How does the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media impact individuals' travel motivation to visit specific destinations?

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ABSTRACT

The impact of social media on the tourism sector has significantly grown over the last decade. This thesis investigates how the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media influences travel motivation and intention. The theories that explain travel motivation and travel intention are social comparison theory and social identity theory. A quantitative survey has been conducted and filled out by 174 individuals. The key variables included in this survey are frequency of exposure to travel-related content (FETC), motivation to choose a travel destination (MCTD), intention to visit a travel destination (IVTD), social comparison (SC), and social identity (SI). The key findings of this research are that a higher frequency of exposure leads to a higher motivation to travel, and eventually, a higher motivation to travel results in intention to travel. This thesis suggested that social comparison and social identity are moderators in the relationships between the frequency of exposure to travel-related content and travel motivation and the frequency of exposure to travel-related content and travel intention. It appears that while they are not moderators, they are of significant influence on the variables. The insights of this thesis offer practical implications for destination marketers and social media influencers by explaining how travel motivation works and by pointing out that a higher frequency of exposure to travel content results in a higher motivation and intention to travel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Topic Relevance

The rise of social media has completely reshaped the tourism industry. People nowadays spend, on average, more than 150 minutes a day on social media platforms (Statista, 2023). Van Looy (2022) defines social media as a group of interactive tools that connect internet users with the same interests by sharing and creating content that will result in value for people, self-expression, or for businesses and influencers. For that reason, it is no coincidence that travel-related content on social media has seen an increase in views and now plays a significant role in the different levels of tourism, particularly concerning the process of choosing a travel destination (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). This result was inevitable because, in 2022, over 4.59 billion people were using social media, which is estimated to increase to 6 billion by 2027 (Statista, 2023). As social media will face a continuous expansion, understanding the consequences of how content influences decision-making, especially concerning travel destination decisions, is highly important (Yousaf et al., 2018).

Social media has grown from a single marketing tool to a marketing intelligence source where organizations can analyze and predict behaviors (Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media is also important for consumers in generating their content. Platforms that enable user-generated content (UGC) are completely changing how consumers can consume content (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). As of October 2023, the main resources used for travel inspiration by travelers worldwide are respectively YouTube, word of mouth, and Instagram (Statista, 2024).

Research by Latif et al. (2020) and Mohammad et al. (2022) has shown that the content that platforms like Facebook offer can be a trigger to choose a specific destination. However, where research like Latif et al. (2020) and other research mainly focus on how travel-related content on social media influences the decision process of choosing a travel destination, this research will elaborate on the theories behind why the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media can influence an individual's motivation to travel. Furthermore, it will elaborate on how the motivation to travel will be changed to the intention to travel.

This thesis will contain the following sections. First, the knowledge gap will be explained, and after that, the research objective will be stated and ended with the research question. Following the research question, this research's academic and practical relevance will be stated. Following the relevance, a literature review will be conducted, followed by hypotheses and a conceptual framework. After this section, the methodology is stated, which also includes the research design and data analysis. The data analysis is followed by the results, a discussion, and a conclusion to finalize this thesis.

1.2 Knowledge gap

Previous research on this topic, like Thešin et al. (2022) and Asdecker (2022), have stated how travel-related content on social media impacts travel behavior. However, this research lacks a connection with how the frequency of exposure to travel content on social media can impact individuals' motivation, where their research focuses only on the intention to visit a travel destination.

1.3 Research objective and question

The objective of this thesis is to explain how the frequency of exposure to travel-related content and the motivation of an individual to choose a specific destination to visit are related. So, to reach the objective, the following research question has been formulated: "How does the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media impact individuals' travel motivation to visit specific destinations?"

1.4 Contributions

1.4.1 Academic relevance

This thesis aims to extend the current knowledge on the effect of social media on travel destination choice by adding the frequency of exposure. Moreover, a conceptual framework to address the relationships between the frequency of exposure to content and motivation to visit a specific destination is developed to gain a more visualized insight. This research is written to inspire other students who are also doing research in social media marketing.

1.4.2 Practical relevance

Next to academic relevance, this thesis can also be used as inspiration for more practical reasons. The tourism sector, in general, could benefit by gaining a better understanding of individuals' travel motivations and act accordingly by creating more content online. Travel agencies can make use of this thesis by getting a better understanding of how individuals are influenced by the travel content they see on social media. Moreover, popular influencers on platforms like Instagram and YouTube can gain more knowledge on the topic of creating content that motivates individuals' behavioral actions around travel destination choice-making.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines existing literature on four variables. Firstly, research is done on how the frequency of being exposed to content on social media can influence an individual. Secondly, this thesis investigates how travel-related content on social media can influence an individual. We then examine the motivations that drive individuals to choose specific travel destinations. This literature review will conclude with the fourth variable of this research, which is the intention to visit a destination.

2.1 Travel-related Content

Travel-related content is derived from user-generated content (UGC) on social media, including text messages, videos, and pictures, enabling travelers to pay more attention and interact more effectively with a wide variety of experiences shared by other tourists (Chung & Koo, 2015). This is done via social media platforms that allow users to share pictures, stories, reviews, and videos on their websites. Social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are used to share these types of content. (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Travel-related content has become more popular than ever on social media, even resulting in over 75% of travelers saying they got their travel inspiration from social media platforms (Statista, 2024). This is because people can now share their own experiences more easily than they could in the past (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

Research showed that the most viewed trip advertising among travelers worldwide is respectively beautiful images, promotions or deals, and content highlighting interesting experiences (Statista, 2024). For that reason, it makes sense that a platform such as Instagram is very popular among potential travelers. This was also researched by Asdecker (2022), who states that influencers on Instagram can influence someone's intention to travel. Thešin et al. (2022) contribute to this statement by mentioning that travel content on social media can enable the visualization of the future trips of potential travelers, which can have an impact on their travel decisions.

2.2 Frequency of Exposure to Social Media Content

People nowadays spend more time than ever on social media (Statista, 2023). According to Latif et al. (2020), a higher frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media content creates a higher likelihood of influencing an individual to choose a specific destination. Two theories will be elaborated on to explain why the frequency of exposure to social media content increases the chance that an individual is being influenced in their travel destination choice. These theories are the social comparison theory and the social identity theory.

Social comparison theory is the drive that individuals have to look at others to compare their capabilities and opinions (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). This theory suggests that people find it important that their opinion is equal to that of others. In the context of travel, people will be more frequently on social media platforms to compare with their friends or influencers who have posted new travel-related content. According to Vogel et al. (2014), people can either have an upward comparison or a downward comparison, where upward comparison happens when an individual is comparing oneself with superior others, whereas downward comparison occurs when comparing with inferior others. Latif et al. (2020) found that upward comparison can cause envy, which is caused by frequently looking to superior others on for example social media platforms, where influencers post travel content based on their luxurious holiday.

Social identity theory is the feeling that an individual has that he or she belongs to a certain social group with value and emotional significance to an individual (McKewon et al., 2016). In other words, the feeling of belonging to a certain social group. According to Latif et al. (2020), social identity is a moderating variable that can explain to what extent an individual is influenced by exposure to travel content. This can explain why people spend more time on social media platforms because for a person to be included in an online group, the individual needs to be frequently on social media to be up-to-date with the content posted by friends. Thus, people with a high online social identity are more likely to be influenced by travel content since those individuals want to be a part of their online group and thus follow others more easily.

If we combine these theories, the following can be said about social media. Due to social comparison, people are more likely influenced by others on social media to affect their intention to visit a travel destination, where social identity moderates the strength of that relationship.

2.3 Motivation to Choose a Travel Destination

Understanding why people travel and what drives them to travel has been an important question over the past decades. Moreover, it is beneficial for tourism planning and marketing to increase knowledge of the factors that influence an individual in choosing a travel destination (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Several pieces of research have been written on the Push-Pull theory and the Hierarchy of Needs as the most used theories to explain travel motivations (Yousaf et al., 2018). The Push-Pull theory consists of two aspects, the first aspect is via intrinsic motivation and the second is from extrinsic motivation (Yousaf et al., 2018). Intrinsic motivators are motivators that arise from the individual, or in other words, the push factors for travel. An extrinsic motivator could arrive from a certain travel destination. These are the pull factors of that specific country, in other words, the pull factor is what an individual wants to experience at a travel destination.

Salsabila and Alversia (2020) state that the push factor is important in starting the desire to travel while the pull factor can explain the choice of the travel destination. Whereas, Yousef et al. (2018) argue that a need for people is a sense of belonging and that social belonging plays a positive role in motivating travelers to visit destinations. However, this reasoning contradicts the research by Latif et al. (2020), who argue that social identity can have a negative influence on the relationship between content exposure and travel intention.

The latter reasoning will be further used in this research. Moreover, this research will elaborate on social comparison and social identity theory as variables to explain how people get motivated to choose a travel destination.

2.4 Intention to Visit a Travel Destination

Intention to Visit a Travel Destination (IVTD) is defined as the likelihood of potentially traveling to a destination in the future (Han et al., 2022). It is stated by Salsabila and Alversia (2020), that intrinsic motivation has a direct influence on IVTD. However, they have found that extrinsic motivation does not significantly influence the intention to travel. In other words, the reason why an individual wants to travel comes from intrinsic beliefs. However, they argue that intrinsic factors are important to initiate the process of choosing a destination and that pull factors are the decisive factors in explaining destination choices.

According to Machado et al. (2021), is upward social comparison a driving force in influencing IVTD. As mentioned before, the social comparison theory can be applied to argue how people are more frequently online to compare themselves with others. However, upward social comparison can arise which happens when an individual perceives others as being better than themselves and thus wants to follow others for aspirational reasons.

Another factor influencing the relationship between the frequency of exposure to travel content and IVTD is the feeling of belonging to a social group. According to McKeown et al. (2016), are individuals significantly influenced by the travel preferences of their online group. Latif et al. (2020) reason that only when individuals have a high social identity they are more likely to shape their behavior according to their social group. That means in this research that only if people have a high social identity, the likelihood is bigger that frequency of exposure to travel content has a significant influence on IVTD.

3 HYPOTHESES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the research question, a set of 5 hypotheses have been established. The following sections will elaborate on these hypotheses.

3.1 Frequency of Exposure to Travel-related Content and Motivation to Travel

As mentioned in this research, social comparison and social identity fuel the level of frequency of exposure to content online. As stated by Statista (2023) social media usage increases every year, which also results in a higher amount of travel-related content. A higher frequency of exposure to travel-related content leads to the point that someone might get intrinsically motivated to travel. This statement is in line with previous research by e.g. Latif et al. (2020) and Asdecker (2022).

H1: Frequency of exposure to travel-related content has a positive influence on motivation to choose a travel destination.

3.2 Motivation to Choose a Travel Destination and IVTD

According to Nguyen et al. (2021) the higher the level of travel motivation a tourist has, the higher the travel intention that person has. Other research like Yousaf et al. (2018) also agree with the statement that motivation to travel leads to the intention to visit a travel destination. Research by Li and Cai (2012) also proved that travel motivation directly influences the intention to travel by finding out that the internal values of an individual significantly influence behavioral intention.

H2: The motivation to choose a travel destination has a positive influence on the intention to visit a travel destination.

3.3 Frequency of Exposure and Intention to Travel

Asdecker (2022) and Latif et al. (2020), state that higher exposure to travel-related content led to upward social comparison, which resulted in a positive one's self-evaluation. This significantly influenced the intention to visit a destination. According to research like Vogel et al. (2014), upward social comparison also resulted from a higher frequency of exposure to social media content, which can trigger intrinsic feelings. Research by Machado et al. (2021), also adds that social comparison significantly affects intention to travel.

H3: Frequency of exposure to travel-related content has a positive influence on the intention to visit a travel destination.

3.4 Social Comparison and Motivation to Choose a Travel Destination

Now that we know that social comparison is significantly important in the way individuals are influenced, we can say that social comparison functions as a moderator in the relationship between frequency of exposure to travel content and motivation to choose a destination. This means that it strengthens the relationship positively. Machado et al. (2021) argue that the reason for this is that upward social comparison creates a better relationship between the variables above, since with upward social comparison, people tend to compare themselves with 'higher influential' individuals on social media which will motivate them more to choose a travel destination. However, with downward social comparison, the relationship works the other way around. Individuals feel themselves better than others and thus will not be influenced by others. So, we suggest that especially upward social comparison can strengthen the relationship between frequency of exposure to travel content, due to the fact that people want to act in the same way as superior individuals do on social media. (Asdecker, 2022; Vogel et al., 2014)

H4: Social comparison positively moderates the relationship between the frequency of exposure to travel content and motivation to choose a travel destination.

3.5 Social Identity and Intention to Travel

In line with the work of Asdecker (2022) and Latif et al. (2020), we assume that social identity moderates the role of the relationship between frequency of exposure and IVTD. Usually, social identity creates the feeling of belonging to a group. However, social identity differentiates in the aforementioned two categories; high social identity and low social identity. A high social identity means that an individual has a higher need to belong to their social group, which causes them to be highly

influenced by others and thus are more likely to act the same way as influencers. On the other hand individuals with a low social identity do not have such a need to belong to a social group and thus are less likely to be influenced by others on social media to decide where they will travel to.

H5: Social identity positively moderates the relationship between the frequency of exposure to travel content and the intention to visit a travel destination.

3.6 Conceptual Framework

To create an overview of the material discussed above, a conceptual framework was created. The framework (fig 1.) works as follows. The first hypothesis is the positive relationship between the frequency of exposure to travel-related content (FETC) and motivation to choose a travel destination (MCTD). This is followed by the second hypothesis, which is the positive relationship between MCTD and the intention to visit a travel destination (IVTD). The following hypothesis is the positive relationship between FETC and IVTD. This conceptual concludes with the fourth and fifth hypotheses, which is the relationship of the moderating variables social comparison and social on respectively the relationship between FETC and MCTD, and between FETC and IVTD.
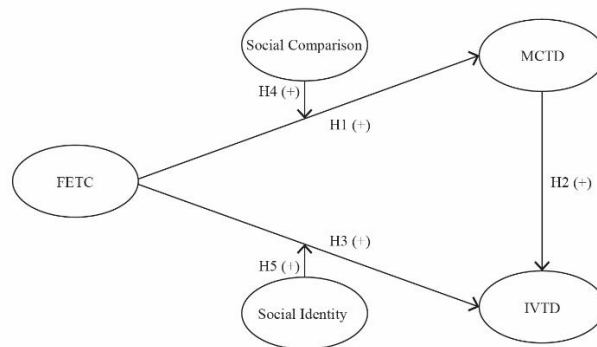

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data Collection and Sample

The objective of this study is to research the impact of frequency of exposure to travel content online on travel motivation and intention. The sample for this research will consist mostly of people above the age of 18, who at least travel once a year. Moreover, the major part of the expected respondent group will be of Dutch nationality. The target group should also be active users of social media. The data will be collected by distribution via the social media platforms WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. The survey will be anonymous and for that reason, answers can not be tracked to a certain person. The sample size will be the number of items times 15, which in this research means that the sample size will contain 180 people Mohamed et al. (2022).

4.2 Survey Instrument

As mentioned by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014), a quantitative analysis should be carried out to identify the actual impact of social media on tourism. For that reason, this thesis will be built on a quantitative survey. To measure motivation to choose a travel destination the example set by Thešin et al. (2022) is followed. They used, a 5-point Likert scale to score the items and they ranged from "strongly disagree" through "neutral" to "strongly agree". While Thešin et al. (2022) had a variety of

items to explain motivation, only two have been chosen that seemed applicable to this thesis. For the items that determine the frequency of exposure to travel content an adaptation of both Asdecker (2022) and Latif et al. (2020), has been done, and was scored on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "not at all" through "sometimes" to "very often'. For IVTD, the items are adapted from Latif et al. (2020), but contradicting with their research, this thesis scored IVTD on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "not at all" through "sometimes" to "very often". The same goes for the variable SI. The variable social comparison is measured with items adapted from Machado et al. (2021), also with a 5-point Likert scale. The Operationalization table can be found in Table 1, and the complete table with the survey items can be found in Appendix 10.7.

Table 1. Operationalization Table

Variables	Number of Items	Adapted from
FETC	2	Asdecker (2022) & Latif et al. (2020)
MCTD	2	Thešin et al. (2022)
IVTD	2	Latif et al. (2020)
SC	3	Machado et al. (2021)
SI	3	Latif et al. (2020)
Socio-Demographics	5	-

4.3 Data Analysis

The data retrieved from the survey will be examined in RStudio, which can make the analyses needed for this research. For hypotheses 1 till 3, the analysis that will be carried out in RStudio will follow the example set by Mohamed et al. (2022) and thus will be a Multiple Linear Regression analysis. However, hypotheses 4 and 5 are suggesting that there is a moderation effect. This moderation effect of social identity and social comparison on the relationship between frequency of exposure to travel-related content and travel motivation and intention is analyzed with the PROCESS code by Hayes (2018) in RStudio.

5 RESULTS

The questionnaire was distributed via 3 social media platforms: WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. The total number of respondents was 174. Of the 174 respondents, 10 were excluded from the analysis because they did not meet the criteria of being active on social media and traveling at least once a year. This means that the N used for the rest of the analysis was 164. The majority of the respondents were between 18 and 25, which is because the respondent pool mainly consists of Dutch students. Moreover, the gender spread was almost fifty-fifty and when we look at social media frequency, the majority of the respondents spend between 1 and 3 hours on social media platforms. Finally, the majority that filled out the questionnaire travels 2 or 3 times a year see Table 2 for all socio-demographics.

Table 2. Socio-demographics

Variables	Count	Percentage
Gender		
Female	81	49.39
Male	82	50.00
Prefer not to say	1	0.61
Age Range		
18-21	64	39.02
21-25	67	40.85
25-30	14	8.54
30-40	5	3.05
50 and above	14	8.54
Social Media Frequency		
Less than one hour	14	8.54
1 or 2 hours	51	31.10
2 or 3 hours	63	38.41
3 or 4 hours	25	15.24
More than 4 hours	11	6.71
Travel Frequency		
Once a year	35	21.34
2 or 3 times	95	57.93
4 or more times	34	20.73

5.1 Factor Analysis

Following the research by Latif et al. (2020), a factor analysis has been carried out to see whether the survey items fit into the model. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), recommend that items should have a factor loading of ideally 0.7 to be considered as good items. As we can see in Figure 3, almost all the items load well on their variable, with at least a 0.7 loading. The only exception is IVTD item 2, which has a factor loading of 0.5 suggesting that this item does not fit well in the overall model. This will mean that IVTD item 2 will be excluded from further analysis. Since now all factors load 0.7 or higher, we can say that the items fit well on their variables.
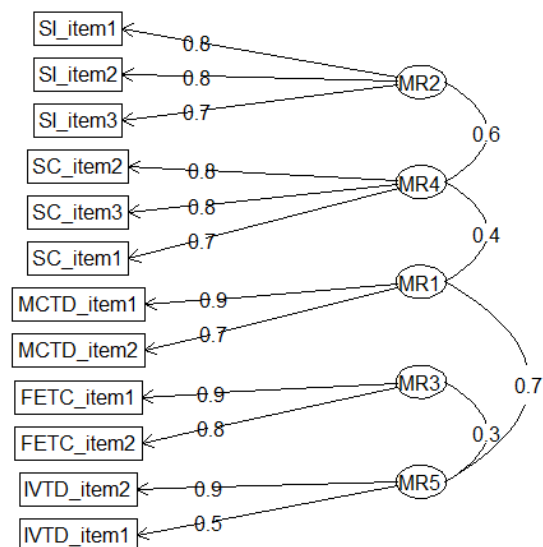
Figure 2. Factor Analysis

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5.2 Cronbach's Alpha

Another type of analysis that has been carried out is Cronbach's Alpha, which is a measure of reliability (Cohen, 2013). In Table 2, we can see that the Alpha values of all variables are at least 0.81, which suggests that the items are reliable and can be used in further analysis.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis

Variables and Items	Mean	SD	α
FETC			0.88
FETC1	3.598	1.061	
FETC2	3.323	1.091	
MCTD			0.81
MCTD1	3.396	0.963	
MCTD2	3.805	0.850	
IVTD			0.82
IVTD1	3.000	0.943	
IVTD2	3.177	1.009	
SC			0.83
SC1	2.659	1.059	
SC2	2.360	1.096	
SC3	2.415	1.124	
SI			0.82
SI1	2.262	0.977	
SI2	2.244	1.034	
SI3	2.726	0.993	

α= Cronbach's Alpha, SD= Standard Deviation

5.3 Correlation

In order to find more relationships between the variables, a correlation matrix has been created (Appendix 10.6). In this figure, we can see that FETC has a moderate positive correlation with MCTD and IVTD. Moreover, it appears that MCTD and IVTD have a strong positive correlation. Furthermore, it can be stated that social comparison has a moderate negative correlation with both MCTD and IVTD. However, social comparison and social identity have a moderate positive correlation. Finally, we can see that age range has a strong negative correlation with social media frequency, suggesting that a higher age leads to lower social media usage.

5.4 Hypotheses Testing

After the reliability and validity had been tested, a regression analysis was performed to analyze the hypotheses. All outcomes of the regression analyses can be found in Table 4. The first hypothesis was that the frequency of exposure to travel-related content influenced motivation to choose a travel destination. As can be seen in the table below, this relationship has a coefficient (β) of 0.2539 and a p-value of 5.375e-05, which is statistically significant. So, we can accept hypothesis 1. The second hypothesis tried to find the relationship between the motivation to choose a travel destination and the intention to travel. With a β of 0.6771 and a p-value of <2e-16, we can say that this relationship is also statistically significant. For that reason, we accept hypothesis 2. The third hypothesis states that the frequency of exposure to travel-related content positively influences the intention to travel. According to a β of 0.20384 and a p-value of 0.00489, we can accept hypothesis 3. Hypothesis four states that the relationship between frequency of exposure

to travel-related content and motivation to choose a travel destination is moderated by social comparison. After the moderation analysis had been performed with the PROCESS function by Hayes (2018), the result of the moderation analysis (Appendix 10.4) has an outcome of the β of 0.0056, an R^2 of 0.1803, and a p-value of 0.9298, we can not say that this moderation is statistically significant. Thus, we reject hypothesis four. The graph for this hypothesis can be found in Figure 3. This graph shows that there is a positive relation between frequency of exposure to travel content and motivation to travel, but shows that SC does not influence that relationship. The final hypothesis states that the relationship between the frequency of exposure to travel-related content and intention to travel is moderated by social identity. After the moderation analysis (Appendix 11.4) had been performed, with an outcome of β 0.0902, an R^2 of 0.0963, and a p-value of 0.2757 we can not say that this moderation is statistically significant. For that reason, we have to reject hypothesis five. The graph for this hypothesis can be found in Figure 4. While this graph suggests that a higher social identity leads to a decrease in the intention to travel, it is still not statistically significant.

Table 4. Summary of Regression Analysis

IV	DV	Coefficient	SE	Significance
FETC	MCTD	0.2539	0.0612	5.37e-05***
MCTD	IVTD	0.6771	0.0718	<2e-16***
FETC	IVTD	0.20384	0.07144	0.00489**
FETC X SC	MCTD	0.0056	0.0631	0.9298
FETC X SI	IVTD	0.0902	0.0825	0.2757

Significance levels are indicated by
*** ($p < 0.001$), ** ($p < 0.01$), and * ($p < 0.05$)
IV= Independent Variable, DV= Dependent Variable
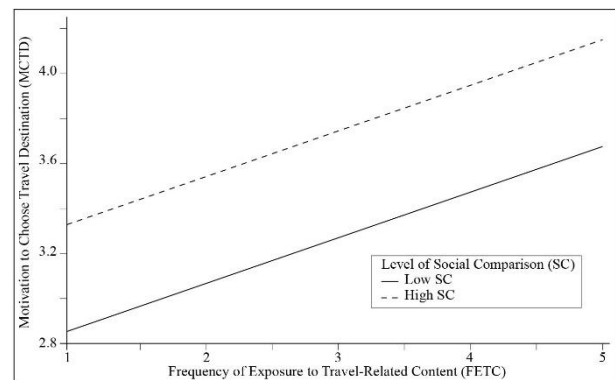
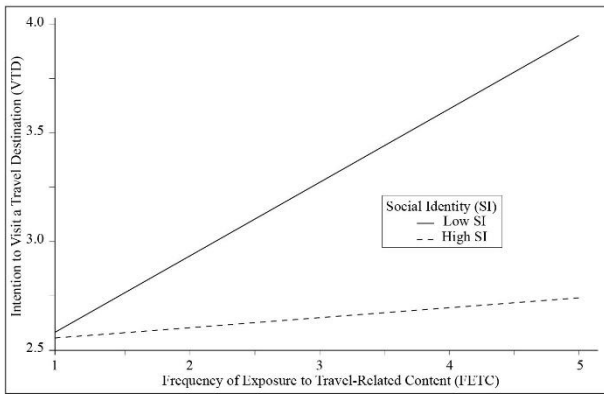**Figure 3. Moderation of SC on FETC and MCTD**

Figure 4. Moderation of SI on FETC and IVTD

6 DISCUSSION

This thesis aimed to examine the role of frequency of exposure to travel-related content online on travel destination choice. More specifically, how motivation to visit a certain destination can be influenced by viewing travel content on social media platforms. While this research did not focus on a specific platform, it still provided an overall answer to all travel-related content available. In this thesis, motivation was not the only outcome variable. The role of intention to travel and motivation to travel was also examined and tested. Whereas other research like Asdecker (2023) and Latif et al. (2020) mainly tried to examine the influence of frequency of exposure to travel content on the intention to visit a travel destination, this thesis focused also on the motivation aspects of choosing a destination. Travel motivation was explained by 2 theories, the social identity theory, and the social comparison theory.

After the hypotheses testing, the following remarks can be made. It can be stated that the frequency of exposure to travel-related content directly influences motivation to choose a destination. The same can be said about the effect of frequency of exposure to travel-related content and intention to visit a travel destination. The third hypothesis was also confirmed, which was that motivation to choose a travel destination directly influences the intention to travel. This is in line with research by Jang et al. (2009) who already confirmed this hypothesis. However, the fourth and fifth hypotheses that analyzed whether social comparison and social identity were moderators in this model, were not statistically significant. This means that this thesis contradicts Latif et al. (2020) who claimed that social identity moderates the relationship between the intention to travel and the frequency of exposure to travel-related content. A reason for this could be the difference in sample size because Latif et al. (2020) had a sample size that was almost twice as big. In addition, differences in cultural aspects can also be of importance, since the culture of Dutch students differs from the citizens of Pakistan.

While social comparison did not function as a moderator, it still moderately correlated with motivation to choose a travel destination. Furthermore, if we look at Figure 3, it can also be stated that factors of motivation to choose a travel destination and social comparison are loaded on each other, suggesting that there is a relationship between the variables. Moreover, to test if the relation is significant, a second regression analysis has been done to research the relationship between social comparison and motivation to choose a travel destination and the relation between social identity and intention to visit a travel destination. In Table 4, we can see that the relations between the aforementioned variables are indeed statistically significant. This means that it can still be said that social comparison influences motivation and social identity influences intention to travel. Future research could further investigate these relationships and find out if social comparison is the driving force of motivation to travel.

Table 4. SC on MCTD and SI on IVTD

IV	DV	Coefficient	SE	Significance
SC	MCTD	0.30283	0.06482	6.233e-06***
SI	IVTD	0.26393	0.08395	0.00198**

SC= Social Comparison, SI= Social Identity

7 CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, we are looking back to the research question: How does the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media impact individuals' travel motivation to visit specific destinations? We will divide this question into two sections. The first part is does frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media impacts individuals' travel motivation. It can be stated that frequency of exposure to travel content impacts individuals travel motivation. This question is in line with hypothesis 1, which is confirmed earlier in this thesis. The next part of the research question is how is motivation transformed into the intention to visit specific destinations. Research like Nguyen et al. (2021) and Li and Cai (2012) researched how travel motivation led to travel intention. They argued that internal values are the main driver in transforming motivation into intention. In this thesis, the main drivers are social comparison and social identity. Even though these variables are not moderators in the relationships between frequency of exposure to travel content and motivation and intention to travel, this thesis proved that there is a correlation between social comparison and social identity, and the motivation to travel. To answer the research question, a higher frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media increases individuals' motivation and intention to travel.

7.1 Theoretical Implications

This thesis extends current knowledge of the tourism industry by researching what influences travel destination motivation and finally the intention to travel. Moreover, this thesis provided an overview of current research, e.g. Latif et al. (2020), Asdecker (2023), Machado et al. (2021) on this topic and proved that the frequency of exposure to travel content on social media impacts motivation to travel. How frequency of exposure leads to higher travel motivation is explained by the social comparison theory. Even though this thesis proved that social comparison is not a moderator in this relation, it still proved that social comparison is a significant contributor to travel motivation. The same goes for social identity on travel intention. Furthermore, this thesis proved that travel motivation leads to intention, and thus is in line with the research of Jang et al. (2009).

7.2 Practical Implications

The results of this thesis can contribute to the marketing functions of people who work in the tourism sector, by creating a theoretical framework that can be used to understand what influences travel motivation. Especially Dutch tourist travel agencies that frequently use social media advertising can now have a better understanding of travel motivation and now they know the importance of frequency of exposure to travel content.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis has a few limitations, for example, travel motivation is explained with the social comparison theory, where there are many more factors that explain travel motivation. Yousaf et al. (2018) created a theoretical overview of current theories on travel motivation and in their research the Hierarchy of Needs is the most outstanding theory in explaining travel motivation. Future research should examine the difference in how social comparison influences travel motivation in comparison with the Hierarchy of Needs. Another limitation is the population of the survey, which is mainly Dutch people in the age range of 18 to 25. This is the age range of Gen Z according to Nguyen et al. (2021). According to the correlation matrix in Appendix 10.6, age range and travel frequency are positively correlated suggesting that a higher age leads to a higher frequency. Future research could investigate how older people react to a higher frequency of social media exposure since they travel more often. Finally, in line with Acharjee and Ahmed (2023), a limitation of this thesis is that this study focuses only on how social media impacts travel destination choice, where there are lots of other factors that can impact it as well.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey. I did not expect that 174 people would fill it out in a short period of time. Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Hatice Kizgin, for her guidance and expertise. Finally, I would like to thank my family for always supporting me and for being there whenever I need them the most.

9 GEN AI STATEMENT

Grammarly was used in this thesis to ensure that grammar and spelling are of academic level.

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11 APPENDIX
11.1 Questionnaire

Start of Block: Questionnaire Luc Italiaander

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "How does the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media impact individuals' travel motivation to visit specific   destinations?"
This study is being done by Luc Italiaander from the Faculty of Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences at the University of   Twente.

The purpose of this research study is to explain the connection between the frequency of exposure to travel-related content on social media, and in which level that can influence an individual in choosing a travel destination to visit. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will take you approximately 5 minutes   to   complete.

The data will be used for this research only. Your answers in this study   will   remain   confidential.

Study contact details for further information: Luc Italiaander, l.italiaander@student.utwente.nl

Page Break

Socio-demographics Please select your age range:

▼ 18-21 (1) ... 50 and above (5)

Please select your gender:

▼ Male (1) ... Prefer not to say (3)

Do you use social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Youtube)?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

How much time do you spend on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Youtube) per day?

◯ Less than one hour (1)

◯ 1 or 2 hours (2)

◯ 2 or 3 hours (3)

◯ 3 or 4 hours (4)

◯ More than 4 hours (5)

How many times do you travel per year?

▼ Less than once a year (1) ... 4 or more times (5)

Page Break

Q1 In the last month, how often have people that you follow on social media posted travel pictures?

○ Not at all (1)

○ Rarely (less then 5 times), (2)

○ Sometimes (between 5 and 10 times) (3)

○ Often (between 10 and 20 times) (4)

○ Very often (more than 20 times) (5)

Q2 In the last month how often did people you follow on social media post pictures, updates, or posts that showed or talked about them traveling?

○ Not at all (1)

○ Rarely (less then 5 times), (2)

○ Sometimes (between 5 and 10 times) (3)

○ Often (between 10 and 20 times) (4)

○ Very often (more than 20 times) (5)

Page Break

Q3 Posts by anyone (e.g. Influencers/Travel bloggers) on social media motivate me to visit a certain destination.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q4 The travel content I see on social media raises my interest in traveling to those destinations.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Page Break

Q5 If I am going to travel, I intend to visit destinations mentioned on social media.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q6 When I am going to travel, the probability is high that I visit destinations mentioned on social media.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Page Break

Q7 I tend to pay attention to how I do things compared to what other people do on social media.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q8 I usually compare how I stand out socially (e.g., in popularity) in relation to other people on social media.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q9 I usually compare how well I do things on social media in relation to the people I follow.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Page Break ─────────────────────

Q10 Being a member of my online social group is an important reflection of who I am.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q11 In general, being a member of my online social group is an important part of my self-image.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Q12 Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a member of my online social group.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Neither agree, nor disagree (3)

○ Agree (4)

○ Strongly agree (5)

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your participation is highly appreciated.

11.2 Factor Analysis

```
Standardized loadings (pattern matrix) based upon correlation matrix
             MR2   MR4   MR1   MR3   MR5   h2   u2   com
FETC_item1 -0.03 -0.01  0.02  0.91 -0.03 0.81 0.191 1.0
FETC_item2  0.06  0.05  0.00  0.81  0.10 0.77 0.234 1.0
MCTD_item1  0.01  0.02  0.90  0.02  0.00 0.84 0.163 1.0
MCTD_item2 -0.02 -0.02  0.70  0.04  0.05 0.54 0.458 1.0
IVTD_item1  0.10  0.03  0.33 -0.09  0.51 0.60 0.396 1.9
IVTD_item2 -0.02  0.00  0.01  0.07  0.94 0.93 0.069 1.0
SC_item1    0.03  0.69  0.01 -0.12  0.22 0.59 0.406 1.3
SC_item2    0.06  0.81 -0.07  0.06 -0.01 0.69 0.312 1.0
SC_item3   -0.01  0.79  0.11  0.07 -0.11 0.67 0.329 1.1
SI_item1    0.79  0.02  0.05 -0.03 -0.01 0.65 0.352 1.0
SI_item2    0.80  0.13  0.00 -0.02 -0.01 0.75 0.251 1.1
SI_item3    0.74 -0.14 -0.05  0.09  0.01 0.48 0.520 1.1

                        MR2  MR4  MR1  MR3  MR5
SS loadings            1.90 1.88 1.60 1.56 1.38
Proportion Var         0.16 0.16 0.13 0.13 0.11
Cumulative Var         0.16 0.31 0.45 0.58 0.69
Proportion Explained   0.23 0.23 0.19 0.19 0.17
Cumulative Proportion  0.23 0.45 0.65 0.83 1.00

 with factor correlations of
     MR2  MR4  MR1  MR3  MR5
MR2 1.00 0.53 0.17 0.16 0.20
MR4 0.53 1.00 0.37 0.16 0.22
MR1 0.17 0.37 1.00 0.29 0.62
MR3 0.16 0.16 0.29 1.00 0.31
MR5 0.20 0.22 0.62 0.31 1.00

Mean item complexity =  1.1
Test of the hypothesis that 5 factors are sufficient.

df null model =  66  with the objective function =  5.96 with Chi Square =
942.91
df of  the model are 16  and the objective function was  0.11
The root mean square of the residuals (RMSR) is  0.01
The df corrected root mean square of the residuals is  0.03

The harmonic n.obs is  164 with the empirical chi square  3.46  with prob
< 1
The total n.obs was  164  with Likelihood Chi Square =  16.86  with prob <
0.39

Tucker Lewis Index of factoring reliability =  0.996
RMSEA index =  0.017  and the 90 % confidence intervals are  0 0.076
BIC =  -64.74
Fit based upon off diagonal values = 1
Measures of factor score adequacy
                                              MR2  MR4  MR1  MR3
Correlation of (regression) scores with factors  0.92 0.92 0.94 0.94
Multiple R square of scores with factors         0.85 0.85 0.88 0.88
Minimum correlation of possible factor scores    0.71 0.71 0.76 0.76
                                              MR5
Correlation of (regression) scores with factors  0.97
Multiple R square of scores with factors         0.93
Minimum correlation of possible factor scores    0.87
```

11.3 Mean and SD

```
    FETC_item1       FETC_item2       MCTD_item1       MCTD_item2
Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000
1st Qu.:3.000    1st Qu.:2.750    1st Qu.:3.000    1st Qu.:4.000
Median :4.000    Median :3.000    Median :4.000    Median :4.000
Mean   :3.598    Mean   :3.323    Mean   :3.396    Mean   :3.805
3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000
Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000
   IVTD_item1       IVTD_item2        SC_item1         SC_item2
Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.00
1st Qu.:2.000    1st Qu.:2.000    1st Qu.:2.000    1st Qu.:2.00
Median :3.000    Median :3.000    Median :2.000    Median :2.00
Mean   :3.006    Mean   :3.177    Mean   :2.659    Mean   :2.36
3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:3.00
Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.00
   SC_item3         SI_item1         SI_item2         SI_item3
Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000
1st Qu.:2.000    1st Qu.:2.000    1st Qu.:1.000    1st Qu.:2.000
Median :2.000    Median :2.000    Median :2.000    Median :3.000
Mean   :2.415    Mean   :2.262    Mean   :2.244    Mean   :2.726
3rd Qu.:3.000    3rd Qu.:3.000    3rd Qu.:3.000    3rd Qu.:3.000
Max.   :5.000    Max.   :4.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000
     FETC            MCTD             IVTD              SC
Min.   :1.00    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000    Min.   :1.000
1st Qu.:3.00    1st Qu.:3.000    1st Qu.:2.500    1st Qu.:2.000
Median :3.50    Median :4.000    Median :3.000    Median :2.333
Mean   :3.46    Mean   :3.601    Mean   :3.091    Mean   :2.478
3rd Qu.:4.00    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:4.000    3rd Qu.:3.333
Max.   :5.00    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :5.000    Max.   :4.667
      SI
Min.   :1.000
1st Qu.:2.000
Median :2.333
Mean   :2.411
3rd Qu.:3.000
Max.   :4.333
```

```
> sd(survey_finaldata$FETC_item1)
[1] 1.060845
> sd(survey_finaldata$FETC_item2)
[1] 1.090595
> sd(survey_finaldata$MCTD_item1)
[1] 0.9632442
> sd(survey_finaldata$MCTD_item2)
[1] 0.8499588
> sd(survey_finaldata$IVTD_item1)
[1] 0.9431506
> sd(survey_finaldata$IVTD_item2)
[1] 1.008771
> sd(survey_finaldata$SC_item1)
[1] 1.059222
> sd(survey_finaldata$SC_item2)
[1] 1.095933
> sd(survey_finaldata$SC_item3)
[1] 1.123658
> sd(survey_finaldata$SI_item1)
[1] 0.9774312
> sd(survey_finaldata$SI_item2)
[1] 1.033915
> sd(survey_finaldata$SI_item3)
[1] 0.9927728
```

11.4 Hypotheses Testing

H1:
```
Call:
lm(formula = MCTD ~ FETC, data = survey_finaldata)

Residuals:
    Min      1Q  Median      3Q     Max
-2.2376 -0.4837  0.2624  0.5163  1.5163

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)   2.7219     0.2206  12.339  < 2e-16 ***
FETC          0.2539     0.0612   4.149 5.37e-05 ***
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.7909 on 162 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.09606,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.09048
F-statistic: 17.22 on 1 and 162 DF,  p-value: 5.375e-05
```

H2:
```
Call:
lm(formula = IVTD ~ MCTD, data = survey_finaldata)

Residuals:
    Min      1Q  Median      3Q     Max
-1.61510 -0.58764  0.05418  0.72346  1.73916

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)   0.5680     0.2652   2.142   0.0337 *
MCTD          0.6771     0.0718   9.431   <2e-16 ***
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.7601 on 162 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.3545,    Adjusted R-squared:  0.3505
F-statistic: 88.95 on 1 and 162 DF,  p-value: < 2.2e-16
```

H3:
```
Call:
lm(formula = IVTD ~ FETC, data = survey_finaldata)

Residuals:
    Min      1Q  Median      3Q     Max
-2.11610 -0.91226  0.08774  0.78198  1.88390

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)  2.30074    0.25749   8.935 8.66e-16 ***
FETC         0.20384    0.07144   2.853  0.00489 **
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.9231 on 162 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.04785,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.04198
F-statistic: 8.142 on 1 and 162 DF,  p-value: 0.00489
```

H4:
```
Outcome Variable: MCTD

Model Summary:
        R      R-sq      MSE       F       df1      df2
     0.4246   0.1803   0.5743   11.7295   3.0000  160.0000
        p
     0.0000

Model:
              coeff      se        t        p       LLCI     ULCI
constant     2.2874   0.5878   3.8915   0.0001   1.1266   3.4483
FETC         0.1939   0.1609   1.2049   0.2300  -0.1239   0.5117
SC           0.2395   0.2392   1.0014   0.3181  -0.2328   0.7119
Int_1        0.0056   0.0631   0.0883   0.9298  -0.1190   0.1302

Product terms key:
Int_1  :  FETC  x  SC

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
        R2-chng      F        df1      df2       p
X*W     0.0000    0.0078   1.0000  160.0000   0.9298
```

H5:
```
Outcome Variable: IVTD

Model Summary:
        R      R-sq      MSE       F       df1      df2
     0.3103   0.0963   0.8190   5.6816   3.0000  160.0000
        p
     0.0010

Model:
              coeff      se         t        p       LLCI     ULCI
constant     2.5939   0.7263   3.5712   0.0005   1.1594   4.0283
FETC        -0.0441   0.2078  -0.2123   0.8322  -0.4545   0.3663
SI          -0.0835   0.2972  -0.2810   0.7791  -0.6705   0.5035
Int_1        0.0902   0.0825   1.0938   0.2757  -0.0727   0.2530

Product terms key:
Int_1  :  FETC  x  SI

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
        R2-chng      F        df1      df2       p
X*W     0.0068    1.1964   1.0000  160.0000   0.2757

******************* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *************************

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95
`
```

11.5 Discussion

SC on MCTD

```
Call:
lm(formula = MCTD ~ SC, data = survey_finaldata)

Residuals:
    Min      1Q  Median      3Q     Max
-2.5616 -0.3562  0.1426  0.5440  1.4431

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)  2.85032    0.17178  16.593  < 2e-16 ***
SC           0.30283    0.06482   4.672 6.23e-06 ***
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.7809 on 162 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.1187,    Adjusted R-squared:  0.1133
F-statistic: 21.83 on 1 and 162 DF,  p-value: 6.233e-06
```

SI on IVTD
```
Call:
lm(formula = IVTD ~ SI, data = survey_finaldata)

Residuals:
    Min      1Q   Median      3Q     Max
-2.51357 -0.80976  0.05828  0.77235  2.36619

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)  2.36987    0.21470  11.038  < 2e-16 ***
SI           0.26393    0.08395   3.144  0.00198 **
---
Signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.9185 on 162 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.0575,    Adjusted R-squared:  0.05168
F-statistic: 9.884 on 1 and 162 DF,  p-value: 0.001984
```

11.6 Correlation Matrix

FETC	1.00	0.31	0.33	0.19	0.18	-0.18	0.03	0.11	0.16
MCTD	0.31	1.00	0.63	0.34	0.15	-0.34	-0.16	0.16	-0.09
IVTD	0.22	0.60	1.00	0.32	0.24	-0.20	-0.22	0.17	0.03
SC	0.19	0.34	0.31	1.00	0.47	-0.27	-0.20	0.26	-0.13
SI	0.18	0.15	0.22	0.47	1.00	-0.13	-0.08	0.26	-0.04
AgeRange	-0.18	-0.34	-0.24	-0.27	-0.13	1.00	0.16	-0.49	0.16
Gender	0.03	-0.16	-0.20	-0.20	-0.08	0.16	1.00	-0.29	0.21
SocialMediaFrequency	0.11	0.16	0.16	0.26	0.26	-0.49	-0.29	1.00	-0.11
TravelFrequency	0.16	-0.09	0.00	-0.13	-0.04	0.16	0.21	-0.11	1.00
	FETC	MCTD	IVTD	SC	SI	AgeRange	Gender	SocialMedia Frequency	TravelFre quency

11.7 Survey Items

Variables	Adapted from	Items
FETC	Asdecker (2022) And Latif et al. (2020)	In the last month, how often have people that you follow on social media posted travel pictures? In the last month how often did people you follow on social media post pictures, updates, or posts that showed or talked about them traveling?
MCTD	Thešin et al. (2022)	Posts by anyone (e.g. Influencers/Travel bloggers) on social media motivate me to visit a certain destination. The travel content I see on social media raises my interest in traveling to those destinations.
IVTD	Latif et al. (2020)	If I am going to travel, I intend to visit destinations mentioned on social media. When I am going to travel, the probability is high that I visit destinations mentioned on social media.
SC	Machado et al. (2021)	I tend to pay attention to how I do things compared to what other people do on social media. I usually compare how I stand out socially (e.g., in popularity) in relation to other people on social media. I usually compare how well I do things on social media in relation to the people I follow.
SI	Latif et al. (2020)	Being a member of my online social group is an important reflection of who I am. In general, being a member of my online social group is an important part of my self-image. Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a member of my online social group.