlation among predictor variables, the standard error of the coefficients of the predictors increases, and as a result, the variance of the predictor's coefficients is inflated.

The value of VIF =1 shows that the predictor variables are not correlated. Nevertheless, when the value of VIF is $1 < VIF < 5$, it shows that the variables are moderately correlated. The VIF between 5 to 10 shows that variables are highly correlated. According to the results in Table 3.4 of regression coefficients, the value of VIF is $1 < VIF < 5$. Since the VIF values were below 5, it was found that there was no multicollinearity among the independent variable. This implies that the results of the multiple regression equation are not misleading since the independent variables in the multiple regression equation are not highly correlated.

Table 3.4 Multicollinearity Test Statistics

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Source attractiveness	0.800	1.237

3.2.4 Heteroskedasticity Test

Violation of homoscedasticity tends to inhibit critical evaluation of forecast errors of standard deviation, which often leads to confidence intervals that are incredibly narrow or extremely wide. Heteroscedasticity in this study was assessed using the Breusch-Pagan test. The null hypothesis for this test was that the error variances were equal and were a multiple function of variables. Homoscedasticity normally occurs when the p-value exceeds the significance level (0.05). As indicated in Table 3.5, the p-value was 0.3274, more significant than the significance level of 0.05. This implies that there was homoscedasticity in the regression model.

Table 3.5 Breusch-Pagan test for Heteroscedasticity

Ho: Constant variance

Variables: Fitted with values of Domestic tourist decision making

Chi2 (1)	0.96
Prob>chi2	0.3274

Table 3.6 Correlation Coefficients

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Tourists Decision Making	1.000				
(2) Source Attractiveness	0.700***	0.736***	1.000		

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

A strong positive relationship ($r = 0.700$, $p < 0.001$) was found between source attractiveness and the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Negm and El Halawany, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Magno and Cassia, 2018) that demonstrated the influence of influencer attractiveness on viewers' travel intentions and their likelihood of accepting travel recommendations. Attractive influencers are often perceived as more persuasive and appealing, which can contribute to their ability to shape their followers' travel decisions. These findings are consistent with the research by Negm and El Halawany (2020), who found a positive correlation between the attractiveness and trustworthiness of SMIs and consumers' intentions to plan a vacation. Further, the attractiveness of vloggers has a significant positive effect on the viewers' travel intentions (Chen et al., 2021). The perceived trustworthiness and quality of the information shared by a blogger are two factors that can highly influence their followers' intention to accept a travel recommendation (Magno and Cassia, 2018).

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The objective of the study strongly demonstrates the significant impact of source attractiveness, as measured by similarity and likability, on the decision-making processes of domestic tourists in Kenya. The consistently high mean scores (>3) across the Likert

3.3 Correlation Analysis

To determine the degree of relationship between the explanatory variables, Pearson's Correlation was performed as illustrated in Table 3.6. Pearson's Correlation (r) is a measure of the strength of the association between two variables. Pearson correlation coefficient ranges between zero and one, where the strength of association increases with the correlation coefficients' value increase. The current study employed Taylor's (2018) correlation coefficient ratings where 0.80 to 1.00 depicts a very strong relationship, 0.60 to 0.79 is strong, 0.40 to 0.59 is moderate, and 0.20 to 0.39 is weak.

The results revealed a strong relationship between source attractiveness and the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya ($r = 0.700$, $p < 0.001$). The relationship was significant since the p-value was less than a 1% significance level. These findings are consistent with the research by Negm and El Halawany (2020), who found a positive correlation between the attractiveness and trustworthiness of SMIs and consumers' intentions to plan a vacation. Further, the attractiveness of vloggers has a significant positive effect on the viewers' travel intentions (Chen et al., 2021). The perceived trustworthiness and quality of the information shared by a blogger are two factors that can highly influence their followers' intention to accept a travel recommendation (Magno and Cassia, 2018).

statements affirm the substantial role that source attractiveness plays in shaping respondents' decisions regarding domestic tourism. The one-sample t-test further supports this conclusion by rejecting the null hypothesis, indicating that source attractiveness is indeed a pivotal factor influencing the decision-making of domestic tourists in Kenya. In essence, the study underscores the critical interplay between source attractiveness, particularly in terms of similarity and likability, and the decision-making dynamics of domestic tourists in Kenya. These findings provide valuable insights for stakeholders in the tourism industry, emphasizing the need to strategically leverage the attractiveness of social media influencers to enhance the likability and relatability of travel-related content. This strategic alignment can contribute to fostering positive decision-making processes among domestic tourists, ultimately influencing their intentions to engage in travel activities.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, which highlight the significant influence of source attractiveness—particularly similarity and likability—on the decision-making processes of domestic tourists in Kenya, several recommendations are proposed. First, tourism marketers should prioritize collaborations with influencers who share cultural, lifestyle, and demographic similarities with the target domestic tourist audience. Influencers who reflect the everyday experiences and values of local tourists are more likely to

build trust and foster positive travel decisions. Relatability and likeability are key components of source attractiveness. Stakeholders in the tourism industry should select influencers who are perceived as genuine, approachable, and engaging. These traits enhance emotional connections with the audience, increasing the likelihood of influencing travel-related decisions.

Secondly, those in the tourism sector should invest in influencer-driven campaigns for domestic tourism. Government tourism bodies, tour operators and travel service providers should consider allocating budgets toward influencer partnerships as part of domestic tourism promotion strategies. These social media influencers should be encouraged to produce content that is not only visually appealing but also authentic and reflective of real travel experiences within Kenya. Content that highlights local attractions in a relatable and down-to-earth manner can strengthen the impact of influencer campaigns. Social media influencers who embody source attractiveness can serve as persuasive tools in encouraging more local travel. Since similarity boosts effectiveness, marketing strategies should be designed with an understanding of regional cultural norms, language preferences, and tourism behaviors. This alignment ensures that messages resonate more deeply with domestic tourists.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can effectively capitalize on the role of source attractiveness in influencing domestic tourists' decision-making processes and boost engagement in Kenya's local tourism sector.

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