The effect of social media influencers' synchronous and asynchronous interactivity on revisit intention: mediating effects of inspiration and travel aspiration

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the usefulness of synchronous and asynchronous 'social media influences' (SMIs) interactivity in 'viewers' inspiration toward online-explored tourism destinations' (VITODs), fostering 'aspiration to travel' (ASPT), and influencing destination revisit intention (DRVI), grounded on the interactivity theory, 'social presence theory' (SPT) and the 'stimulus-organism-response' (S-O-R) model.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative research method was employed, with questionnaire data collected through purposive sampling and data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings – The results indicate that SMIs' synchronous interactivity significantly enhances VITODs and DRVI, whereas asynchronous interactivity shows no significant effect. Moreover, VITODs positively affect ASPT and ASPT strongly predicts the DRVI. Finally, the mediating findings indicate that VITODs and ASPT significantly mediate the relationship between synchronous interactivity and DRVI.

Practical implications – This study offers practical implications for destination marketing organizations (DMOs), SMIs and government-relevant bodies to properly utilize social media interactive strategies through real-time (live) online promotion of tourism destinations.

Originality/value – This study is the first that reinforces the concept of SMIs' interactivity by assessing the effects of SMIs' synchronous interactivity (online real-time live communication/active interactivity) and asynchronous interactivity (online delayed responses to

comments and messages/passive interactivity) on social media viewers' travel decisions. This study also contributes to synchronous interactivity and DRVI links by confirming the mediating effects of VITODs and ASPT.

Keywords: Synchronous Interactivity, Asynchronous Interactivity, Inspiration, Aspiration to Travel, Revisit Intention, Tourism Destinations

1. Introduction

Interactivity in communication has been broadly interpreted in the literature, generally referring to how communication occurs through shared interaction between two parties (Bonner, 2010). In the realm of online communication, interactivity concerns the extent to which two groups can respond to one another. In interactive communication, the medium, the messages, and the degree of synchronization among these elements are vital (Liu & Shrum, 2002). Further, Liu and Shrum (2002) identify three key components of interactivity, including active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity. Active control allows users to customize and control their online experience (Du, 2020); two-way communication enables reciprocal exchanges; and synchronicity refers to real-time communication, involving immediate inputs and responses (Liu & Shrum, 2002; Luo et al., 2025).

In the early days of Internet communication, technology was not very advanced. Currently, after two decades, technology has rapidly developed, and social media has become a critical way to communicate and interact with other individuals (including customers, followers, friends, family members and strangers). Social media platforms (including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, etc.) are prominent online platforms where interaction takes place. For the interaction, two parties are crucial, including content creators and viewers/followers (Appel et al.,

2020; Fayyaz et al., 2025). Advancements in online technologies have transformed traditional assumptions about both interpersonal and mass media communication. The traditional parasocial relation concept no longer fully captures the evolving modern individual interactions and related relationships (Lou, 2022). Thus, synchronous and asynchronous interactivity have long been recognized as a central factor altering interpersonal communication and teamwork (Dennis et al., 2008).

In the tourism context, the concept of synchronous and asynchronous interactivity is acknowledged in prior studies (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). Synchronous interactivity can facilitate real-time interaction on social media platforms (Deng et al., 2021), whereas asynchronous is a two-way interaction between influencers and viewers without time restrictions in the form of replies to comments and messages (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). Travel vloggers engage in both asynchronous and synchronous forms of interactivity with their followers. They respond to comments on their videos and participate in real-time chat interactions, actively incorporating viewer suggestions into their content (Sheng et al., 2022). Such practices foster meaningful engagement and strengthen the relational bond that SMIs have with their audience (Delbaere et al., 2021). Additionally, SMIs engage in live discussions and address followers' queries during live streaming sessions (Giertz et al., 2022). Therefore, interaction has become a critical component of social media communication, and high levels of interactivity can foster trust and emotional attachment to brands, thereby enhancing consumer engagement and promoting brand loyalty (Jun & Yi, 2020).

Interactivity can accelerate individual physiological stimulation, affecting viewers' opinions and intention to acquire goods or services. In the live-streaming business environment, interactivity can increase social relationships and lead to customer engagement behavior (Kang et al., 2021).

Moreover, virtual interactivity has been found to significantly enhance both brand image and consumers' purchase intentions (Jia et al., 2022). Within the tourism context, social media interactions enable viewers to engage in real-time communication with travel influencers, thereby fostering a sense of immediacy and relevance (Barreda et al., 2020). Such interactivity on social media platforms notably impacts hotel customers' trust and their intention to make a purchase (Liao et al., 2019). Chen et al. (2023) found that authentic social media interactivity significantly influences tourists' inspiration. L. Li et al. (2024) also established that social network interactivity significantly influences spatial presence, which further led to impulsive travel intentions.

Most prior studies in tourism and related fields have focused on general interactivity, often neglecting to examine synchronous and asynchronous interactivity as distinct constructs. For instance, Ki et al. (2022) found that perceived passive interactivity (e.g., comments and replies) from SMIs can trigger inspiration in viewers. In another study, active interactivity in the form of online destination live streaming was shown to influence users' sense of presence, trust, and revisit intention (Zheng et al., 2023). Despite these insights, many studies use the term interactivity interchangeably with social media interaction, contributing to conceptual ambiguity. This is because online interaction encompasses both synchronous (active, real-time) and asynchronous (passive, delayed) communication, in line with the study of Ng (2017).

Recent literature underscores the importance of distinguishing between these two forms. Synchronous and asynchronous interactivity represent different ways of engaging in social media communication (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022), where treating them as a single construct under the general umbrella of "interactivity" obscures their unique characteristics and effects.

Recognizing this gap, the present study adopts Lou's (2022) conceptualization, treating synchronous and asynchronous interactivity as separate constructs

Moreover, within the tourism context, prior research established that social media interaction significantly influences customer trust, purchase intentions, and brand perception (A. Barreda et al., 2016; Liao et al., 2019). However, the specific impacts of synchronous and asynchronous interactivity on viewer inspiration, travel aspiration, and revisit intention remain underexplored. There is a pressing need to identify new antecedents and consequences of inspiration in tourism contexts (Böttger et al., 2017; Tsaur et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study aims to determine the role of synchronous or asynchronous interactivity in forming viewers' inspiration toward tourism destinations, fostering aspiration to travel and revisit intention. This investigation is theoretically grounded in interactivity theory, SPT, and the SOR model.

The current study contributes to the work of theorists and practitioners in several ways. First, it extends the SMIs research, particularly exploring the effect of SMIs' attributes, including synchronous and asynchronous interactivity roles in VITODs, subsequent ASPT, and revisit intentions. The depth of this study enhances its significance in understanding which form of interactivity (synchronous vs asynchronous) is more effective in shaping VITODs and subsequent ASPT and revisit intention, together with the support of the interactivity theory, SPT, and S-O-R model. Second, this study extends the interactivity theory by integrating active (synchronous) and passive (asynchronous) interactivity in shaping travel decisions. Hence, the research aims to contribute a new perspective to the interactivity theory by examining synchronous interactivity (real-time, live interactions) and asynchronous interactivity (delayed responses, such as replies to comments) on social media. Third, to support the hypothesized relationships among the study's

constructs, the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is applied. The external *stimuli* (S) variables encompass SMIs' asynchronous and synchronous interactivity. Furthermore, the *organism* (O) is represented by VITODs and their ASPT, and the *response* (R) refers to DRVI. This study also enriches the SMIs literature by examining the mediating role of VITODs and ASPT in linking synchronous and asynchronous interactivity and DRVI.

Fourth, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for DMOs, SMIs, and tourism policymakers. These stakeholders can utilize the study outcomes to design more interactive and authentic promotional strategies through synchronous and asynchronous communication modes. By adopting such approaches, practitioners can enhance destination visibility, strengthen tourist engagement, and promote more sustainable and transparent destination marketing practices.

Finally, the current study concentrates on Pakistan's northern tourism destinations, encompassing Chitral, Swat, Dir, Kashmir, Murree, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Naran. The northern part of Pakistan is a desirable tourism destination for travelers because of its biodiversity and cultural appeal (Arshad et al., 2018). This part of Pakistan has significant tourism potential as it offers a wide range of tourist attractions. Travelers can explore different sorts of tourism experiences during their trip, including culture, food, adventure, sport, and ecotourism (Abbasi et al., 2024). While traveling, people get involved in hiking, skydiving/paragliding, mountain climbing, fishing, and traditional Polo. Other pull factors include the distinct culture (such as the Kalash in Chitral), old forts and heritage sites, and hospitable host communities. Despite all these tourism attractions, the systematic way of tourism promotion and showcasing of the tourism destination of Pakistan is still scarce (Aftab & Khan, 2019).

2. Literature review

2.1 Interactivity theory

According to the interactivity theory, interaction is a communication process of exchanging messages by two or more people through a communication medium (A. A. Barreda et al., 2016). Interactive communication is the composition of two-way interactions, control over information flow and synchronicity (Johnson et al., 2006). Johnson et al. (2006) argued that interactivity can also be explained through exchangeability, responsiveness, non-oral information, and response agility. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are critical in the formation of the whole process of interactive communication. Interaction efficacies rely on both parties' involvement in the exchange of information (A. A. Barreda et al., 2016). Thus, in the context of technological communication, Kiousis (2002) stated that interactivity is the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated channel through which individuals can connect and exchange messages reciprocally, both synchronously and asynchronously. Virtual learning literature argues that both synchronous (real-time interactivity, including live video conferencing, chat rooms, or instant messaging) and asynchronous (discussion forums, emails, or recorded video lectures with follow-up questions) interactive learning forums provide opportunities for individuals to share their work (Ng, 2017). Extensive literature utilized interactivity theory in live interactive digital media, particularly in live travel streaming (Ye et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2023). Thus, in the current digital era, SMIs' interactivity occurs both synchronously and asynchronously on different platforms. In synchronous interactivity, SMIs are highly engaged with their viewers through real-time (live) interaction, indicating a high level of presence. In asynchronous interactivity, however, SMIs do not respond immediately but reply to comments later (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022).

This study, therefore, examines how different types of travel influencers' interactivities, including synchronous and asynchronous interactivity, influence VITODs, ASPT and DRVI.

2.2 Social presence theory (SPT)

According to Short et al. (1976), social presence is defined as the degree to which a communication instrument allows users to feel the presence of others in the interaction. This encompasses the experience of noticing others' existences within the medium and the quality of the interactions. SPT is a well-established concept in areas such as online education and digital reading. It represents the notion of realness or the perception of adding mediation in communication, impacting constructs like satisfaction, user experience and learning outcomes (Kreijns et al., 2022). Other studies explain that SPT emphasizes the significance of social interaction, the humanization of online environments, and the enhancement of user engagement through factors like interactivity, emotional support, and a sense of community (Murtafi'ah & Pradita, 2023). The physical presence and social presence influence the purchasing decisions of potential tourists regarding travel-related products through online live-streaming (Xu et al., 2021). Thus, human presence in digital content can easily manipulate individuals towards a destination and facilitate mental stimulation for future travel experiences (Li & Wan, 2025). SPT can assist in explaining how synchronous interactivity (online live interactivity) influences viewers' perceptions and behaviors. High social media presence through synchronous interactions may increase VITODs and strengthen their ASPT and DRVI.

2.3 Stimulus organism response (S-O-R) model

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed the S-O-R model, which explains that external stimuli (S) induce individuals' internal cognitive and emotional states (O), which subsequently result in a final

action or response (R) (Abbasi et al., 2023b). The S-O-R model helps to comprehend the role of external environmental factors in shaping emotions, desires, and thoughts, which ultimately convert into behavioral responses (Hadj Salah et al., 2025). In social media live streaming, the S-O-R theory has been applied, where the social presence of streamers on these platforms serves as the stimulus (S), influencing consumer trust and creating a flow state, both of which function as the organism (O), that further lead to impulsive buying behavior, which is the response (R) (Ming et al., 2021). In both social media live-streaming and tourism contexts, the S-O-R model has been successfully applied to support the conceptual model alongside other underlying theories (Abbasi et al., 2023a; Fang et al., 2023; Ming et al., 2021). In the current study, the *external stimuli* (S) variables include SMIs' asynchronous and synchronous interactivity. The *organism* (O) is represented by VITODs and their ASPT. Finally, the *response* (R) refers to their intention to revisit (see Figure 1).

2.4 Synchronous and asynchronous interactivity

Social interaction has a long history and has been used in different fields of study. Particularly in online communication, interactivity can be defined as "the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized" (Liu & Shrum, 2002, p. 54). Most of the prior studies used the general interactivity theory to examine communication that involves SMIs (Ooi et al., 2023). However, due to advancements in social media, interactions occur either through online live-streaming interactivity or delayed-response interactivity (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). This is because online engagement comprises both synchronous (active and immediate) and asynchronous (passive and delayed) forms of communication.

Synchronous social media interactivity can be explained through real-time live-streaming interactions with viewers/followers on media platforms (active interactivity). Examples of synchronous interactivity on social media can be a real-time live interaction session, online live podcasting or live-streaming meet-ups, where live streamers (SMIs or channel representatives) can address the live questions of viewers on the spot regarding such matters as health, travel, sport, food and cosmetics (Deng et al., 2021; Giertz et al., 2022; F. Li et al., 2024; Lou, 2022). SMI live interaction allows followers to experience tourist attractions that are not physically present at the tourist destination, but are present in online real-time communication (Zhang et al., 2025). Viewers interact socially with other viewers and influencers, which can increase their happiness. These feelings of belonging can not only encourage viewers/followers to become emotionally involved in live interactions, but can also help to express their views by sending messages and financial and non-financial rewards to live streamers (Guan et al., 2022). Thus, synchronous interactivity arguably fosters a sense of belonging, which is an important psychological factor for viewers (Chen & Wu, 2024).

Asynchronous interactivity denotes interactions that take place at different times (i.e., passive interactivity). It is the predominant mode of computer-based communication, in which exchanges of information occur after a certain duration rather than instantly (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022), such as SMIs or brand representatives who create and upload content (including vlogs and blogs related to travel, cosmetics, food, etc) on social media and reply to the comments and suggestions of viewers after a certain time duration in the form of replies or shooting ‘question and answer’ videos. More specifically, this implies that SMIs’ contents are not used instantly upon formation but uploaded by SMIs, who receive comments from viewers after some time; no live interaction happens between SMIs and their followers (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). One example of the

Tripadvisor digital website, where travelers can get information about their travel plans and book their trips. During the travel planning and booking process, they share their opinions, get advice, and experiences through asynchronous interactivity with the social community (Mohammad Arif & Du, 2019). Also, SMIs personally reply to comments from their followers/viewers, enhancing relationships that lead to long-term attachment with their followers (Hudders et al., 2022). Thus, comments on influencers' content are powerful sources of information and play a vital role in the decision of users (Nistor & Selove, 2024).

2.5 Hypotheses development

2.5.1 The role of synchronous and asynchronous interactivity on viewers' inspiration toward online-explored tourism destinations and revisit intention

Social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Twitter are widely recognized online platforms for carrying out online interaction. In the realm of online interactivity, two essential parties are engaged, including content creators and users (viewers/followers) (Appel et al., 2020; Fayyaz et al., 2025). Advancements in online media have guided us to the expansion of the concept of social media interaction, encompassing both asynchronous and synchronous forms of interactivity (Giertz et al., 2022; Lou, 2022). Travel influencers are involved in both types of interactivity with their online audience by replying to their comments (Sheng et al., 2022) and by involving them in live interaction (Giertz et al., 2022). Social media interaction enables viewers to engage in real-time engagement with travel influencers (Barreda et al., 2020). Abdullah et al. (2016) found that how customers perceive the level of interactivity on a hotel's website affects their perceived value and likelihood of revisiting the website. Moreover, another study explained that social media interactivity has a substantial impact on tourists' inspiration (Chen et al., 2023) and tourists' willingness to participate (Ye et al., 2022). The more consumers are involved in social

media, the higher their inspiration (Cao et al., 2021; Ki et al., 2022). In prior literature, most of the studies used the word 'interaction/interactivity' for both asynchronous and synchronous interactivity and mixed these two distinct concepts. In the current study, we presume that SMIs' asynchronous and synchronous interactivity attributes separately influence VITODs and DRVI. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H1. SMIs' asynchronous interactivity positively affects VITODs.

H2. SMIs' synchronous interactivity positively affects VITODs.

H3. SMIs' asynchronous interactivity positively affects DRVI.

H4. SMIs' synchronous interactivity positively affects DRVI.

2.5.2 Viewers' inspiration toward online-explored tourism destinations and aspiration to travel

Travel inspiration can offer a prospective shortcut in the tourist decision-making process (Dai et al., 2025, 2022). Furthermore, He et al. (2021) explained that a positive experience is closely linked to tourist inspiration. When visitors feel inspired, they are more likely to engage with tourist destinations (He et al., 2021). According to Oltra et al. (2022), inspiration may influence an individual's aspiration to consume a product or service. With their high-quality experiential storytelling, engaging content, and personal touch, Instagram influencers appear to be key figures who obtain trust among potential travelers, further influencing their travel aspirations, and leading to actions such as booking a holiday or trip (Bastrygina et al., 2024). SMIs serve as an inspirational source for followers, and followers are inspired to be like them (act like them) and follow their suggestions (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Thus, it is presumed that viewers' inspiration influences ASPT:

H5. VITODs positively affects ASPT.

2.5.3 The mediating role of viewers' inspiration toward online-explored tourism destinations

In the online brand community, customer interactivity is significantly associated with customer inspiration (Cao et al., 2021). The SMI interactivity trait impacts consumers' inspired-by-state (Ki et al., 2022). Moreover, in the luxury brand context, brand aspiration was found to have positive impacts on brand attachment and brand commitment (Sarkar & Roy, 2016). Previous research confirmed that travel inspiration possesses the potential mediating force (Fang et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2023). According to Nguyen et al. (2025) study, inspiration is an emotional stage that significantly mediates the link between credible vlogger characteristics and travel planning behaviors. Another study also established that tourists' inspiration mediates the relationship between perceived influence of SMIs and sustainable travel behavior (Hussain et al., 2025). Despite adequate literature evidence of the direct and indirect role of customer inspiration, there is insufficient research in tourism and hospitality, specifically the mediation role of VITODs between SMIs' attributes (synchronous and asynchronous interactivity) and ASPT in the destination tourism context. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6. VITODs mediate the influence of asynchronous interactivity on their ASPT.

H7. VITODs mediate the influence of synchronous interactivity on their ASPT.

2.5.4 Direct and mediating role of aspiration to travel

An aspiration can be defined as a strong intrinsic desire, hope, or ambition to accomplish something (Bernard & Seyoum Taffesse, 2014). Such deep desires motivate individuals to work hard to attain something highly significant in the present time or the future (Uzzaman & Karim, 2015). Aspiration assists the customer journey across each touchpoint, from product identification to purchase and post-purchase behavior (Moore, 2022). According to Petrick (2004), loyal visitors exhibit a stronger desire to revisit a destination in the future compared to less loyal ones. A global

survey conducted by Rakuten Marketing with 3,600 individuals from five countries found that 88% of participants reported that SMIs' content endorsements significantly increase their travel aspirations (Bastrygina et al., 2024). In the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, individuals have shown high aspirations for future holiday travel (Skarp & Hoolohan, 2024). Despite the insights of prior studies, however, the association among VITODs, ASPT and DRVI remained unknown. The present investigation assesses the effect of VITODs through ASPT on DRVI. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H8. ASPT positively affects DRVI.

H9. ASPT mediates the influence of VITODs on DRVI.

(Add figure 1 here)

3. Method

3.1 Sample and data collection

For data collection, we followed purposive sampling and defined certain criteria to obtain a relevant data set (Abbasi et al., 2022). The target participants of this study were individuals who had watched SMIs' content and based on that experience traveled to different tourism destinations. Furthermore, this study considered the following social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. In an endeavor to ensure a relevant pool of respondents, we followed specific criteria and visited tourist destinations to collect data from tourists, raising six lines of enquiry, including "Do you watch social media influencers' travel content on social media?", "Do you comment on SMIs' travel content?", "Do you watch SMIs' live streaming on tourism?". Consequently, this study only considered those tourists who fulfilled the current study criteria, and the rest of the tourists were disregarded.

Prior to starting the survey, participants were provided with a detailed information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, research procedures, voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without providing a reason. They were assured that no personal identifiers would be collected, their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and all data would be securely stored and used only for academic purposes. Consent was then obtained from participants through a signed consent form. The current study's procedures were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Sunway University (Ref No: PGSUREC2023/050).

3.2 Measures

This is a cross-sectional study, and a survey method for data collection was applied. The scales were adopted from prior studies and assessed through a five-point Likert scale. Four items of asynchronous interactivity were acquired from Bozkurt et al. (2021), Ki et al. (2022) and Jun and Yi (2020), and five items of synchronous interactivity were obtained from Jun and Yi (2020) and Zheng et al. (2023). Seventeen items of VITODs were adopted from Tsaur et al. (2022) and Böttger et al. (2017). Five items of ASPT were obtained from Pop et al. (2022) and Lee et al. (2012). Finally, DRVI's four items were adapted from Bonn et al. (2007), Peng et al. (2023) and Pradhan et al. (2023).

Subsequently, we conducted a pilot study reliability test on 51 participants to assess the consistency of the adapted scale. All variables' Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.7, reflecting adequate reliability. Thus, with minor changes to the questionnaires as per the suggestion of the respondents, we subsequently distributed hard copies of questionnaire among the respondents, and the final 325 responses were utilized in the current study. The gender distribution is nearly balanced, with 177 (54.15%) males and 148 (45.85%) females. A significant portion (44.31%)

falls within the 22–27 age bracket, and the second-highest age bracket is 16–21 (30.2%), reflecting a predominantly young age group. The majority of respondents hold either a bachelor's (59.69%) or a master's degree (22.2%), indicating a highly educated sample, while income data show that most respondents (58.46%) earn less than PKR 40,000 monthly.

To assess common method bias (CMB), we applied Harman's Single-Factor Test, which indicated that in this study, the total variance extracted from a single factor was 35.43 %, below the 50% threshold criteria. Additionally, VIF values for all indicators are below the threshold of 3.

3.3 Data analysis

Studies used PLS-SEM due to its robust capability to manage both reflective and formative constructs, as affirmed and recommended by previous research for analyzing complex study models and second-order formative construct formation (Hair et al., 2019). In the current study, we apply the PLS-SEM approach because VITODs used in this study is a second-order formative construct, making this technique suitable and effective for our study context.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement model

To assess the internal consistency and validity, this study applied Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7, composite reliability (CR) > 0.7, average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5, loadings > 0.6, HTMT < 0.85 and VIF < 3 (Hair et al., 2019). The results presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that all the established criteria for reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity have been achieved.

(Add table 1 here)

(Add table 2 here)

Moreover, in the formation of second-order formative constructs for VITODs, this study applied the methodological technique recommended by Becker et al. (2012). Similar to Hussain et al. (2025), this study utilized the latent variable score of 'inspired by' and 'inspired to' in the formation of the second-order formative construct of VITODs. This process included evaluating latent-variable scores of the first-order reflective construct and using these scores as indicators in the second order. Table 3 indicates that "Inspired-by" (outer weight = 0.311, T = 4.273, p-value < 0.001, VIF = 2.029) and "Inspired-to" (outer weight = 0.754, T = 11.9, p-value < 0.001, VIF = 2.029) substantially contribute to VITODs. Both dimensions are statistically significant, with adequate outer weight and no multicollinearity issues, confirming the validity and reliability of the second-order formative construct of VITODs.

For the effect size and predictive power of the model, this study applies f^2 (> 0.02), R^2 (0-1), Q^2 (> 0) and PLSpredict (Hair et al., 2019). The current study's R^2 findings in Table 5 show an adequate level of explanatory power, such as VITODs value of 0.23, ASPT value of 0.55, and DRVI value of 0.29. Additionally, this study found Q^2 values greater than 0, including VITODs (0.21), ASPT (0.11), and DRVI (0.10). Likewise, it is advised by Shmueli et al. (2019) to apply PLSpredict for measuring out-of-sample prediction by comparing PLS-RMSE values with LM-RMSE values. The PLS-RMSE values for the DRVI indicators are shown as lower than the LM-RMSE values, signifying a substantial predictive ability (see Table 4).

(Add table 3 here)

(Add table 4 here)

4.2 Test of research hypotheses

The structural model in Table 5 indicates significantly positive effects of synchronous interactivity on VITODs ($T = 9.022$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.231$) and DRVI ($T = 3.489$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.055$), while the effect of asynchronous interactivity on VITODs ($T = 1.159$, $p > 0.05$, $f^2 = 0.005$) and DRVI ($T = 0.926$, $p > 0.5$, $f^2 = 0.004$) is non-significant. Moreover, VITODs positively affect ASPT ($T = 18.137$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 1.232$). Furthermore, ASPT strongly predicts DRVI ($T = 7.747$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.240$). Figure 2 shows that H2, H4, H5 and H8 are accepted, whereas H1 and H3 are rejected. Additionally, the indirect impact of synchronous interactivity shows a significant influence on ASPT through VITODs (H7: $T = 8.212$, $p < 0.001$). Whereas asynchronous interactivity insignificantly influences ASPT through VITODs (H6: $T = 1.135$, $p > 0.5$). It is also confirmed that VITODs strongly predict DRVI through ASPT (H9: $T = 6.688$, $p < 0.001$).

(Add table 5 here)

(Add figure 2 here)

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to determine whether synchronous interactivity or asynchronous interactivity more effectively inspires viewers toward tourism destinations, fostering ASPT, and influencing DRVI, as underpinned by the SPT, interactivity theory and the S-O-R model. The findings indicated that synchronous interactivity had a significantly positive influence on both VITODs and

DRVI. The current study's assertion is directly supported by the SPT (Short et al., 1976). As SPT accentuates the implication of online social interaction, the humanization of digital environments, and the enrichment of social connections through interactivity, emotional backing, and a sense of community (Murtafi'ah & Pradita, 2023). Hence, the results of the current study are aligned with the previous studies that explained real-time interactivity could lead to inspiration and behavioral intention (Cao et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Jia et al., 2022; Ki et al., 2022). These findings underscore the significance of real-time interactive communication in enhancing viewer motivation and engagement toward tourism destinations. Synchronous interactivity, such as live streaming, live chats, online streaming and video calls, provides immediate feedback and a sense of presence for the followers and viewers, which leads to a robust emotional connection and enhances the inspiration of viewers. This real-time online conversation can generate a more immersive experience, making the viewer feel more connected to the travel destinations and increasing their ASPT and DRVI.

Additionally, the study identified a significant indirect effect of synchronous interactivity on ASPT through the mediating role of VITODs. The current study findings are in line with prior claims of the mediating power of travel inspiration (Fang et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2023). The mediating role of inspiration demonstrates that synchronous interactivity not only directly inspires viewers toward tourism destinations but also enhances their ASPT by fostering a deep emotional connection with the destination. This highlights the potential of real-time interactivity as an influential way of interaction for tourism marketers aiming to inspire and motivate potential/experienced travelers toward tourism destinations.

In contrast, asynchronous interactivity did not show a significant effect on VITODs and DRVI. Additionally, the study also found that asynchronous interactivity insignificantly influences ASPT

through VITODs. These findings are contrary to those of Ki et al. (2022), who argued that the more users perceive that SMIs are interactive, the more they feel inspired by the content of SMIs. Asynchronous interactivity, such as comments, messages, and emails, lacks the immediacy effect because it is not like live communication, which may be the reason for their minor impact on VITODs and DRVI. Delaying feedback in asynchronous interactivity can decrease the sense of engagement and emotional connection, leading to a weaker influence on the viewers' decisions. Furthermore, in some cases, SMIs were unable to respond to most comments, leading to decreased interest and unfollowing behavior (Ouvrein, 2020). These findings highlight the limited role of asynchronous interactivity in shaping VITODs and DRVI. Asynchronous interactivity supports ongoing passive interactive communication. However, it is not as effective as synchronous interactivity in VITODs and further enhances their DRVI.

Study findings reveal that VITODs positively affect ASPT. Furthermore, ASPT strongly predicted DRVI. The study also established a critical mediating role of ASPT in linking VITODs and DRVI. These findings support the claim made by Oltra et al. (2022) that travel inspiration can elevate aspirations and behavior, also reinforcing Dai et al. (2022) assertion that travel inspiration leads to the dreams of travel. The current findings established that VITODs and ASPT are key pathways through which SMIs' synchronous interactivity influences DRVI. This suggests the importance of fostering viewers' inspiration and ASPT as part of tourism marketing strategies. By creating engaging and inspiring content through synchronous interactivity, marketers not only effectively enhance travel aspiration among potential travelers but also elevate the DRVI among experienced travelers.

This study aligns with SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth by emphasizing the vital role of tourism in job creation and local economic development. It examines how SMIs promote

destination tourists' numbers through active and passive online interactive marketing. Effective utilization of SMIs can increase tourist online engagement and destination tourism volumes, thereby supporting sustainable economic growth in culturally and ecologically rich regions such as Northern Pakistan.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study offers several theoretical implications. It extends Lou's (2022) concept of SMIs' synchronous and asynchronous interactivity concept in the context of destination tourism, which is supported by the interactivity theory, SPT and the S-O-R model. The interactivity theory and SPT are specifically relevant in the current study's context. These explain the importance of digital platforms in supporting users to feel a sense of positive association with others during virtual interactions. The study contributed a new viewpoint by exploring synchronous (real-time, live interactions) and asynchronous interactivity (delayed responses, such as replies to comments) on social media, expanding beyond the conventional way of interaction, such as physical interactivity and telephone calls. Thus, it confirmed how real-time live conversation (synchronous interactivity) about tourism enhances a sense of social presence that leads to greater inspiration and travel decisions. Conversely, asynchronous interactivity has an insignificant impact on VITODs and DRVI. Hence, this study failed to prove a link between asynchronous interactivity with VITODs and travel decisions. The findings enhance the current body of literature on social media interactivity by distinguishing between synchronous and asynchronous forms of digital media influencers' interactivity. This comparison of synchronous and asynchronous social media interactivity is crucial for future research aimed at understanding the interaction process in depth, thereby engaging and attracting tourists to various destinations. Overall, the integration of the SPT and interactivity theory, through synchronous and asynchronous interactivity, with the outcome of

VITODs and their ASPT and DRVI, are a considerable contribution to the S-O-R model, offering significant and exclusive impact to the current body of knowledge.

Moreover, this study extends the destination inspiration concept in the context of tourism promotion through SMIs' interactions. Destination inspiration (inspired-by and inspired-to) is a second-order construct constituted by Tsaur et al. (2022), suggesting to incorporate new antecedents and consequences. Thus, this study contributed to the destination inspiration concept by incorporating synchronous and asynchronous interactivity as antecedents and ASPT as an outcome. This phenomenon concludes the ability of SMIs' interactivity to not only influence the consciousness of viewers but also tap into deeper ASPT. The deeper the desire for travel, the higher the probability of DRVI. Individuals with strong aspirations to experience new journeys are more inclined to plan for future travel. This study extends the contribution to literature by testing the intervening role of VITODs and ASPT. The findings established that VITODs and ASPT sequentially mediate the link between synchronous interactivity and DRVI.

5.3 Practical implications

The findings of this study provide several actionable implications for DMOs, SMIs and tourism policymakers in Pakistan. First, DMOs should develop structured interactive digital strategies that integrate synchronous communication such as live-streaming sessions, webinars, and virtual tours. These synchronous live events should not only showcase destination attractions but also allow potential travelers to ask questions related to accommodation, transportation, or local culture in real time. By addressing such queries directly, DMOs can build credibility, enhance destination appeal, and strengthen visitors' intention to travel or revisit.

Second, DMOs are encouraged to collaborate with SMIs to create structured synchronous interactivity—live-interactive campaigns. Rather than relying solely on pre-recorded promotional content, DMOs should partner with influencers to conduct real-time digital experiences, including live destination walks, Q&A sessions, or interactive storytelling. These activities create a sense of authenticity and emotional engagement that traditional advertisements often lack. To ensure impact, DMOs should provide influencers with destination-specific guidelines, storytelling frameworks, and official hashtags to unify the campaign identity across platforms.

Third, the study offers practical directions for SMIs themselves. While many travel influencers focus mainly on prerecorded vlogs and short-form videos, they should now incorporate synchronous live destination sessions into their content plans. Live broadcasts allow influencers to respond immediately to audience questions and feedback, creating a participatory experience that enhances trust and authenticity. Moreover, influencers should also maintain asynchronous interaction, such as replying to comments, acknowledging feedback, and integrating follower suggestions into future content. This two-way interaction process fosters long-term follower loyalty and a perception of transparency, which can ultimately increase destination credibility and tourist conversion.

Finally, the study suggests policy-level actions for tourism authorities in Pakistan, such as the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, the Gilgit Baltistan Tourism Authority and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, to partner with recognized influencers in conducting official live destination campaigns that align with national tourism goals. Such collaborations can promote destinations to both domestic and international markets, helping to reduce stereotypes and misinformation by providing authentic, unedited destination exposure. Authorities should develop clear collaboration frameworks, including ethical content guidelines

and cultural preservation protocols, to ensure that live-stream promotions reflect the true heritage and sustainability values of the destination.

5.4 Limitations and future research

As data collection focused on Pakistan's northern tourism destination, future studies should be conducted in other countries with a similar geographical landscape to ensure the generalizability of the study. Moreover, future research studies may examine the underlying mechanisms through which different types of synchronous interactivity (e.g., live streaming vs. video calls) may vary in their influence on viewer inspiration and traveler engagement behaviors. Additionally, investigating the function of individual variances, such as personality traits, prior travel experience and SMIs' attributes, along with forms of interactivity, could provide a deeper understanding influence on viewers' inspiration, desires, and behavior. Moreover, the current study is limited to assessing the direct and indirect association between variables. Future studies can consider the moderating effect of internet users' empowerment, digital habits, and demographic factors for understanding variations in behavioral responses and engagement outcomes. Finally, the current study focused on the application of S-O-R, SPT and interactivity theory; future studies may apply other theoretical perspectives, such as persuasion theory and credibility theory, particularly to comprehend SMI association with other outcome variables of destination or influencers, such as travel inspiration, travel content love, and visitor engagement behaviors.

Data Availability Statement: The data that supports this study is available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Figure 1. Conceptual model. **Source(s):** Authors' own creation

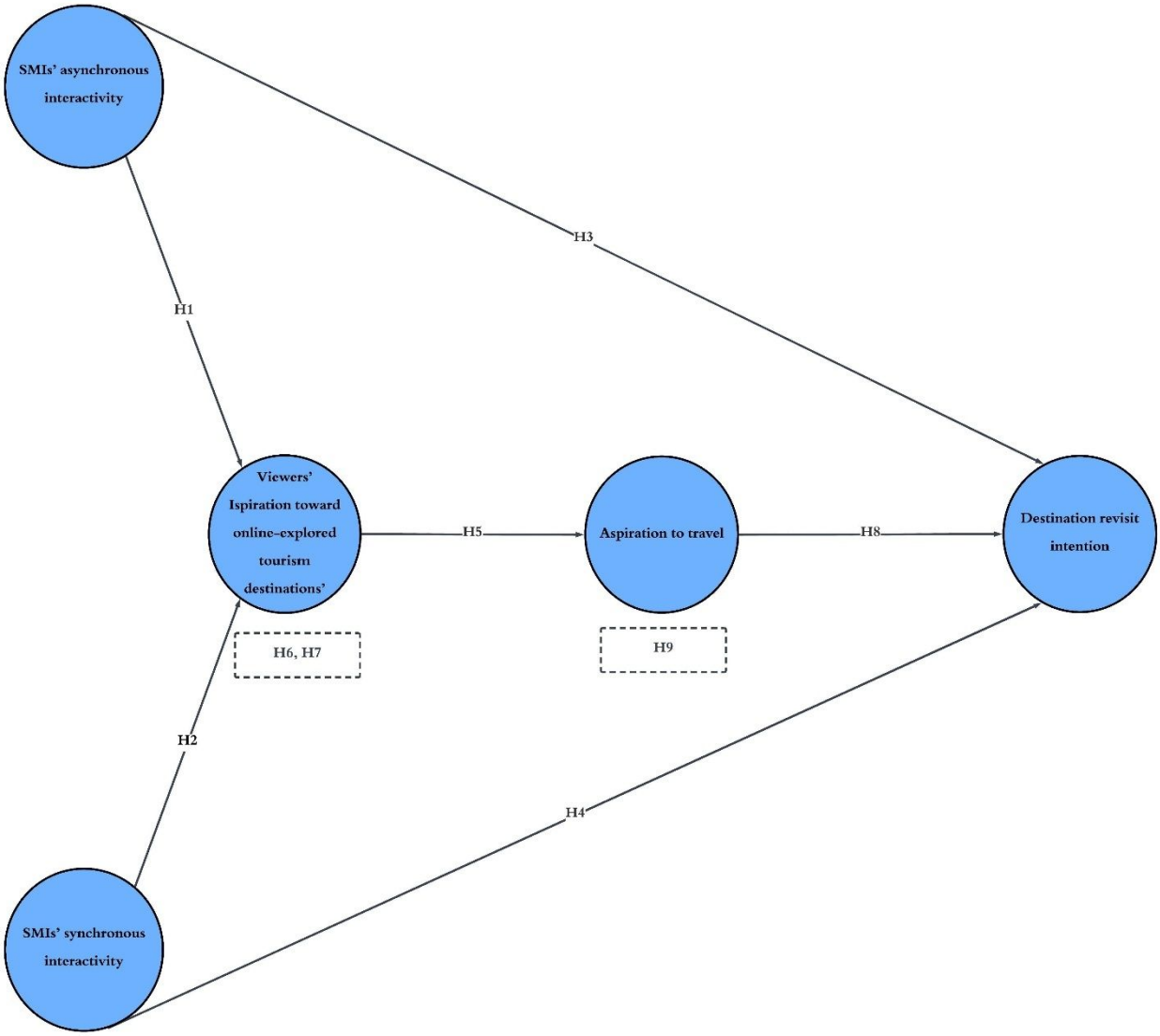

Figure 2. Model with findings. **Source(s):** Authors' own creation

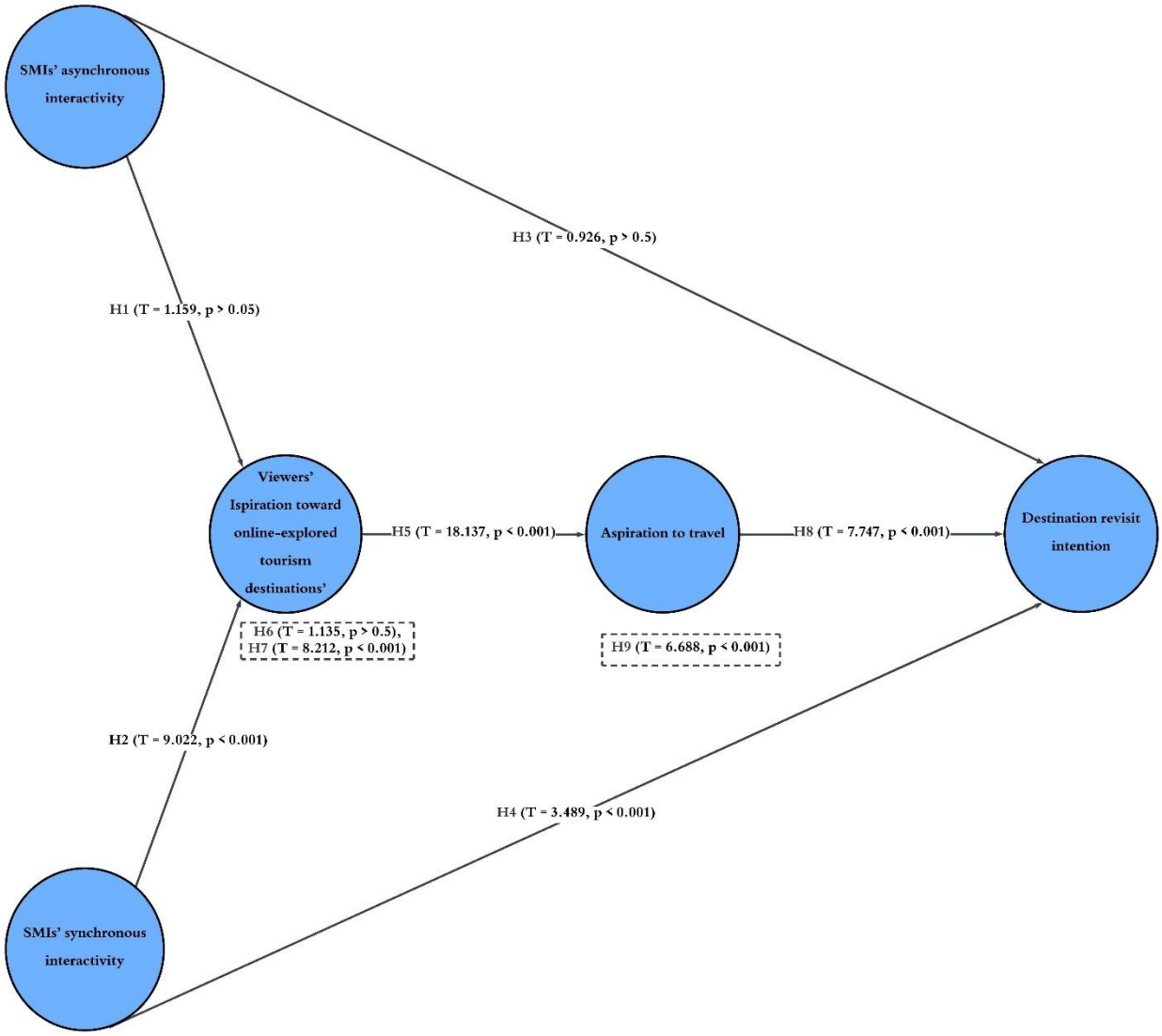

Table 1. Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Variance inflation factor (VIF)
SMIs' synchronous interactivity	SI1	0.650	0.757	0.763	0.839	0.514	1.301
	SI2	0.771					1.671
	SI3	0.815					1.972
	SI4	0.746					1.656
	SI5	0.574					1.189
SMIs' asynchronous interactivity	ASI1	0.836	0.845	0.853	0.895	0.681	1.946
	ASI2	0.808					1.974
	ASI3	0.823					1.987
	ASI4	0.834					1.924
Inspiration by	INB1	0.760	0.893	0.893	0.916	0.609	2.003
	INB2	0.782					2.111
	INB3	0.784					2.050
	INB4	0.805					2.220
	INB5	0.838					2.541
	INB6	0.738					1.817
	INB7	0.750					1.956
Inspired to	INT1	0.709	0.909	0.912	0.924	0.550	1.710
	INT2	0.702					1.750
	INT3	0.780					2.392
	INT4	0.779					2.302
	INT5	0.670					1.802
	INT6	0.747					2.217
	INT7	0.690					1.830
	INT8	0.784					2.318
	INT9	0.786					2.335
	INT10	0.760					1.992
Aspiration to travel	ASPT1	0.748	0.881	0.883	0.910	0.628	1.872
	ASPT2	0.813					2.263
	ASPT3	0.773					1.935
	ASPT4	0.798					2.296
	ASPT5	0.786					2.295
	ASPT6	0.836					2.579

Destination revisit intention	DRVI1	0.848	0.885	0.885	0.920	0.743	2.177
	DRVI2	0.873					2.444
	DRVI3	0.891					2.848
	DRVI4	0.835					2.031

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Table 2. HTMT

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Aspiration to travel						
2. Destination revisit intention	0.569					
3. Inspiration by	0.708	0.484				
4. Inspired to	0.807	0.546	0.784			
5. SMIs' asynchronous interactivity	0.272	0.148	0.198	0.260		
6. SMIs' synchronous interactivity	0.419	0.430	0.498	0.556	0.450	

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Table 3. Validity tests second-order constructs

Second-order Construct	First order	Outer weight	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	VIF
VITODs	Inspired by	0.311	0.31	0.073	4.273	0.000	2.029
	Inspired to	0.754	0.754	0.063	11.9	0.000	2.029

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Table 4. Pls Predict

Constructs	Items	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_RMSE - LM_RMSE
DRVI	DRVI1	0.887	0.901	-0.0126
	DRVI2	0.823	0.832	-0.0089
	DRVI3	0.835	0.846	-0.0108
	DRVI4	0.839	0.864	-0.0246

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Table 5. Direct and mediating effect

Hypotheses	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	F^2	R^2	Q^2
H1: SMIs' asynchronous interactivity ➔ VITODs	0.067	0.071	0.058	1.159	0.123	0.005	0.23	0.21
H2: SMIs' synchronous interactivity ➔ VITODs	0.452	0.455	0.05	9.022	0.000	0.231		
H3: SMIs' asynchronous interactivity ➔ DRVI	-0.055	-0.052	0.06	0.926	0.177	0.004		
H4: SMIs' synchronous interactivity ➔ DRVI	0.221	0.221	0.063	3.489	0.000	0.055		
H5: VITODs ➔ ASPT	0.743	0.744	0.041	18.137	0.000	1.232	0.55	0.11
H8: ASPT ➔ DRVI	0.442	0.443	0.057	7.747	0.000	0.240	0.29	0.10
H6: SMIs' asynchronous interactivity ➔ VITODs ➔ ASPT	0.05	0.054	0.044	1.135	0.128			
H7: SMIs' synchronous interactivity ➔ VITODs ➔ ASPT	0.335	0.338	0.041	8.212	0.000			
H9: VITODs ➔ ASPT ➔ DRVI	0.328	0.33	0.049	6.688	0.000			

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Appendix

Synchronous interactivity (Jun and Yi, 2020; Zheng et al., 2023)

- Interacting with social media influencers about tourism on live-streaming was like having a real conversation.
- I perceived that this social media influencer effectively addresses my travel-related queries in their live-streaming.
- In the live discussion, social media influencers would respond to individual travel-related questions quickly and efficiently
- In live-streaming conversations, social media influencer allows individuals to communicate directly with her or him
- In live streaming, social media influencers reply to individuals' messages on tourism.

Asynchronous interactivity (Bozkurt et al., 2021; Jun and Yi, 2020; Ki et al., 2022)

- Social media influencers reply to my comments on their travel posts within a short period.
- The social media influencer responds to my comment on his travel video quickly and efficiently.
- Social media influencer provides us with an option to communicate directly through a chat box/messenger.
- The social media influencer replies to individuals' comments on his travel video.

Viewers' inspiration toward online-explored tourism destinations:

Inspired by (Böttger et al., 2017; Tsaur et al., 2022)

- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations stimulated (aroused/increased) my imagination related to travel to new places.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations compelled me to discover something new.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations unexpectedly gave me a new idea.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations increased my curiosity.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations stimulated my inspiration.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations resonated (connected/associated) with me.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations broadened my horizons(perspectives) related to travel.

Inspired to (Böttger et al., 2017; Tsaur et al., 2022)

- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to experience more by browsing/seeing more travel-related content of social media influencers.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to make some changes.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to understand more about tourism.

- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to do something new.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to change myself.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to learn the value of appreciation.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations inspired me to reflect.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations increased my interest to visit certain places.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations motivated to visit certain places.
- Travel vlogs on tourism destinations persuaded me to learn more about travel destinations through social media

Aspiration to travel (Lee et al., 2012; Pop et al., 2022)

- I have a strong urge to visit the unexplored tourist destinations promoted by social media influencers in their vlogs.
- Watching tourism vlogs by social media influencers increases my aspirations (wishes) to visit unexplored destinations.
- Watching tourism vlogs by social media influencers intensifies my desire to visit unexplored destinations.
- I wish to visit unexplored northern tourist destinations promoted by social media influencers in their vlogs in the near future.
- I would like to visit unexplored northern tourist destinations promoted by social media influencers in their vlogs shortly.
- I am eager to visit unexplored northern tourist destinations promoted by social media influencers in their vlogs soon

Destination revisit intention (Bonn et al., 2007; Peng et al., 2023; Pradhan et al., 2023)

- I would revisit the remaining tourist destinations in the north (northern part of Pakistan) in future.
- If I get the opportunity, I will return to the north (northern part of Pakistan) for tourism purposes.
- I will return to the north (northern part of Pakistan) for a tour in the future.
- I have a high intention to revisit the north (northern part of Pakistan) for a tour in the future.

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The Effect of Social Media Influencers' Synchronous and Asynchronous Interactivity on Revisit Intention: Mediating Effects of Inspiration and Travel Aspiration

Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights

Comment 1:

Associate editor(s)' Comments to Author:
Please address the following comments:
- Change the subtitle "Hypotheses" to "Hypotheses development".

Authors' response:

We thank the Associate Editor for this suggestion. The subtitle has been revised from "Hypotheses" to "Hypotheses Development" in the manuscript as recommended. (see page 11)

Comment 2:

- In the method and results sections, use these titles and sub-titles: The main title is Method. The sub-titles are: Sample and data collection, Measures, Data analysis. The main title is Results. The sub-titles are: Measurement model, test of research hypotheses.

Authors' response:

We appreciate the guidance. The section titles and sub-titles in both the Method and Results sections have been revised accordingly to ensure consistency with the journal's preferred structure. (see pages 14-18)

Comment 3:

-The main title is Discussion and conclusions. The sub-titles are: Conclusions, Theoretical implications, Practical implications, Limitations and future research.

Authors' response:

Dear Associate Editor, thank you for your kind reminder. In the second revision, the Discussion and Conclusions section has been revised, including the sub-sections Conclusions, Theoretical implications, Practical implications, and Limitations and future research. (see pages 18-24)

Comment 4:

-Upload the ethical clearance statement approved by your university's ethics review board in the system.

Authors' response:

Dear Associate Editor, the ethical approval letter issued by our university's ethics review board has been uploaded as a PDF under the section "Supplementary file not for review."

Comment 5:

-Proofread your paper one more time.

Authors' response:

The entire manuscript has been carefully proofread to ensure clarity, coherence, and the correction of any grammatical or typographical errors.