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VIŠE OD INSPIRACIJE: RAZOTKRIVANJE ULOGE *INFLUENCERA* NA DRUŠTVENIM MEDIJIMA U RAZLIČITIM FAZAMA KORISNIČKOG PUTOVANJA TURISTA

BEYOND INSPIRATION: UNPACKING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' CREDIBILITY DIMENSIONS IN CUSTOMER JOURNEY OF TRAVELERS

SAŽETAK: Ovo istraživanje ispituje ulogu *influencera* na društvenim medijima tijekom cjelokupnog korisničkog putovanja turista, pri čemu se posebno razmatraju faze prije kupnje (prepoznavanje potreba, prikupljanje informacija i vrednovanje alternativa), kupnje (rezervacija) i nakon kupnje (vrednovanje iskustva i širenje informacija). Polazeći od teorije vjerodostojnosti izvora, istraživanje analizira kako tri ključne dimenzije vjerodostojnosti *influencera* (pouzdanost, stručnost i privlačnost) oblikuju ponašanje korisnika u svakoj fazi. Online anketa provedena na 197 ispitanika potvrdila je da su se, iako je ukupna vjerodostojnost *influencera* snažan prediktor u svim trima fazama putovanja, dimenzije pouzdanosti i privlačnosti pojavile kao glavne sile koje pokreću korisničko putovanje te da znatno nadmašuju izravan učinak stručnosti. Analiza medijacije pokazala je da vjerodostojnost *influencera* oblikuje reakcije korisnika tijekom dinamičnog procesa koji se odvija od faze do faze, pri čemu se njezini učinci prenose iz faze prije kupnje u fazu kupnje, tj. prije utjecaja na ishode nakon kupnje.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *influenceri* na društvenim medijima, korisničko putovanje turista, vjerodostojnost *influencera*, teorija vjerodostojnosti izvora

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the role of social media influencers across the entire traveler's customer journey specifically examining the pre-purchase (needs recognition, information gathering and evaluation of alternatives), purchase (booking), and post-purchase (experience evaluation and information dissemination) stages. Drawing on the Source Credibility Theory, the research analyzes how three key dimensions of influencer credibility (Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness) shape customer behaviors at each stage. An online survey of 197 respondents confirmed that, while overall influencer credibility is a strong predictor across the three journey stages, the dimensions of Trustworthiness and Attractiveness emerged as the primary forces driving customer journey, significantly outweighing the direct effect of expertise. The mediation analysis revealed that influencer credibility shapes customer responses through a dynamic, stage-by-stage process in which its effects flow from pre-purchase to purchase stages before influencing post-purchase outcomes.

KEYWORDS: social media influencers, traveler's customer journey, influencer credibility, source identity theory

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1. UVOD

Internet je značajno promijenio način na koji ljudi konzumiraju medije, komuniciraju i stupaju u interakciju unutar velikih zajednica te integriraju društvene mreže u svakodnevni život (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021). Ovaj pomak vidljiv je i u industriji putovanja, budući da se ljudi temeljem sadržaja na društvenim mrežama upoznaju s novim lokacijama i inspiriraju za buduća putovanja. Štoviše, Hu i Olivieri (2021) tvrde da društvene mreže služe kao ključna digitalna dodirna točka koja može oblikovati iskustvo turista tijekom različitih faza njihovog korisničkog putovanja (tj. prije, tijekom i nakon kupnje). Nedavna industrijska izvješća podupiru ovu tvrdnju, budući da 48 % ispitanika navodi da koristi društvene mreže kao inspiraciju za putovanja, dok njih 11 % koristi društvene mreže za istraživanje smještaja diljem svijeta (Statista, 2025). U Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama 39 % turista koristi društvene mreže za planiranje putovanja (Statista, 2025). Ovi podaci podudaraju se s predkupovnom fazom u korisničkom putovanju, tijekom koje turisti traže i procjenjuju informacije iz svih dostupnih izvora kako bi donijeli informirane odluke u fazi kupnje. Poslijekupovna faza odnosi se na evaluaciju turista i njihovo dijeljenje iskustva nakon što je osoba posjetila destinaciju, pri čemu se društvene mreže često koriste za dijeljenje dojmova s drugima nakon putovanja.

Budući da se ljudi sve češće oslanjaju na društvene mreže kao sastavni dio svog iskustva putovanja, turističke organizacije prepoznaju ih kao važno sredstvo promocije koje tako čine temelj za marketinške strategije izgrađene oko suradnje s *influencerima* (Gretzel, 2018). Posljedično, marketing *influencera* sve se više koristi kao alat za diferencijaciju i privlačenje pažnje potencijalnih turista (Femenia-Serra i Gretzel, 2020). Kako turisti često traže informacije putem društvenih mreža i zajednica za dije-

1. INTRODUCTION

The omnipresence of the internet has significantly changed peoples' lives. These changes are evident in the ways people consume the media, communicate and interact within large communities, and integrate social media into everyday life (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan and Altıntaş, 2021). The shift is also visible in the travel industry, as social media content introduces users to new locations and inspires future trips. Moreover, Hu and Olivieri (2021) argue that social media serve as a key digital touchpoint that can shape travelers' experience throughout the various stages of their customer journey (i.e., pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase). Recent industry reports support this claim, with 48 % of respondents report using social media for travel inspiration, while 11 % use social media for accommodation research worldwide (Statista, 2025). In the United States, 39 % of vacationers use social media for travel planning (Statista, 2025). This data coincides with the pre-purchase stage of the customer journey, during which travelers search for and evaluate information from all available sources to make informed decisions in the purchase stage. The post-purchase stage refers to travelers' evaluation and sharing of experience after the person has visited the destination, with social media often being used to share impressions after the trip with others.

Due to a growing reliance among the general public on social media as an integral part of their travel experience, tourism organizations recognize them as an important means of promotion, forming the foundation for marketing strategies built around influencer collaborations (Gretzel, 2018). Consequently, influencer marketing is increasingly used as a tool for differentiation and for capturing the attention of potential travelers (Femenia-Serra and Gretzel, 2020). As travelers frequently seek information through social media and content-sharing communities, in-

ljenje sadržaja, komunikacija uz pomoć *influencera* postala je kritična dodirna točka unutar njihovog korisničkog putovanja (Cox *et al.*, 2009; Varkaris i Neuhofer, 2017). U digitalnom okruženju, *influenceri* promoviraju proizvode i usluge dijeljenjem vlastitih iskustava i preporuka, djelujući kao neovisni zagovornici koji oblikuju stavove publike (Sahelices-Pinto i Rodríguez-Santos, 2014). Osim promoviranja proizvoda, *influenceri* sve više oblikuju percepciju turističkih destinacija. Njihov se utjecaj temelji na percipiranoj vjerodostojnosti, koja izravno utječe na ponašanje pratitelja i njihove odluke o kupnji (Magno, Cassia i Ugolini, 2018). Percipirana vjerodostojnost *influencera* može se objasniti teorijom vjerodostojnosti izvora koja odražava razinu do koje primatelj vjeruje pošiljatelju i, u kontekstu društvenih mreža, koliko se kreatori sadržaja percipiraju vjerodostojnima (Yilmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021). Ohanian (1990) tvrdi da se vjerodostojnost izvora može raščlaniti na tri ključne dimenzije: pouzdanost, stručnost i privlačnost.

Unatoč rastućem interesu znanstvenika za ovo područje, većina radova i dalje se fokusira na proces odabira destinacije, dok je uloga faza kupnje i poslijekupovnog ponašanja manje zastupljena. Ovaj rad ima za cilj ispuniti tu prazninu istraživanjem uloge koju *influenceri* imaju u svim fazama korisničkog putovanja turista kako bi se bolje razumjelo ponašanje turista. Kako bi se to ostvarilo, rad se fokusira na ispitivanje uloge vjerodostojnosti *influencera* kroz tri dimenzije (stručnost, pouzdanost i privlačnost) i njihovu važnost tijekom svih faza korisničkog putovanja (prije kupnje, tijekom kupnje i nakon kupnje). Na temelju navedenog cilja istraživanja postavljaju se sljedeća istraživačka pitanja:

IP1: Koja je uloga vjerodostojnosti influencera na društvenim mrežama u fazama korisničkog putovanja turista (prije, tijekom i nakon kupnje)?

IP2: Kako su tri dimenzije vjerodostojnosti influencera na društvenim mrežama

influencer-driven communication has become a critical touchpoint within their customer journey (Cox *et al.*, 2009; Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017). In the digital environment, influencers promote products and services by sharing their own experiences and recommendations, acting as independent advocates who shape the attitudes of their audience (Sahelices-Pinto and Rodríguez-Santos, 2014). In addition to promoting products, influencers are increasingly shaping the perception of tourist destinations. Their influence is based on perceived credibility, which directly affects the behavior of followers and their purchasing decisions (Magno, Cassia and Ugolini, 2018). The perceived credibility of an influencer can be explained by the Source Credibility Theory that reflects the extent to which the recipient trusts and believes the sender and, in the context of social media, how credible the content creators are perceived to be (Yilmazdoğan, Doğan and Altıntaş, 2021). According to Ohanian (1990), source credibility can be broken down into three key dimensions: Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness.

Despite the growing interest of scholars in this area, most of the work still focuses on the destination selection process, while the role of the purchase and post-purchase stages is less represented. This paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the role influencers have in all stages of the traveler's customer journey in order to better understand traveler behavior. In order to do so, we are focusing on influencer's credibility in travelers' customer journey through three credibility dimensions (Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness) and their importance in all stages of the traveler's customer journey (pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase). Based on the stated research goal the following research questions are set:

RQ1: What is the role of the social media influencer credibility in the stages of the traveler's customer journey (pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase)?

RQ2: How do the three dimensions of social media influencer credibility (Trustwor-

(*pouzdanost, stručnost i privlačnost*) pove-zane s ponašanjem potrošača kroz faze ko-risničkog putovanja (prije, tijekom i nakon kupnje)?

(*thinness, Expertise, and Attractiveness*) relate to consumer behavior across the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages of the traveler's customer journey?

2. PREGLED LITERATURE

2.1. Definicija i obilježja *influencera*

U rječniku Merriam-Webster (2024) *influencer* je definiran kao netko tko „inspirira ili usmjerava postupke drugih” i tko „može potaknuti interes za proizvod objavljivanjem na društvenim mrežama”. Abidin (2016) ističe da se *influenceri* prepoznaju po velikom broju pratitelja na svojim profilima, njihovoj moći utjecaja (Dhanesh i Duthler, 2019) i mogućnosti ostvarivanja prihoda (Abidin, 2016). Hu *et al.* (2020) objašnjavaju da su *influenceri* najčešće obični ljudi koji koriste tehnologiju i komunikacijske alate za stvaranje sadržaja na društvenim mrežama, dok istovremeno utječu na svoje pratitelje. Oni dijele raznovrsne sadržaje koji okupljaju publiku koju zanima ono što predstavljaju.

Slično tome, Buhalis (2022) navodi da su *influenceri* pojedinci koji okupljaju zajednicu pratitelja na društvenim mrežama i imaju značajan utjecaj na široku publiku putem svojih objava. Childers, Lemon i Hoy (2019) ih vide kao pojedince koji redovito potiču online angažman ciljnih skupina i promoviraju proizvode, usluge ili marke. Njihove metode komunikacije obuhvaćaju pisane objave, fotografije, videozapise i druge aktivnosti, poput online susreta. Ove aktivnosti pomažu u oblikovanju njihove digitalne osobnosti (Tafesse i Wien, 2018) i osobne marke (Kay, Mulcahy i Parkinson, 2020), čime grade povjerenje publike demonstriranjem znanja u područjima kao što su moda, sport, kuhanje, stil života i slično. Kozinets, Gretzel i Gambetti (2023) također ističu da se *influencere* može promatrati kao osobne marke koje razvijaju odnose s angažiranom publikom dosljednim, autentičnim i prepo-

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition and characteristics of influencers

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2024) defines an influencer as someone who “inspires or directs the actions of others” and who “can stimulate interest in a product by posting on social media”. Abidin (2016) highlights that influencers are recognized by the large number of followers on their profiles, their power of influence (Dhanesh and Duthler, 2019) and the possibility of generating income (Abidin, 2016). Hu *et al.* (2020) explain that influencers are usually ordinary people who use technology and communication tools to create content on social media, while at the same time influencing their followers. They share a variety of content that gathers an audience interested in what they represent.

Similarly, Buhalis (2022) states that influencers are individuals who gather a community of followers on social media and have a significant impact on a wide audience through their posts. Childers, Lemon and Hoy (2019) see them as individuals who regularly encourage online engagement of target groups and promote products, services or brands. Their communication methods include written posts, photos, videos and other forms of social activities such as online meetups. These activities help shape their digital persona (Tafesse and Wien, 2018) and personal brand (Kay, Mulcahy and Parkinson, 2020), thereby building audience trust through demonstrating knowledge in areas such as fashion, sports, cooking, lifestyle, and the like. Kozinets, Gretzel and Gambetti (2023) also point out that influencers can be seen as personal brands that develop rela-

znatljivim sadržajem na barem jednoj društvenoj platformi.

Influenceri se često percipiraju kao „lide-ri mišljenja” snažnog javnog imidža (John, 2023). Yefanov (2022) daje širu definiciju, opisujući ih kao kreatore javnog mnijenja koji imaju snažan utjecaj na svoju ciljnu publiku promoviranjem ideja i proizvoda putem izravnih komunikacijskih kanala, posebice na društvenim mrežama. Pritom kombiniraju privatni i javni život kako bi stvorili osjećaj bliskosti s pratiteljima, oblikujući time njihove potrošačke navike, životne izbore, pa čak i političke stavove. Zajednički nazivnik svih ovih definicija je djelovanje putem društvenih mreža. Yulianti i Huda (2022) smatraju *influencere* ključnima u donošenju odluka o kupnji te se oni uvelike koriste u digitalnom marketingu putem platformi kao što su Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X (bivši Twitter) i Pinterest.

Učinkovitost *influencera* na društvenim mrežama temelji se na teoriji vjerodostojnosti izvora, koja pretpostavlja da privlačnost, pouzdanost i stručnost *influencera* potiču njihov poticajni utjecaj na bihevioralne namjere, uključujući odluke o posjetu destinaciji i planiranju putovanja (Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds, 2025). Vjerodostojnost je ključna u razvoju razumijevanja utjecaja koji *influenceri* imaju na odluke kupaca. Kada se *influencere* percipira kao vjerodostojne, njihove preporuke proizvoda postaju vrednije kupcu, čime se povećava vjerojatnost kupnje (Lazer *et al.*, 2018). Prema Coutinho i Diasu (2023), vjerodostojnost *influencera* sastoji se od tri glavne dimenzije: pouzdanosti, stručnosti i privlačnosti. Pouzdanost se odnosi na iskrenost i nepristranost izvora (Rusdiana, Suroso i Suwandari, 2020). Prema Popu *et al.* (2021), pouzdanost predstavlja prethodne, akumulirane percepcije i iskustva koja dovode do toga da kupac razvije povjerenje. Visoke razine povjerenja u *influencere* pozitivno utječu na odnos s pratiteljima i posljedično na njihovu lojalnost marki (Ceyhan *et al.*, 2018; Coutinho i Dias, 2023). Stručnost,

tionships with an engaged audience through consistent, authentic, and recognizable content on at least one social platform.

Influencers are often perceived as “opinion leaders” with a strong public image (John, 2023). Yefanov (2022) provides a broader definition, highlighting them as public opinion leaders who have a strong influence on their target audience by promoting ideas and products through direct communication channels, especially on social media. In doing so, they combine private and public lives to create a sense of closeness with followers, thereby shaping their consumption habits, life choices and even political views. The common denominator of all these definitions is action through social networks. Yulianti and Huda (2022) consider influencers to be key in making purchasing decisions and are heavily used in digital marketing through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X (ex Twitter) and Pinterest.

The effectiveness of social media influencers is based on Source Credibility Theory, which posits that an influencer’s attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise drive their persuasive impact on behavioral intentions, including decisions to visit a destination and plan travel (Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds, 2025). Credibility is essential in developing an understanding of the impact that influencers have on customer decisions. When an influencer is perceived as credible, their product recommendations become more valuable to the customer, thus increasing the likelihood of purchase (Lazer *et al.*, 2018). According to Coutinho and Dias (2023), influencer credibility consists of three main dimensions: Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness. Trustworthiness refers to the honesty and impartiality of the source (Rusdiana, Suroso and Suwandari, 2020). According to Pop *et al.* (2021), trustworthiness represents the prior, accumulated perceptions and experiences that lead a customer to develop trust. High levels of trust in influencers positively influence the relationship with followers and consequently their loyalty to the brand (Cey-

kao druga dimenzija, odnosi se na percepciju kompetencije i razine znanja koju *influencer* posjeduje, što značajno utječe na vjerodostojnost sadržaja i utječe na odluku o kupnji (Schouten, Janssen i Verspaget, 2019). Stručnost označava da izvor komunikacije posjeduje adekvatno znanje i vještine u određenom području (Yilmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021).

Pratitelji često traže *influencere* specijalizirane za određeno područje jer ih smatraju relevantnim izvorima informacija, posebice kada sadržaj odgovara njihovim interesima (Coutinho i Dias, 2023). Na primjer, kupci mogu tražiti i uzeti u obzir *influencere* koji kreiraju sadržaj o kuhanju i hrani kada traže recepte, modne *influencere* za savjete o modi i stiliziranju te *influencere* usmjerene na putovanja za savjete o destinacijama, putovanjima i smještaju. Konačno, privlačnost, što uključuje i fizički izgled i simpatičnost, također može utjecati na percepciju vjerodostojnosti *influencera*. Ona je ključna za stvaranje snažnog prvog dojma jer poruke koje prenose ljudi percipirani kao privlačni značajno utječu na mišljenja i procjene koje drugi imaju o proizvodu ili lokaciji (Ohanian, 1990). *Influenceri* koji su percipirani kao privlačni učinkovitiji su u prenošenju poruka (Wang i Scheinbaum, 2018; Coutinho i Dias, 2023), što implicira da privlačnost može povećati svijest o marki i olakšati izgradnju povjerenja (Guo *et al.*, 2018; Lou i Yuan, 2019). Zaključno, kada su *influenceri* percipirani kao stručni, pouzdani i privlačni, njihova vjerodostojnost raste, što pozitivno utječe na namjeru kupnje kod njihovih pratitelja. Održavanje tih kvaliteta ključno je za dugoročni utjecaj *influencera* na digitalnom tržištu (Coutinho i Dias, 2023).

2.2. Uloga *influencera* u korisničkom putovanju turista

Zbog povećane konkurentnosti na tržištu, organizacije sada više nego ikad pokušavaju

han *et al.*, 2018; Coutinho and Dias, 2023). Expertise, as the second dimension, refers to the perception of the competence and level of knowledge that the influencer possesses, which significantly affects the credibility of the content and impacts purchase decision (Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget, 2019). It signifies that the source possesses adequate knowledge and skills in a particular area (Yilmazdoğan, Doğan, and Altıntaş, 2021).

Followers often seek out influencers specialized in a particular field because they consider them relevant sources of information, especially when the content matches their interests (Coutinho and Dias, 2023). For example, followers may seek out and consider food influencers for recipes, fashion influencers for fashion and styling advice, and travel influencers for destination, travel and accommodation advice. Finally, attractiveness, including physical appearance and likeability, can also influence perceptions of an influencer's credibility. It is crucial for creating a strong first impression because messages delivered by people who are perceived as attractive significantly influence the opinions and evaluations that others hold about a product or location (Ohanian, 1990). Influencers who are perceived as attractive are more effective at conveying messages (Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018; Coutinho and Dias, 2023) implying that attractiveness can increase brand awareness and facilitate trust building (Guo *et al.*, 2018; Lou and Yuan, 2019). In conclusion, when influencers are perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and attractive, their credibility increases, which positively influences customers' purchase intentions. Maintaining these qualities is crucial for influencers' long-term impact in the digital marketplace (Coutinho and Dias, 2023).

2.2. The role of influencers in traveler's customer journey

Due to the increased competitiveness on the market, organizations are now more

predvidjeti korake i želje kupaca. Umjesto da samo reagiraju na tijek puta koji kupac odabere, organizacije su same počele definirati korisnička putovanja u digitalnom okruženju (Edelman i Singer, 2015). Koncept korisničkog putovanja koristi se barem od ranih 1990-ih godina za opisivanje usluga iz perspektive kupca. U literaturi se taj koncept promatra kao proces kroz koji kupac prolazi kako bi ostvario određeni cilj, a koji uključuje jednog ili više pružatelja usluga (Folstad, Halvorsrud i Kvale, 2014). Prema Pourazadu, Stocchi i Simmondsu (2025), korisničko putovanje u turizmu nudi sveobuhvatan konceptualni okvir za analizu načina na koji se iskustva turista razvijaju od faze početne spoznaje do refleksije nakon putovanja, uokviren kao niz međusobno povezanih kognitivnih, emocionalnih i bihevioralnih odgovora na različite dodirne točke. Te dodirne točke u digitalnom okruženju mogu biti u vlasništvu marke (oglašavanje, web stranica, newsletter), u vlasništvu partnera (turističke agencije), u vlasništvu kupaca (računi na društvenim mrežama) te društvene/vanjske dodirne točke (stranice za recenzije, *influenceri*) (Hu i Olivieri, 2021). S obzirom na broj i složenost dodirnih točaka, razumijevanje korisničkog iskustva u digitalnom okruženju ključno je za poboljšanje konverzije kroz prodaju. Društvene mreže imaju ključnu ulogu u korisničkom putovanju, omogućujući markama izravnu interakciju s pojedincima i utjecaj na njihovo ponašanje (Forbus, 2021), kao i na percepcije, očekivanja i preferencije kupaca (Ramos i Matos, 2020).

Korisničko putovanje obično se dijeli u tri međusobno povezane faze: predkupovnu, kupovnu i poslijekupovnu fazu. Ovaj proces nije strogo linearan, već je dinamičan i iterativan, budući da prethodna iskustva oblikuju očekivanja kupaca u budućim interakcijama s markom (Lemon i Verhoef, 2016). Prva faza – predkupovna obuhvaća sve što kupac doživi prije dovršetka transakcije (Lemon i Verhoef, 2016). Često se naziva i fazom prije donošenja odluke jer uključuje kognitivne i

than ever striving to anticipate steps and customer's wishes. Instead of just reacting to the path that the customer chooses, organizations have started to define the customer journey (Edelman and Singer, 2015). The concept of a customer journey has been used since at least the early 1990s to describe services from the customer's perspective. In the literature, this concept is seen as a process that a customer goes through to achieve a certain goal, which involves one or more service providers (Folstad, Halvorsrud and Kvale, 2014). According to Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds (2025) customer journey in tourism offers a thorough conceptual framework for analyzing how traveler experiences develop from the stage of initial awareness to post-trip reflection, framed as a series of interconnected cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to different touchpoints. Those touchpoints in the digital environment can be brand-owned (advertising, website, newsletter), partner-owned (travel agencies), customer-owned (social media accounts) and social/external touchpoints (review sites, influencers) (Hu and Olivieri, 2021). Given the number and complexity of touchpoints, understanding the user experience in a digital environment is essential for improving sales conversion. Social media plays a key role in the customer journey, allowing brands to directly interact with individuals and influence their behavior (Forbus, 2021) as well as customer perceptions, expectations, and preferences (Ramos and Matos, 2020).

The customer journey is typically divided into three interconnected stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. This process is not strictly linear, but dynamic and iterative, as previous experiences shape customers' expectations in future interactions with the brand (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The first stage – pre-purchase, encompasses everything a customer experiences before completing a transaction (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). It is also often referred to as the pre-decision stage because

psihološke procese povezane s prikupljanjem i obradom informacija, uključujući spoznaju, razmatranje i procjenu alternativa (Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds, 2025). Želja za putovanjem često je oblikovana informacijama primljenim putem brojnih online i offline komunikacijskih kanala, kao i kampanje na društvenim mrežama usmjerene na povećanje vidljivosti i angažmana. Prema Popu *et al.* (2021), najsnažniji utjecaj društvenih mreža obično se javlja tijekom faza prepoznavanja problema i potrage za informacijama. *Influenceri* na društvenim mrežama informiraju svoje pratitelje o različitim turističkim destinacijama, ali ih i motiviraju na putovanje (Babu i Philip, 2025). Njihova prisutnost na društvenim mrežama, osobito na vizualno orijentiranim platformama poput Instagrama, snažno utječe na želje i ponašanje njihovih pratitelja (Sharma i Bhartiya, 2023). Prema Tussyadiah i Fesenmaieru (2009), želja za posjetom određenoj destinaciji snažno je oblikovana online komunikacijom, pri čemu se pokazalo da video sadržaj posebno povećava interes za određenim lokacijama. Naš konceptualni okvir predstavljen je na Slici 1, a obrazloženje hipoteza u nastavku.

U predkupovnoj fazi kupci također aktivno traže i uspoređuju informacije kako bi donijeli informiranu odluku o putovanju. Tijekom tog procesa, sadržaj vjerodostojnih *influencera* na društvenim mrežama, blogovi o putovanjima, platforme za recenzije i online zajednice snažno usmjeravaju donošenje odluka, pri čemu turisti obično konzultiraju recenzije kako bi identificirali preporučene aktivnosti prije posjeta destinaciji (Guerreiro, Viegas i Guerreiro, 2019). Tijekom prikupljanja informacija, turisti formiraju očekivanja o destinaciji često temeljem iskustva prethodnih posjetitelja (Pop *et al.*, 2021) poput *influencera*. Povjerenje koje grade sa svojom publikom čini ih neizostavnima u fazi prije kupnje, gdje pomažu pojedincima identificirati destinacije koje odgovaraju njihovim interesima i očekivanjima. Putem sadržaja koji promovira specifične lokacije,

it involves cognitive and psychological processes related to gathering and processing information, as well as awareness, consideration, and evaluating alternatives (Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds, 2025). Persons' desire to travel is often shaped by information received through multiple online and offline communication channels, including social media campaigns aimed at increasing visibility and engagement. According to Pop *et al.* (2021), social media's strongest influence tends to occur during the stages of problem recognition and information search. Social media influencers inform their followers about different tourist destinations, but they also motivate them to travel (Babu and Philip, 2025). Their presence on social media, especially on visually oriented platforms such as Instagram, strongly influences the desires and behavior of their followers (Sharma and Bhartiya, 2023). According to Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) the desire to visit a particular destination is strongly shaped by online communication, with video content shown to boost interest in travel locations. We present our conceptual framework in Figure 1 and hypothesis rationale below.

At the pre-purchase stage, customers also actively search for and compare information to make an informed travel decision. During that process, content from credible social media influencers, travel blogs, review platforms, and online communities strongly guides decision-making, with travelers commonly consulting reviews to identify recommended activities before visiting a destination (Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro, 2019). While gathering information, travelers form expectations about the destination often through the experiences of previous visitors (Pop *et al.*, 2021) like influencers. The trust they build with their audience renders them indispensable at the pre-purchase stage, where they help individuals identify destinations that match their interests and expectations. Through content promoting specific locations, influencers act

Slika 1: Konceptualni model

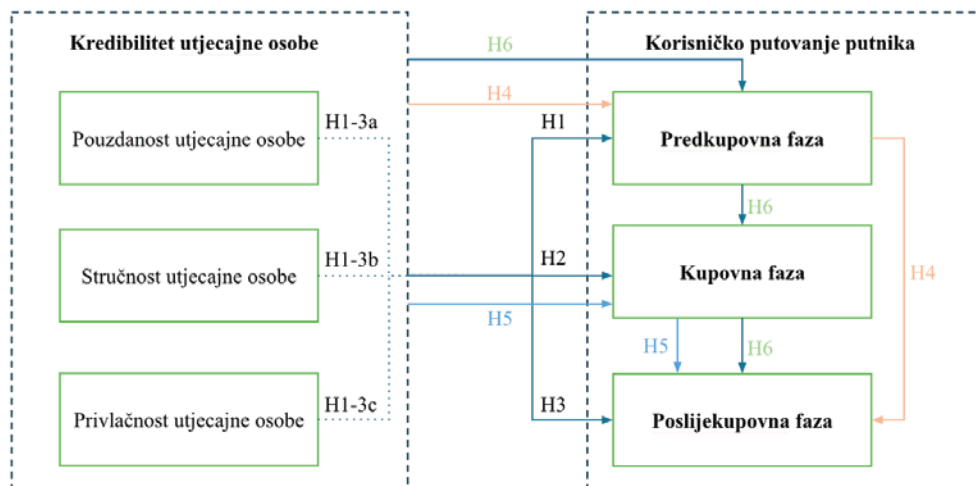
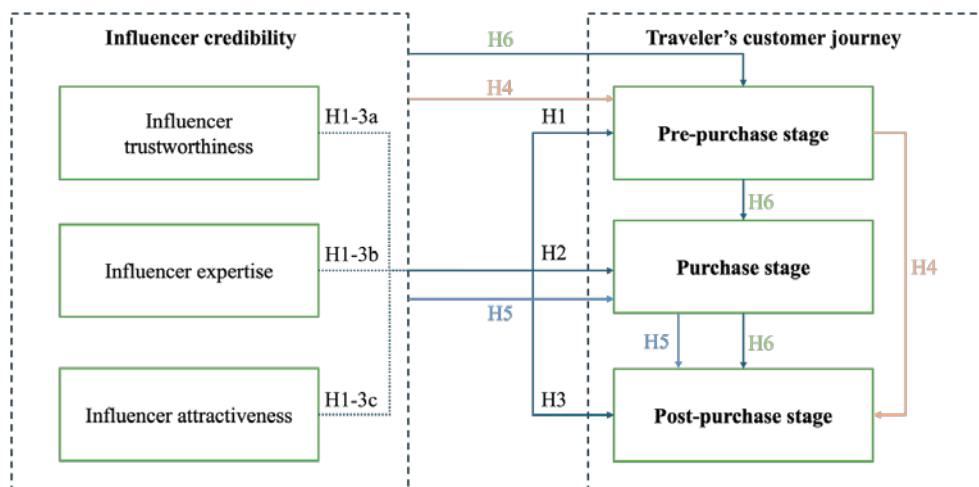


Figure 1: Conceptual model



influenceri djeluju kao posrednici između destinacija i potencijalnih turista, stvarajući slike koje utječu na percepcije i potiču želju za posjetom (Saini, Kumar i Oberoi, 2023). Prema Pourazadu, Stocchi i Simmondsu (2025), jednom kada kupci prihvate *influencer* kao pružatelje informacija, vjerojatnije je da će njihov sadržaj u predkupovnoj fazi smatrati i informativnim i poticajnim. Utje-

as intermediaries between destinations and potential travelers, creating images that influence perceptions and encourage the desire to visit (Saini, Kumar and Oberoi, 2023). According to Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds (2025) once customers accept influencers as information providers, they are more likely to find their content both informative and persuasive at the pre-purchase stage. The

čaj sadržaja koji dijele vjerodostojne *influencere* u ovoj fazi dobro je dokumentiran u literaturi (Kang i Schuett, 2013; Hudson i Thal, 2013; Kapitan i Silvera, 2015 u Guerreiro, Viegas i Guerreiro, 2019). Stoga se postavlja prva hipoteza:

H1. Vjerodostojnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na predkupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Budući da se ovaj rad temelji na pretpostavci da je vjerodostojnost trodimenzionalni konstrukt, važno je procijeniti utjecaj svih dimenzija od kojih se sastoji. Pouzdanost je važna u predkupovnoj fazi jer će potaknuti početno uvjerenje da su promocije destinacija od strane *influencera* autentične i nepristrane. Ova akumulirana pozitivna percepcija čini pratitelja prijemčivim za poruku i povećava želju za posjetom promoviranoj lokaciji (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021). Prema Popu *et al.* (2021), povjerenje u sadržaj koji stvaraju *influenceri* ima značajan pozitivan učinak na želju za putovanjem mladih kupaca, njihovo pretraživanje informacija i procjenu alternativa. Stoga se predlaže:

H1a. Pouzdanost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na predkupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Stručnost, kao druga dimenzija vjerodostojnosti, od vitalnog je značaja jer pratitelji aktivno traže *influencere* za koje se smatra da imaju dovoljno znanja i vještina (npr. o niskobudžetnim putovanjima ili specifičnim regijama). Ona potvrđuje vjerodostojnost *influencera* koja jamči da ih turist promatra kao relevantne izvore informacija i vodiče tijekom pretraživanja informacija i namjeri putovanja (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021). To vodi do sljedeće hipoteze:

H1b. Stručnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na predkupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Privlačnost je također važna u predkupovnoj fazi korisničkog putovanja jer je vrlo učinkovita za stvaranje snažnog prvog dojma

impact of content shared by credible influencers at this stage is well documented in the literature (Kang and Schuett, 2013; Hudson and Thal, 2013; Kapitan and Silvera, 2015 in Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro, 2019). We therefore hypothesize:

H1. Influencer credibility has a direct positive effect on the pre-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

Since this paper is based on the assumption that credibility is a three-dimensional construct, it is important to evaluate the influence of all dimensions. Trustworthiness is important at the pre-purchase stage because it will foster the initial belief that the influencer's destination promotions are genuine and impartial. This accumulated positive perception makes the customer receptive to the message and increases the desire to visit the promoted location (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan and Altıntaş, 2021). According to Pop *et al.* (2021) trust in the content created by influencers has a significant positive effect on the travel desire of young customers, their information search and evaluation of the alternatives. Therefore, we propose:

H1a. Influencer trustworthiness has a direct positive effect on the pre-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

Expertise, as the second credibility dimension, is vital because followers actively seek out influencers perceived as having sufficient knowledge and skills (e.g., about budget travel or specific regions). It validates the influencer credibility, ensuring that the customer views him/her as a relevant source of information and a guide in their information search and travel intention (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan and Altıntaş, 2021). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1b. Influencer expertise has a direct positive effect on the pre-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

Attractiveness is also important at the pre-purchase stage of the customer journey because it is highly effective for making a

i privlačenje pažnje. Poruke koje prenose privlačni i simpatični pojedinci značajno utječu na pozitivne početne procjene proizvoda ili lokacije, što pomaže u povećanju svijesti o marki i olakšavanju ranih faza izgradnje povjerenja (Lou i Yuan, 2019). Na temelju ovog nalaza predlaže se sljedeća hipoteza:

H1c. Privlačnost influencera na društvenim mrežama ima izravan pozitivan utjecaj na predkupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

U drugoj, kupovnoj fazi, kupac donosi konačnu odluku o kupnji, tj. kupuje turistički aranžman koji najbolje odgovara njegovim preferencijama (Pop *et al.*, 2021). Ova faza obuhvaća stvarnu odluku o transakciji (Lemon i Verhoef, 2016) i pokriva iskustva tijekom procesa kupnje, koja se često događaju kroz više dodirnih točaka, posebice digitalnih (Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds, 2025). Tijekom kupovne faze, lojalni pratitelji često slijede preporuke *influencer*a (Guerreiro *et al.*, 2019), a ponekad čak mijenjaju svoje planove u skladu s tim preporukama (Fotis, Buhalis i Rossides, 2012). Nakon donošenja odluke, kupci nastavljaju s rezervacijom ključnih elemenata svog putovanja, kao što su smještaj i prijevoz. U slučajevima kada je *influencer* u partnerstvu s određenim pružateljima usluga, oni mogu iskoristiti posebne ponude ili popuste koje taj *influencer* promovira (Jelski, 2018). *Influencer*i koji su izgradili snažnu reputaciju na društvenim mrežama često imaju značajan komercijalni utjecaj, što ih čini vrijednim partnerima turističkih poduzeća u povećanju prodaje i rezervacija (Digital Travel Expert, 2023).

Kao što je ranije navedeno, u ovoj fazi kupac prelazi iz razmatranja na konačnu odluku i transakciju. Vjerodostojnost je ovdje kritična za smanjenje percipiranog rizika i pretvaranje namjere u stvarnu kupnju (Ohanian, 1990). Stoga se predlaže druga hipoteza:

strong first impression and capturing attention. Messages delivered by appealing and likeable individuals significantly influence positive initial evaluations of a product or location, which helps in increasing brand awareness and facilitating the early stages of trust building (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Based on this finding we propose the following hypothesis:

H1c. Attractiveness of a social media influencer has a direct positive influence on the pre-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

In the second, purchase stage, the customer makes a final purchase decision i.e. buys the tourist package that best suits their preferences (Pop *et al.*, 2021). This stage encompasses the actual transaction decision (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and covers experiences during the purchase process, often occurring across multiple touchpoints, particularly the digital ones (Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds, 2025). During the purchase stage, loyal followers of influencers often follow their recommendations (Guerreiro *et al.*, 2019) and sometimes even change their plans in accordance with those recommendations (Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides, 2012). After making a decision, customers proceed to book key elements of their trip, such as accommodation and transportation. In cases where the influencer has a partnership with certain service providers, they can take advantage of special offers or discounts promoted by the influencer (Jelski, 2018). Influencers who have built a strong reputation on social media often have significant commercial influence, making them valuable partners for tourism businesses to increase sales and bookings (Digital Travel Expert, 2023).

As argued earlier, at this stage, the customer moves from consideration to the final decision and transaction. Credibility is critical here for reducing the perceived risk and converting intent into actual purchase (Ohanian, 1990). Hence, we propose our second hypothesis:

H2. Vjerodostojnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na kupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Uspostavljeno povjerenje između *influencera* i njihovih pratitelja aktivno smanjuje percipirani rizik transakcije. Kupac se osjeća sigurnije i samopouzdanije slijedeći pouzdanu preporuku za određenu rezervaciju, hotel ili uslugu, što ga izravno potiče na kupnju. Prema Popu *et al.* (2021), 44,9 % ispitanika navodi da su posjetili određenu destinaciju temeljem preporuke *influencera*, što ukazuje na to da su oni značajan čimbenik u donošenju „konačnih odluka“ povezanih s rezervacijom putovanja ili kupnjom specifičnih turističkih proizvoda.

H2a. Pouzdanost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na kupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Stručnost se manifestira kroz uvjerenje da je specifična preporuka *influencera* (npr. najbolja platforma za rezervaciju ili najučinkovitija ruta) optimalna ili se temelji na praktičnom, provjerenom iskustvu. Prema Guerreiro *et al.* (2019), oni koji su lojalni *influencerima* skloni su posjećivati mjesta/destinacije koje oni preporučuju. Stoga se predlaže da:

H2b. Stručnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na kupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Vizualna privlačnost i poželjan stil života koje predstavljaju privlačni *influenceri* utječu na to da se ono što je preporučeno čini poželjnije i perspektivnije (Ohanian, 1990). To može ojačati motivaciju pratitelja da dovrše transakciju i nabave promovirani proizvod ili uslugu kako bi ostvarili željeni stil života (Schouten, Janssen i Verspaget, 2019), a to dovodi do sljedeće hipoteze:

H2c. Privlačnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na kupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Posljednja poslijekupovna faza obuhvaća evaluaciju je li destinacija ispunila očekivanja kupaca, kao i dimenzije povratnih infor-

H2. Influencer credibility has a direct positive effect on the purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

The established trust between the influencer and their followers actively reduces the perceived risk of the transaction. The customer feels safer and more confident following a trusted recommendation for a specific booking, hotel, or service, which directly encourages them to commit to the purchase. According to Pop *et al.* (2021) 44,9 % of respondents reported visiting a destination based on an influencer's recommendation, indicating that influencers are a significant factor in driving *final decisions* related to booking trips or purchasing specific tourist products.

H2a. Influencer trustworthiness has a direct positive effect on the purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

Expertise translates into the belief that the influencer's specific recommendation (e.g., the best booking platform, the most efficient route) is optimal or based on practical, verified experience. According to Guerreiro *et al.* (2019), those who are loyal to influencers tend to visit places/destinations they recommend. Therefore, we propose that:

H2b. Influencer expertise has a direct positive effect on the purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

The visual appeal and desirable lifestyle presented by the attractive influencer make the recommended feel more aspirational and desirable (Ohanian, 1990). This can strengthen the follower's motivation to complete the transaction and acquire the promoted product or service to achieve that lifestyle (Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget, 2019) leading to the next hypothesis:

H2c. Influencer attractiveness has a direct positive effect on the purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

The final post-purchase stage encompasses evaluation whether the destination met the customers' expectations as well

macija putem usmenih preporuka (Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds, 2025). *Influenceri* i dalje imaju važnu ulogu, budući da mogu oblikovati stavove turista o destinaciji kroz kognitivne, afektivne i konativne dimenzije (Sharma i Bhartiya, 2023; Lorgeoux i Divarak, 2023). Slijedom toga, u ovoj fazi kupci mogu podijeliti svoja iskustva na društvenim mrežama, uspoređujući stvarno iskustvo s prethodnim očekivanjima, što rezultira pozitivnim ili negativnim povratnim informacijama. Dijeljenjem osobnih iskustava na društvenim mrežama, kupci utječu na reputaciju marke, pri čemu negativne recenzije potencijalno potiču druge da promijene svoje preferencije (Lemon i Verhoef, 2016). To sugerira da vjerodostojnost *influencera*, uspostavljena u ranijim fazama, također oblikuje korisničko putovanje u poslijekupovnoj fazi, pa se predlaže sljedeća hipoteza:

H3. Vjerodostojnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Istraživanje koje su proveli Pop *et al.* (2021) pokazalo je da povjerenje u sadržaje koje stvaraju *influenceri* ima značajan pozitivan utjecaj na zadovoljstvo nakon kupnje, ali ne i na njihovo dijeljenje iskustava na društvenim mrežama. Unatoč nepotpunim rezultatima, predložena je sljedeća hipoteza:

H3a. Pouzdanost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Percipirana stručnost *influencera* utječe na to kako turist ocjenjuje vlastito putovanje jer često uspoređuje svoje stvarno iskustvo sa standardima i preporukama stručnjaka, što oblikuje njegovo cjelokupno zadovoljstvo i buduće namjere. Prema Wahbi, El-Deebu i Metryju (2025), kada pojedinci percipiraju sebe sposobnima za postizanje slične razine učinka ili statusa poput *influencera*, javljaju se pozitivne emocije poput aspiracije i divljenja. Stoga se predlaže:

as feedback dimensions through word-of-mouth recommendations (Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds, 2025). Influencers continue to play an important role, as they can shape the tourists' attitudes about the destination through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions (Sharma and Bhartiya, 2023; Lorgeoux and Divarak, 2023). As a result, at this stage, customers can share their experiences on social media, comparing the actual experience with previous expectations, resulting in positive or negative feedback. By sharing personal experiences on social media, customers influence the reputation of a brand, with negative reviews potentially prompting others to change their preferences (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This suggests that the influencer's credibility, established in earlier stages, also shapes the customer journey in the post-purchase stage so we propose the following hypothesis:

H3. Influencer credibility has a direct positive effect on the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

Research by Pop *et al.* (2021) showed that trust in the content created by influencers has a significant positive impact on post-purchase satisfaction but not on their experience sharing on social media. Despite the inconclusive findings, we propose:

H3a. Influencer trustworthiness has a direct positive effect on the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

The perceived expertise of the influencer affects in what manner the traveler evaluates their own trip because they often compare their real-world experience against the expert's standards and recommendations, which shapes their overall satisfaction and future intentions. According to Wahba, El-Deeb and Metry (2025), when individuals perceive themselves as capable of achieving a similar level of performance or status as the influencers, positive emotions such as aspiration and admiration arise. Accordingly, we propose:

H3b. Stručnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Ljudi koji su percipirani kao privlačni šalju poruke koje značajno utječu na razmišljanja i procjene drugih ljudi o proizvodu ili mjestu (Yilmazdogan *et al.*, 2021), što dovodi do sljedeće hipoteze:

H3c. Privlačnost influencera ima izravan pozitivan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu korisničkog putovanja turista.

Kao što je ranije navedeno, korisničko putovanje je dinamičan, sekvencijalan proces koji se odvija kroz faze prije kupnje, tijekom kupnje i nakon kupnje (Lemon i Verhoef, 2016). S druge strane, vjerodostojnost *influencera* višedimenzionalni je konstrukt sazdan od pouzdanosti, stručnosti i privlačnosti (Ohanian, 1990) koji će vjerojatno manifestirati svoj utjecaj oblikovanjem percepcija i odluka u svakoj prethodnoj fazi koje se zatim prenose na kasnije faze (Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds, 2025). Stoga je opravdana medijacijska analiza koja bi pokazala kako dimenzije vjerodostojnosti djeluju kroz ranije faze korisničkog putovanja i utječu na ishode u kasnijim fazama. Kako bi se modelirao taj sekvencijalni utjecaj, predložene su sljedeće hipoteze:

H4. Predkupovna faza posreduje u odnosu između vjerodostojnosti influencera i poslijekupovne faze u korisničkom putovanju turista, na način da vjerodostojnost influencera ima pozitivan neizravan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu putem predkupovne faze.

H5. Kupovna faza posreduje u odnosu između vjerodostojnosti influencera i poslijekupovne faze u korisničkom putovanju turista, tako da vjerodostojnost influencera ima pozitivan neizravan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu putem faze kupnje.

H6. Predkupovna i kupovna faza zajednički (serijski) posreduju u odnosu između vjerodostojnosti influencera i poslijekupovne faze u korisničkom putovanju turista, na način da njihova vjerodostojnost ima pozi-

H3b. Influencer expertise has a direct positive effect on the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

People who are viewed as attractive send messages that significantly influence other people's thoughts and evaluations about a product or a place (Yilmazdogan *et al.*, 2021) leading to the following hypothesis:

H3c. Influencer attractiveness has a direct positive effect on the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey.

As noted earlier, the customer journey is a dynamic, sequential process unfolding across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Conversely, influencer credibility is a multidimensional construct consisting of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990) that is likely to exert its impact by shaping perceptions and decisions at each prior stage that then carry forward to later stages (Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds, 2025). Hence, a mediation analysis is warranted to capture how these credibility dimensions work through earlier customer journey stages and affect the outcomes at subsequent stages. In order to model this sequential influence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4. The pre-purchase stage mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey in such a way that the influencer credibility has a positive indirect effect on the post-purchase stage via the pre-purchase stage.

H5. The purchase stage mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and the post-purchase phase of the traveler's customer journey in such a way that influencer credibility has a positive indirect effect on the post-purchase stage via the purchase stage.

H6. The pre-purchase and purchase stages jointly (serially) mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and the post-purchase stage of the traveler's customer journey in such a way that influencer credibility has a

tivan neizravan učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu sekvencijalnim putem.

positive indirect effect on the post-purchase stage through the sequential path.

3. METODOLOGIJA

3. METHODOLOGY

Kako bi se ispitala uloga vjerodostojnosti *influencera* u korisničkom putovanju turista, provedeno je online anketno istraživanje na prigodnom uzorku hrvatskih građana koji koriste društvene medije i prate *influence-re*. Upitnik je izrađen pomoću alata Google Forms i distribuiran putem društvenih medija (tj. Facebooka, Instagrama i WhatsAppa).

Polustrukturirani upitnik sastojao se od pet cjelina: aktivnosti ispitanika na društvenim medijima, ponašanja i navika povezanih s putovanjima, uloge *influencera* u korisničkom putovanju turista, njihove vjerodostojnosti i demografskih podataka (dob, spol, obrazovanje, radni status, prihod). Definicije varijabli i način mjerenja prikazani su u Tablici 1.

To examine the role of influencers’ credibility in the traveler’s customer journey, we conducted an online survey on a non-random convenient sample of Croatian citizens who use social media and follow influencers. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed via social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp).

The semi-structured questionnaire consisted of five sections: respondents’ activities on social media, travel behaviors and habits, the role of influencers in the traveler’s customer journey, influencer credibility and demographic data (age, gender, education, employment status, income). Variable definitions and measurement are presented in Table 1.

Tablica 1: Operacionalizacija varijabli

Naziv varijable	Mjerna ljestvica	Izvor	Cronbachov alfa koeficijent
Predkupovna faza	Ljestvica Likertova tipa s 5 stupnjeva (u rasponu od 1 – „uopće se ne slažem” do 5 – „u potpunosti se slažem”)	Guerreiro, Viegas i Guerreiro, 2019	0,877
Kupovna faza			0,833
Poslijekupovna faza			0,795
Vjerodostojnost <i>influencera</i>			0,873

Table 1: Variable operationalization

Variable name	Measurement	Source	Cronbach alpha
Pre-purchase stage	5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 - “strongly disagree” to 5 - “strongly agree”).	Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro, 2019	0.877
Purchase stage			0.833
Post-purchase stage			0.795
Influencer credibility			0.873

U razdoblju od 17. srpnja do 23. kolovoza 2024. prikupljena su ukupno 254 valjana odgovora. Iz daljnje analize isključeno je 57 ispitanika koji nisu pratili *influencere* na društvenim medijima. Obilježja uzorka prikazana su u Tablici 2 i opisana u nastavku.

A total of 254 valid responses were collected in the period from July 17 to August 23, 2024, but 57 respondents who did not follow influencers on social media were excluded from further analysis. Sample characteristics are presented in Table 2 and discussed below.

Tablica 2: Sociodemografska obilježja uzorka

Varijabla		Frekvencija	Postotak	Valjani postotak	Kumulativni postotak
Spol	Muški	50	25,4	25,4	25,4
	Ženski	147	74,6	74,6	100,0
	Ukupno	197	100,0	100,0	
Dob	18-30	161	81,7	81,7	81,7
	31-45	35	17,8	17,8	99,5
	46-55	1	0,50	0,5	100,0
	Ukupno	197	100,0	100,0	
Stupanj obrazovanja	Srednja škola	52	26,4	26,4	26,4
	Preddiplomski studij	61	31,0	31,0	57,4
	Diplomski studij	78	39,6	39,6	97,0
	Poslijediplomski studij	6	3,0	3,0	100,0
	Ukupno	197	100,0	100,0	
Radni status	Student/ica	51	25,9	25,9	25,9
	Zaposlen/a	124	62,9	62,9	88,8
	Samozaposlen/a	13	6,6	6,6	95,4
	Nezaposlen/a	9	4,6	4,6	100,0
	Ukupno	197	100,0	100,0	
Prihod (EUR)	> 500	22	11,2	11,2	11,2
	500-999	37	18,8	18,8	29,9
	1.000-1.999	82	41,6	41,6	71,6
	2.000-2.999	26	13,2	13,2	84,8
	3.000-4.999	6	3,0	3,0	87,8
	5.000+	1	0,5	0,5	88,3
	Preferiram ne odgovoriti	23	11,7	11,7	100,0
	Ukupno	197	100,0	100,0	

Table 2: Sample sociodemographic characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	50	25.4	25.4	25.4
	Female	147	74.6	74.6	100.0
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Age	18-30	161	81.7	81.7	81.7
	31-45	35	17.8	17.8	99.5
	46-55	1	0.50	0.5	100.0
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Education	High school	52	26.4	26.4	26.4
	Undergraduate	61	31.0	31.0	57.4
	Graduate	78	39.6	39.6	97.0
	Postgraduate	6	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Employment status	Student	51	25.9	25.9	25.9
	Employed	124	62.9	62.9	88.8
	Self-employed	13	6.6	6.6	95.4
	Unemployed	9	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	
Income in EUR	> 500	22	11.2	11.2	11.2
	500-999	37	18.8	18.8	29.9
	1.000-1.999	82	41.6	41.6	71.6
	2.000-2.999	26	13.2	13.2	84.8
	3.000-4.999	6	3.0	3.0	87.8
	5.000+	1	0.5	0.5	88.3
	Prefer not to say	23	11.7	11.7	100.0
	Total	197	100.0	100.0	

Konačni uzorak sastojao se od 197 sudionika, od kojih je većina bila ženskog spola (74,6 %) u dobi od 18 do 30 godina (81,7 %), 17,8 % ih je bilo je u dobi od 31 do 45 godina, a 0,5 % od 46 do 55 godina. Sudionici su bili općenito visoko obrazovani: 26,4 % ih je završilo srednju školu, 31,0 % je pohađalo preddiplomski studij, 39,6 % diplomski, a 3,0 % poslijediplomski studij. U pogledu zaposlenosti, 62,9 % sudionika bilo je zaposleno, 25,9 % su bili studenti, 6,6 % samozaposleno, a 4,6 % nezaposleno. Najčešće zabilježen mjesečni prihod iznosio je između 1.000 i 1.999 EUR (41,6 %) s manjim udjelima u nižim ili višim rasponima, dok 11,7 % sudionika nije htjelo otkriti svoje prihode.

Najveći broj ispitanika provodi između 1 i 3 sata dnevno na društvenim medijima (46,2 %), dok ih 38,1 % koristi društvene medije 3 do 5 sati, a 15,2 % više od 5 sati. Ispitanici su najaktivniji na Instagramu (76,6 %), a slijede TikTok (9,6 %), Facebook (6,1 %), LinkedIn (2,5 %), Snapchat (2,5 %), Pinterest (1,0 %) i X (1,0 %). Sadržaj koji ispitanici najčešće prate uključuje modu i ljepotu (79,4 %), putovanja i turističke destinacije (66 %), hranu (43,5 %), sport i zdravi život (41,9 %), slavne osobe (23,7 %), kulturu i umjetnost (20,6 %), vijesti (16,2 %), zabavu (0,8 %) te vjerske teme (0,4 %).

U pogledu putnih navika, većina ispitanika putuje do dva puta godišnje (54,3 %), dok 37,1 % putuje tri do četiri puta, a samo 8,6 % navodi da putuje pet ili više puta godišnje. U uzorku dominiraju ispitanici koji samostalno organiziraju svoja putovanja (87,8 %), dok manji dio njih koristi usluge drugih za njihovu organizaciju (12,2 %). Također, većina preferira istraživanje novih destinacija (84,8 %) u usporedbi s onima koji se radije vraćaju na već posjećena mjesta (15,2 %).

4. REZULTATI ISTRAŽIVANJA

Podaci su analizirani korištenjem softverskog paketa IBM SPSS 30. Prije pro-

The final sample consisted of 197 participants, most of whom were female (74.6 %) and aged 18–30 years old (81.7 %), then 17.8 % were 31–45, and finally 0.5 % were 46–55 years of age. The participants were generally well educated: 26.4 % had completed high school, 31.0 % were undergraduates, 39.6 % graduates, and 3.0 % postgraduates. In terms of employment, 62.9 % were employed, 25.9 % were students, 6.6 % self-employed, and 4.6 % unemployed. The reported monthly income was most commonly between 1,000 and 1,999 EUR (41.6 %), with smaller proportions in lower or higher brackets and 11.7 % preferring not to report their income.

The largest number of respondents spend between 1 and 3 hours a day on social networks (46.2 %), while 38.1 % of them use the networks for 3 to 5 hours, and 15.2 % for more than 5 hours. The respondents are most active on Instagram (76.6 %), followed by TikTok (9.6 %), Facebook (6.1 %), LinkedIn (2.5 %), Snapchat (2.5 %), Pinterest (1.0 %) and X (1.0 %). The content that respondents most often follow includes fashion and beauty (79.4 %), travel and tourist destinations (66 %), food (43.5 %), sports and healthy living (41.9 %), celebrities (23.7 %), culture and arts (20.6 %), news (16.2 %), entertainment (0.8 %) and religious topics (0.4 %).

In terms of their travel behavior, most respondents travel up to two times a year (54.3 %), while 37.1 % travel three to four times, and only 8.6 % say they travel five or more times a year. The sample is dominated by respondents who organize their trips independently (87.8 %), while a smaller share uses the services of others to organize them (12.2 %). In addition, the majority prefer to explore new destinations (84.8 %) compared to those who prefer to return to places they have already visited (15.2 %).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 30. Before conducting the main analyses, the

vođenja glavnih analiza, pretpostavka normalnosti ispitana je za svaku varijablu korištenjem Shapiro-Wilkovog testa. Rezultati su pokazali da su distribucije svih varijabli bile približno normalne ili su uočena manja odstupanja od normalnosti koja se smatraju prihvatljivima. Naposljetku, pouzdanost skale varijabli mjerenih s više čestica ispitana je pomoću Cronbachovog alfa koeficijenta. Uz ovaj pokazatelj, izračunata je matrica korelacije čestica i statistika omjera stavki i ukupnog iznosa. Koeficijenti prikazani u Tablici 1 pokazuju da je za sve varijable premašen preporučeni prag (0,70) za unutarnju konzistentnost (Tabachnick i Fidell, 2007).

4.1. Deskriptivna statistika

Deskriptivna statistika za pojedinačne čestice i kompozitne skale (Tablica 3) pokazuje da se sudionici umjereno oslanjaju na *influencere* tijekom svog korisničkog puta. U predkupovnoj fazi, ispitanici su uglavnom iskazali slaganje s tvrdnjama da traže i uzimaju u obzir objave i iskustva *influencera* pri donošenju odluka o putovanju, pri čemu je najsnažnija potvrda zabilježena za tvrdnju da kvalitetan sadržaj *influencera* povećava njihovu želju za posjetom destinaciji ($M = 4,03$, $SD = 0,99$). Kompozitni rezultat za predkupovnu fazu bio je relativno visok ($M = 24,14$, $SD = 6,13$), što upućuje na činjenicu da *influenceri* imaju istaknutu ulogu kao izvor informacija i inspiracije prije odabira odredišta putovanja. Nasuprot tome, tvrdnje vezane uz fazu kupnje i odgovarajući kompozitni rezultat ($M = 11,51$, $SD = 4,50$) ukazuju na skromniju ulogu *influencera*, posebno u pogledu korištenja ponuda i popusta koje nude. Odgovori vezani uz poslijekupovnu fazu pokazali su da sudionici umjereno slijede savjete *influencera* za vrijeme boravka te da će se vjerojatno ponovno osloniti na njih ako su zadovoljni preporučenom destinacijom, dok je aktivno dijeljenje iskustava na profilima *influencera* ili uspoređivanje očekivanja sa stvarnim iskustvima bilo manje zastupljeno.

assumption of normality was assessed for each variable using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results indicated that the distributions for all variables were approximately normal or with minor deviations from normality observed. Finally, the scale reliability of all multi-item measures was examined using Cronbach's alpha. In addition to this indicator, for a more precise evaluation the inter-item correlation matrix and item-to-total statistics were calculated. The coefficients are reported in Table 1 and indicate that all measurements exceeded the recommended threshold (0.70) for internal consistency (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for individual items and composite scales (Table 3) indicate that participants reported a generally moderate reliance on influencers throughout the traveler's customer journey. At the pre-purchase stage, respondents tended to agree that they search for and consider influencers' posts and experiences when making travel decisions, with the strongest endorsement for quality influencer content increasing their desire to visit a destination ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.99$). The composite pre-purchase score was relatively high ($M = 24.14$, $SD = 6.13$), suggesting that influencers play a salient role as a source of information and inspiration before choosing where to travel. In contrast, purchase stage items and the corresponding composite score ($M = 11.51$, $SD = 4.50$) indicate a more modest impact of influencers on concrete booking behaviors, especially regarding use of influencer-offered deals and discounts. Post-purchase items showed that participants moderately follow influencers' advice during their stay and are likely to rely on them again if satisfied with a recommended destination, while actively sharing experiences on influencers' profiles or comparing expectations with actual experiences was less common; the overall post-purchase composite mean

Tablica 3: Deskriptivna statistika glavnih varijabli modela

Čestica/Varijabla	N	Min	Max	Aritmetička sredina (M)	Standardna devijacija (SD)
<i>Kvalitetan sadržaj koji objavljuju influenceri može povećati moju želju za posjetom određenoj turističkoj destinaciji.</i>	197	1	5	4,03	0,99
<i>Pretražujem objave influencera na društvenim mrežama kada moram donijeti odluku o putovanju.</i>	197	1	5	3,60	1,19
<i>Influenceri na društvenim mrežama mogu promijeniti moj stav prema određenoj turističkoj destinaciji.</i>	197	1	5	3,49	1,11
<i>Prilikom donošenja odluka o putovanju razmatram iskustva putovanja influencera na društvenim mrežama.</i>	197	1	5	3,47	1,06
<i>Influenceri na društvenim mrežama često su važan izvor inspiracije za moje buduće putovanje.</i>	197	1	5	3,47	1,13
<i>Vjerujem da preporuke i savjeti influencera na društvenim mrežama značajno utječu na moj odabir turističkih destinacija.</i>	197	1	5	3,16	1,10
Predkupovna faza - ukupno	197	9,00	35,00	24,14	6,13
<i>Obižavam posjećivati mjesta koja sam vidio/vidjela na društvenim mrežama influencera.</i>	197	1	5	3,35	1,22
<i>Često biram smještaj koji su preporučile influenceri na društvenim mrežama zbog njihove estetike ili lokacije.</i>	197	1	5	2,90	1,34
<i>Osjećam se sigurnije rezervirajući smještaj koji je preporučila influencer jer vjerujem da će odgovarati mojim očekivanjima</i>	197	1	5	2,89	1,24
<i>Često koristim ponude i popuste koje nude influenceri kako bih rezervirao/la smještaj ili prijevoz za putovanje.</i>	197	1	5	2,63	1,43
Kupovna faza - ukupno	197	4,00	20,00	11,51	4,50
<i>Ako mi se svidjela turistička destinacija koju preporučuje influencer, vjerojatnije je da ću ponovno koristiti te preporuke za buduća putovanja.</i>	197	1	5	3,63	1,07
<i>Tijekom boravka u odabranoj destinaciji pratim savjete i preporuke influencera kako bih maksimalno iskoristio/la svoje iskustvo u destinaciji.</i>	197	1	5	3,21	1,70
<i>Nakon putovanja često uspoređujem svoje turističko iskustvo s očekivanjima koje su stvorile preporuke influencera na društvenim mrežama..</i>	197	1	5	2,64	1,31
<i>Dijelim svoja iskustva putovanja na profilima društvenih mreža influencera koji su me potaknuli na odabir turističke destinacije</i>	197	1	5	2,35	1,41
Poslijekupovna faza - ukupno	197	4,00	20,00	11,83	4,00
<i>Pouzdanost influencera</i>	197	1	5	3,42	1,22
Stručnost influencera	197	1	5	3,49	1,16
<i>Privlačnost influencera</i>	197	1	5	3,19	1,36
Ukupna vjerodostojnost influencera	197	3,00	15,00	10,10	3,35

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for main variables in the model

Item/Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Quality content published by influencers can increase my desire to visit a particular tourist destination.</i>	197	1	5	4.03	0.99
<i>I search for influencers' posts on social media when I have to make a travel decision.</i>	197	1	5	3.60	1.19
<i>Influencers on social media can change my attitude towards a particular tourist destination.</i>	197	1	5	3.49	1.11
<i>I tend to consider the travel experiences of social media influencers when making travel decisions.</i>	197	1	5	3.47	1.06
<i>Influencers on social media are often an important source of inspiration for my future travel.</i>	197	1	5	3.47	1.13
<i>I believe that recommendations and advice from influencers on social media significantly influence my choice of travel destinations.</i>	197	1	5	3.16	1.10
Pre-purchase stage total	197	9.00	35.00	24.14	6.13
<i>I tend to visit places I've seen on influencer's social media.</i>	197	1	5	3.35	1.22
<i>I often choose accommodations recommended by social media influencers because of their aesthetics or location.</i>	197	1	5	2.90	1.34
<i>I feel more confident booking accommodation recommended by an influencer because I trust it will meet my expectations.</i>	197	1	5	2.89	1.24
<i>I often use deals and discounts offered by influencers to book accommodation or transportation for travel.</i>	197	1	5	2.63	1.43
Purchase stage total	197	4.00	20.00	11.51	4.50
<i>If I liked a tourist destination recommended by an influencer, I am more likely to use their recommendations again for future trips.</i>	197	1	5	3.63	1.07
<i>During a stay at my chosen destination, I follow the advice and recommendations of influencers to make the most of my experience at the destination.</i>	197	1	5	3.21	1.70
<i>After traveling, I often compare my travel experience with the expectations created by recommendations from influencers on social media.</i>	197	1	5	2.64	1.31
<i>I share my travel experiences on the social media profiles of influencers who inspired me to choose a travel destination.</i>	197	1	5	2.35	1.41
Post-purchase stage total	197	4.00	20.00	11.83	4.00
<i>Influencer trustworthiness</i>	197	1	5	3.42	1.22
Influencer expertise	197	1	5	3.49	1.16
<i>Influencer attractiveness</i>	197	1	5	3.19	1.36
Influencer credibility total	197	3.00	15.00	10.10	3.35

Ukupna kompozitna srednja vrijednost za poslijekupovnu fazu ($M = 11,83$, $SD = 4,00$) podržava taj zaključak. Percepcija vjerodostojnosti *influencera* bila je također umjerena, sa sličnim razinama srednje vrijednosti za percipiranu stručnost ($M = 3,49$, $SD = 1,16$), pouzdanost ($M = 3,42$, $SD = 1,22$) i privlačnost ($M = 3,19$, $SD = 1,36$), a kompozitni rezultat vjerodostojnosti ($M = 10,10$, $SD = 3,35$) ukazuje na to da se *influenceri* općenito doživljavaju kao relativno vjerodostojni, ali ne i jednoznačno visoko pouzdani izvori.

4.2. Korelacije

Analiza korelacija prikazana u Tablici 4 pokazuje statistički značajne pozitivne asocijacije između vjerodostojnosti *influencera* i različitih faza korisničkog puta. Rezultati za predkupovnu, kupovnu i poslijekupovnu fazu bili su snažno međusobno povezani ($r = 0,62$ – $0,73$, svi $p < 0,001$), što ukazuje na to da osobe koje se oslanjaju na *influencere* pri odabiru destinacije imaju tendenciju praćenja njihovih preporuka tijekom rezervacije i nakon putovanja. Vjerodostojnost *influencera* bila je umjereno do snažno korelirana sa sve tri faze ($r = 0,60$ – $0,67$, svi $p < 0,001$), što sugerira da viša percepcija pouzdanosti, stručnosti i privlačnosti *influencera* jest povezana s njihovim većim utjecajem u svim fazama procesa odlučivanja. Sveukupno, ovi rezultati podupiru ideju da je percipirana vjerodostojnost *influencera* usko povezana s njihovim utjecajem u različitim fazama korisničkog puta.

($M = 11,83$, $SD = 4,00$) reflects this mixed pattern. The perceptions of influencer credibility were also moderate, with similar mean levels for perceived Expertise ($M = 3,49$, $SD = 1,16$), Trustworthiness ($M = 3,42$, $SD = 1,22$), and Attractiveness ($M = 3,19$, $SD = 1,36$) and a composite credibility score ($M = 10,10$, $SD = 3,35$) that influencers are generally viewed indicates as reasonably credible but not uniformly highly trusted sources.

4.2. Correlations

Correlation analysis presented in Table 4 shows statistically significant positive associations between influencer credibility and different stages of the traveler's customer journey. Prepurchase, purchase, and post-purchase scores were all strongly interrelated ($r = 0,62$ – $0,73$, all $ps < 0,001$), indicating that individuals who rely on influencers before choosing a destination also tend to follow their recommendations during booking and after the trip. Influencer credibility was moderately to strongly correlated with all three stages ($r = 0,60$ – $0,67$, all $ps < 0,001$), suggesting that higher perceptions of influencer trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are linked to greater reported influence of influencers across the entire traveler's customer journey. Overall, these results support the notion that perceived influencer credibility is closely connected to their impact at different stages of the customer journey.

Tablica 4: Matrica korelacija

		Predkupovna faza	Kupovna faza	Poslijekupovna faza	Vjerodostojnost influencera
Predkupovna faza	Pearsonov koeficijent korelacije	1	0,658**	0,620**	0,668**
	Sig. (dvostrano)		<0,001	<0,001	<0,001
	N	197	197	197	197
Kupovna faza	Pearsonov koeficijent korelacije	0,658**	1	0,734**	0,600**
	Sig. (dvostrano)	<0,001		<0,001	<0,001
	N	197	197	197	197
Poslijedupovna faza	Pearsonov koeficijent korelacije	0,620**	0,734**	1	0,661**
	Sig. (dvostrano)	<0,001	<0,001		<0,001
	N	197	197	197	197
Vjerodostojnost influencera	Pearsonov koeficijent korelacije	0,668**	0,600**	0,661**	1
	Sig. (dvostrano)	<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	
	N	197	197	197	197

** . Korelacija je statistički značajna na razini 0,01 (dvostrano)

Table 4: Correlation matrix

		Pre-purchase	Purchase	Post-purchase	Influencer credibility
Pre-purchase	Pearson Correlation	1	0.658**	0.620**	0.668**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
	N	197	197	197	197
Purchase	Pearson Correlation	0.658**	1	0.734**	0.600**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001		<0.001	<0.001
	N	197	197	197	197
Post-purchase	Pearson Correlation	0.620**	0.734**	1	0.661**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001		<0.001
	N	197	197	197	197
Influencer credibility	Pearson Correlation	0.668**	0.600**	0.661**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	
	N	197	197	197	197

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.3. Izravni učinci

Kako bi se ispitali izravni učinci vjerodostojnosti *influencera* i njezinih dimenzija (pouzdanosti, stručnosti i privlačnosti) na tri faze korisničkog puta, provedena je serija jednostavnih i višestrukih regresijskih analiza. U prvom koraku, ukupni rezultat vjerodostojnosti *influencera* korišten je kao prediktor svake faze korisničkog puta (H1–H3). U drugom koraku, pouzdanost, stručnost i privlačnost unesene su istovremeno kako bi se ispitao jedinstveni doprinos svake dimenzije (H1a–H3c).

Kao što je prikazano u Tablici 5, provedena je serija jednostavnih regresijskih modela (Model 1, 3 i 5) s ukupnom vjerodostojnošću *influencera* kao prediktorom. U Modelu 1, ukupna vjerodostojnost *influencera* objašnjava 44,7 % varijance u predkupovnoj fazi ($R^2 = 0,447$, $F(1,195) = 157,37$, $p < 0,001$) te ima snažan pozitivan učinak ($\beta = 0,668$, $p < 0,001$). Ovime se potvrđuje H1. Za fazu kupnje (Model 3), ukupna vjerodostojnost *influencera* objašnjava 36,1 % varijance ($R^2 = 0,361$, $F(1, 195) = 109,93$, $p < 0,001$), a učinak je pozitivan i značajan ($\beta = 0,600$, $p < 0,001$) što potvrđuje H2. Naposljetku, za poslijekupovnu fazu, vjerodostojnost *influencera* objašnjava 43,7 % varijance ($R^2 = 0,437$, $F(1, 195) = 151,55$, $p < 0,001$). Učinak je pozitivan i snažan ($\beta = 0,661$, $p < 0,001$), čime se potvrđuje H3.

4.3. Direct effects

To test the direct effects of influencer credibility and its dimensions (Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness) on the three stages of the traveler's customer journey, a series of simple and multiple regression analyses was conducted. In the first step, the overall influencer credibility score was used as a predictor of each traveler's customer journey stage (H1–H3). In the second step, Trustworthiness, Expertise, and Attractiveness were entered simultaneously to examine the unique contribution of each dimension (H1a–H3c).

As reported in Table 5, we ran a series of simple regression models (Model 1, 3, and 5) with overall influencer credibility as a predictor. In Model 1, overall influencer credibility explains 44.7 % of the variance in the pre-purchase stage ($R^2 = 0.447$, $F(1,195) = 157.37$, $p < 0.001$), and has a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$). This supports H1. For the purchase stage (Model 3), overall influencer credibility explains 36.1 % of the variance ($R^2 = 0.361$, $F(1, 195) = 109.93$, $p < 0.001$) and its effect is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.600$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Finally, for the post-purchase stage, influencer credibility explains 43.7 % of the variance ($R^2 = 0.437$, $F(1,195) = 151.55$, $p < 0.001$). The effect is positive and strong ($\beta = 0.661$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3.

Tablica 5: Rezultati regresijske analize

Zavisna varijabla	Model/Hipoteza	Prediktor	B	SE B	β	t	p	R ²	Adj. R ²	F (df1, df2)	p(F)
Predkupovna faza	1	Konstanta	11,79	1,04	—	11,37	<0,001	0,447	0,444	157,37 (1.195)	<0,001
	H1	Ukupna vjerodostojnost <i>influncera</i>	1,22	0,10	0,668	12,55	<0,001				
	2	Konstanta	12,04	1,06	—	11,36	<0,001	0,453	0,445	53,38 (3.193)	<0,001
	H1a	Pouzdanost <i>influncera</i>	1,82	0,47	0,363	3,86	<0,001				
	H1b	Stručnost <i>influncera</i>	0,50	0,48	0,094	1,02	0,308				
	H1c	Privlačnost <i>influncera</i>	1,31	0,33	0,289	3,91	<0,001				
Kupovna faza	3	Konstanta	3,38	0,82	—	4,13	<0,001	0,361	0,357	109,93 (1.195)	<0,001
	H2	Ukupna vjerodostojnost <i>influncera</i>	0,81	0,08	0,600	10,49	<0,001				
	4	Konstanta	3,73	0,82	—	4,53	<0,001	0,386	0,376	40,43 (3.193)	<0,001
	H2a	Pouzdanost <i>influncera</i>	1,63	0,37	0,444	4,45	<0,001				
	H2b	Stručnost <i>influncera</i>	-0,23	0,38	-0,058	-0,60	0,551				
	H2c	Privlačnost <i>influncera</i>	0,94	0,26	0,284	3,63	<0,001				
Poslijekupovna faza	5	Konstanta	3,85	0,68	—	5,64	<0,001	0,437	0,434	151,55 (1.195)	<0,001
	H3	Ukupna vjerodostojnost <i>influncera</i>	0,79	0,06	0,661	12,31	<0,001				
	6	Konstanta	3,89	0,70	—	5,55	<0,001	0,440	0,432	50,61 (3.193)	<0,001
	H3a	Pouzdanost <i>influncera</i>	1,10	0,31	0,336	3,53	<0,001				
	H3b	Stručnost <i>influncera</i>	0,55	0,32	0,159	1,71	0,089				
	H3c	Privlačnost <i>influncera</i>	0,71	0,22	0,242	3,24	0,001				

Table 5: Regression analysis results

Dependent variable	Model/ Hypothesis	Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	R ²	Adj. R ²	F (df1, df2)	p(F)
Pre-purchase stage	1	Constant	11.79	1.04	—	11.37	< .001	.447	.444	157.37 (1, 195)	< .001
		Influencer credibility total	1.22	0.10	.668	12.55	< .001				
	2	Constant	12.04	1.06	—	11.36	< .001	.453	.445	53.38 (3, 193)	< .001
		Influencer trustworthiness	1.82	0.47	.363	3.86	< .001				
		Influencer expertise	0.50	0.48	.094	1.02	.308				
		Influencer attractiveness	1.31	0.33	.289	3.91	< .001				
Purchase stage	3	Constant	3.38	0.82	—	4.13	< .001	.361	.357	109.93 (1, 195)	< .001
		Influencer credibility total	0.81	0.08	.600	10.49	< .001				
	4	Constant	3.73	0.82	—	4.53	< .001	.386	.376	40.43 (3, 193)	< .001
		Influencer trustworthiness	1.63	0.37	.444	4.45	< .001				
		Influencer expertise	-0.23	0.38	-.058	-0.60	.551				
		Influencer attractiveness	0.94	0.26	.284	3.63	< .001				
Post-purchase stage	5	Constant	3.85	0.68	—	5.64	< .001	.437	.434	151.55 (1, 195)	< .001
		Influencer credibility total	0.79	0.06	.661	12.31	< .001				
	6	Constant	3.89	0.70	—	5.55	< .001	.440	.432	50.61 (3, 193)	< .001
		Influencer trustworthiness	1.10	0.31	.336	3.53	< .001				
		Influencer expertise	0.55	0.32	.159	1.71	.089				
		Influencer attractiveness	0.71	0.22	.242	3.24	.001				

Modeli 2, 4 i 6 ispituju učinke dimenzija vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na svaku od triju faza korisničkog puta. Model 2 ispituje H1a-c i značajan je ($R^2 = 0,453$, $F(3,193) = 53,38$, $p < 0,001$) te objašnjava oko 45 % varijance u predkupovnoj fazi. Dvije dimenzije izdvajaju se kao značajni prediktori: pouzdanost ($B = 1,82$, $\beta = 0,363$, $p < 0,001$) i privlačnost *influencera* ($B = 1,31$, $\beta = 0,289$, $p < 0,001$). Nasuprot tome, stručnost *influencera* nije značajan prediktor ponašanja u predkupovnoj fazi u multivarijatnom modelu ($B = 0,50$, $\beta = 0,094$, $p = 0,308$). Ovi rezultati pokazuju da percipirana pouzdanost i privlačnost *influencera* ima važniju ulogu u oblikovanju ponašanja u predkupovnoj fazi od percipirane stručnosti. Posljedično, H1a i H1c su potvrđene, dok H1b nije potvrđena. Model 4 ispituje H2a-c i značajan je ($R^2 = 0,386$, $F(3, 193) = 40,43$, $p < 0,001$) te objašnjava 38,6 % varijance u fazi kupnje. Slično Modelu 2, pouzdanost ($B = 1,63$, $\beta = 0,444$, $p < 0,001$) i privlačnost ($B = 0,94$, $\beta = 0,284$, $p < 0,001$) su značajni prediktori. Stručnost *influencera* ostaje neznčajna ($B = -0,23$, $\beta = -0,058$, $p = 0,551$). Stoga rezultati pružaju potporu za H2a i H2c, dok H2b nije potvrđena. Sličan obrazac uočava se u Modelu 6 za poslijekupovnu fazu. Višestruki regresijski model koji uključuje pouzdanost, stručnost i privlačnost je značajan ($R^2 = 0,440$, $F(3, 193) = 50,61$, $p < 0,001$). Ponovno, pouzdanost *influencera* ($B = 1,10$, $\beta = 0,336$, $p < 0,001$) i privlačnost *influencera* ($B = 0,71$, $\beta = 0,242$, $p = 0,001$) pokazuju pozitivne, statistički značajne učinke na poslijekupovnu fazu. Međutim, stručnost *influencera* pokazuje samo marginalni učinak ($B = 0,55$, $\beta = 0,159$, $p = 0,089$), koji nije statistički značajan na konvencionalnoj razini $\alpha = 0,05$. Stoga su H3a i H3c potvrđene, dok H3b nije potvrđena. U svim modelima, vrijednosti VIF-a i tolerancije ispod su 4 te ne ukazuju na ozbiljne probleme multikolinearnosti.

Models 2, 4 and 6 test the effects of influencer credibility dimensions on each of the three stages of the traveler's customer journey. Model 2 tests H1a-c and is significant ($R^2 = .453$, $F(3, 193) = 53.38$, $p < 0.001$) and explains about 45 % of the variance in the pre-purchase stage. Two dimensions emerge as significant predictors: influencer Trustworthiness ($B = 1.82$, $\beta = 0.363$, $p < 0.001$) and influencer Attractiveness ($B = 1.31$, $\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$). By contrast, influencer Expertise is not a significant predictor of pre-purchase behavior in the multivariate model ($B = 0.50$, $\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.308$). These results indicate that the extent to which an influencer is perceived as trustworthy and attractive plays a more important role in shaping pre-purchase behavior than the perceived expertise. Consequently, H1a and H1c are supported, while H1b is not supported. Model 4 tests H2a-c and is significant ($R^2 = 0.386$, $F(3,193) = 40.43$, $p < 0.001$) explaining 38.6 % of the variance in the purchase stage. Similarly to Model 2, Trustworthiness ($B = 1.63$, $\beta = 0.444$, $p < 0.001$) and Attractiveness ($B = 0.94$, $\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.001$) are significant predictors. Expertise remains non-significant ($B = -0.23$, $\beta = -0.058$, $p = 0.551$). Therefore, the results provide support for H2a and H2c, but H2b is not supported. We observe a similar pattern in Model 6 for the post-purchase stage. The multiple regression model including Trustworthiness, Expertise and Attractiveness is significant ($R^2 = 0.440$, $F(3, 193) = 50.61$, $p < 0.001$). Again, Trustworthiness ($B = 1.10$, $\beta = 0.336$, $p < 0.001$) and influencer attractiveness ($B = 0.71$, $\beta = 0.242$, $p = 0.001$) show positive, statistically significant effects on the post-purchase stage. However, influencer expertise shows only a marginal effect ($B = 0.55$, $\beta = 0.159$, $p = 0.089$), which is not statistically significant at the conventional $\alpha = 0.05$ level. Thus, H3a and H3c are supported, while H3b is not supported. Across all models, VIF values and tolerances are below 4 and indicate no serious multicollinearity problems.

4.4. Medijacijska analiza

Kako bi se analizirala procesna priroda korisničkog putovanja i razmotrili teorijski pristupi koji razlikuju faze prije, tijekom i nakon kupnje, specificiran je model serijske medijacije. U ovom modelu, pretpostavlja se da vjerodostojnost *influencera* utječe na reakcije turista u poslijekupovnoj fazi ne samo izravno, već i neizravno putem ranijih faza odlučivanja. Konkretno, korištenjem PROCESS-a (Model 6), vjerodostojnost *influencera* unesena je kao nezavisna varijabla (X), predkupovna faza (M1) i faza kupnje (M2) specificirane su kao serijski medijatori, a poslijekupovna faza (Y) tretirana je kao zavisna varijabla. Ova specifikacija omogućuje ispitivanje cjelokupnog procesa — od izloženosti vjerodostojnim *influencerima*, kroz procjene u predkupovnoj fazi i ponašanje u fazi kupnje, do reakcija u fazi nakon kupnje — procjenom specifičnih neizravnih učinaka kroz isključivo predkupovnu fazu, kroz isključivo fazu kupnje te kroz potpuni sekvencijalni put (Vjerodostojnost *influencera* → Predkupovna faza → Faza kupnje → Poslijekupovna faza).

U skladu s rezultatima regresijske analize za izravne učinke, vjerodostojnost *influencera* statistički je značajan prediktor predkupovne faze ($b = 1,2226$, $SE = 0,0975$, $t = 12,54$, $p < 0,001$, $R^2 = 0,4466$), što ukazuje na to da je viša percipirana vjerodostojnost povezana s intenzivnijim i povoljnijim ponašanjem u toj fazi. Kada je faza kupnje regresirana na vjerodostojnost *influencera* i predkupovnu fazu, model je bio statistički značajan ($R^2 = 0,4800$, $F(2, 194) = 89,55$, $p < 0,001$). Unutar ovog modela, oba prediktora imala su statistički značajne pozitivne učinke: vjerodostojnost *influencera* pozitivno je predviđala ponašanje u fazi kupnje ($b = 0,3887$, $SE = 0,0933$, $t = 4,16$, $p < 0,001$), a predkupovna faza također je imala statistički značajan pozitivan utjecaj na fazu kupnje ($b = 0,3406$, $SE = 0,0510$, $t = 6,68$, $p < 0,001$). Za poslijekupovnu fazu kao ishod, puni model koji uključuje vjerodostojnost

4.4. Mediation analysis

To capture the process nature of the traveler's customer journey and to reflect theoretical accounts that distinguish between pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages, we specified a serial mediation model. In this model, influencer credibility is assumed to influence travelers' post-purchase responses not only directly, but also indirectly through earlier decision stages. Specifically, using PROCESS (Model 6), influencer credibility was entered as the independent variable (X), the pre-purchase stage (M1) and purchase stage (M2) were specified as ordered mediators, and the post-purchase stage (Y) was treated as the outcome. This specification enables us to test a full process—from exposure to credible influencers, through pre-purchase evaluations and purchase behavior, to post-purchase reactions—by estimating specific indirect effects via the pre-purchase stage only, via the purchase stage only, and via the full sequential path (Influencer credibility → Pre-purchase → Purchase → Post-purchase).

Consistent with earlier regression results for direct effects, influencer credibility significantly predicted the pre-purchase stage ($b = 1,2226$, $SE = 0,0975$, $t = 12,54$, $p < 0,001$, $R^2 = 0,4466$), indicating that higher perceived credibility is associated with more intensive and favorable pre-purchase behaviors. When the purchase stage was regressed on influencer credibility and the pre-purchase stage, the model was significant ($R^2 = 0,4800$, $F(2, 194) = 89,55$, $p < 0,001$). Within this model, both predictors had significant positive effects: influencer credibility positively predicted purchase behavior ($b = 0,3887$, $SE = 0,0933$, $t = 4,16$, $p < 0,001$), and the pre-purchase stage also exerted a significant positive influence on purchase ($b = 0,3406$, $SE = 0,0510$, $t = 6,68$, $p < 0,001$). For the post-purchase stage as the outcome, the full model including influencer credibility, pre-purchase and purchase was significant

influencera, predkupovnu fazu i fazu kupnje bio je statistički značajan ($R^2 = 0,6185$, $F(3, 193) = 104,30$, $p < 0,001$). Unutar ovog modela, vjerodostojnost *influencera* imala je statistički značajan pozitivan učinak na reakcije u poslijekupovnoj fazi ($b = 0,3636$, $SE = 0,0745$, $t = 4,88$, $p < 0,001$), dok učinak predkupovne faze na poslijekupovnu fazu nije bio statistički značajan ($b = 0,0627$, $SE = 0,0433$, $t = 1,45$, $p = 0,149$). Nasuprot tome, faza kupnje pokazala se snažnim i statistički značajnim prediktorom ponašanja u poslijekupovnoj fazi ($b = 0,4343$, $SE = 0,0549$, $t = 7,91$, $p < 0,001$). Stoga, kada se uzme u obzir poslijekupovna faza, predkupovna faza više nema statistički značajan izravni učinak na poslijekupovnu fazu, dok faza kupnje ostaje snažan prediktor. Ukupni učinak vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na poslijekupovnu fazu (Tablica 6) bio je pozitivan i statistički značajan ($b = 0,7900$, $SE = 0,0642$, $t = 12,31$, $p < 0,001$, 95 % CI [0,6634, 0,9165]). Kada su medijatori uključeni u model, izravni učinak vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na fazu nakon kupnje ostao je statistički značajan, ali je bio znatno smanjen ($b = 0,3636$, $SE = 0,0745$, $t = 4,88$, $p < 0,001$, 95 % CI [0,2166, 0,5106]), što ukazuje na parcijalnu medijaciju.

($R^2 = 0.6185$, $F(3, 193) = 104.30$, $p < 0.001$). Within this model, influencer credibility had a significant positive effect on post-purchase responses ($b = 0.3636$, $SE = 0.0745$, $t = 4.88$, $p < 0.001$), while the effect of the pre-purchase stage on post-purchase outcomes was not significant ($b = 0.0627$, $SE = 0.0433$, $t = 1.45$, $p = 0.149$). In contrast, the purchase stage emerged as a strong and significant predictor of post-purchase responses ($b = 0.4343$, $SE = 0.0549$, $t = 7.91$, $p < .001$). Therefore, when post-purchase is taken into account, pre-purchase stage no longer has a significant direct effect on post-purchase outcomes, whereas purchase remains a strong predictor. The total effect of influencer credibility on the post-purchase stage (Table 6) was positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.7900$, $SE = 0.0642$, $t = 12.31$, $p < 0.001$, 95 % CI [0.6634, 0.9165]). When the mediators were included in the model, the direct effect of influencer credibility on post-purchase remained significant but was substantially reduced ($b = 0.3636$, $SE = 0.0745$, $t = 4.88$, $p < .001$, 95 % CI [0.2166, 0.5106]), indicating partial mediation.

Tablica 6: Ukupni i izravni učinci vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na poslijekupovnu fazu

Ukupni učinci vjerodostojnosti <i>influencera</i> na poslijekupovnu fazu					
Učinak	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0,7900	0,0642	12,3105	0,0000	0,6634	0,9165
Izravni učinci vjerodostojnosti <i>influencera</i> na poslijekupovnu fazu					
Učinak	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0,3636	0,0745	4,8795	0,0000	0,2166	0,5106

Table 6: Total and direct effects of influencer credibility on post-purchase stage

Total effect of influencer credibility on post-purchase stage					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.7900	.0642	12.3105	.0000	.6634	.9165
Direct effect of influencer credibility on post-purchase stage					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.3636	.0745	4.8795	.0000	.2166	.5106

Ukupni izravni učinak vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na poslijekupovnu fazu bio je statistički značajan ($b = 0,4264$, $\text{BootSE} = 0,0683$, 95 % CI $[0,3008, 0,5717]$), potvrđujući da se znatan udio njezina utjecaja prenosi putem posredničkih faza. Specifični neizravni učinak putem isključivo predkupovne faze nije bio statistički značajan ($b = 0,0767$, $\text{BootSE} = 0,0538$, 95 % CI $[-0,0245, 0,1870]$), budući da je interval pouzdanosti uključivao nulu. Stoga H4 nije potvrđena. Nasuprot tome, neizravni učinak isključivo putem faze kupnje bio je statistički značajan ($b = 0,1688$, $\text{BootSE} = 0,0538$, 95 % CI $[0,0803, 0,2941]$), što ukazuje na to da se dio učinka vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na ishode u poslijekupovnoj fazi ostvaruje putem njezina utjecaja na ponašanje u fazi kupnje, pružajući potporu za H5. Serijski neizravni učinak putem predkupovne faze i faze kupnje također je bio statistički značajan ($b = 0,1809$, $\text{BootSE} = 0,0400$, 95 % CI $[0,1135, 0,2763]$), pokazujući da vjerodostojnost *influencera* utječe na reakcije u poslijekupovnoj fazi, najprije pojačavajući procjene u pretkupovnoj fazi, koje zatim utječu na fazu kupnje, što u konačnici dovodi do povoljnijih ishoda u poslijekupovnoj fazi. Stoga nalazimo potporu za H6.

The total indirect effect of influencer credibility on post-purchase was significant ($b = 0.4264$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.0683$, 95 % CI $[0.3008, 0.5717]$), confirming that a considerable proportion of its influence is transmitted through the mediating stages. The specific indirect effect via the pre-purchase stage alone was not significant ($b = 0.0767$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.0538$, 95 % CI $[-0.0245, 0.1870]$), as the confidence interval included zero. Therefore, H4 is not supported. In contrast, the indirect effect via the purchase stage alone was significant ($b = 0.1688$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.0538$, 95 % CI $[0.0803, 0.2941]$), indicating that part of the effect of influencer credibility on post-purchase outcomes operates through its impact on purchase behavior, providing support for H5. The serial indirect effect through both pre-purchase and purchase was also significant ($b = 0.1809$, $\text{BootSE} = 0.0400$, 95 % CI $[0.1135, 0.2763]$), showing that influencer credibility affects post-purchase responses by first enhancing pre-purchase evaluations, which then increase purchase behavior, ultimately leading to more favorable post-purchase outcomes. Therefore, we find support for H6.

Tablica 7: Neizravni učinak vjerodostojnosti *influencera* na poslijekupovnu fazu

	Učinak	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
UKUPNO	0,4264	0,0683	0,3008	0,5717
Vjerodostojnost <i>influencera</i> → Predkupovna faza → Poslijekupovna faza	0,0767	0,0538	-0,0245	0,1870
Vjerodostojnost <i>influencera</i> → Kupovna faza → Poslijekupovna faza	0,1688	0,0538	0,0803	0,2941
Vjerodostojnost <i>influencera</i> → Predkupovna faza → Kupovna faza → Poslijekupovna faza	0,1809	0,0400	0,1135	0,2763

Table 7: Indirect effect of Influencer credibility on post-purchase stage

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
TOTAL	.4264	.0683	.3008	.5717
Influencer credibility -> Pre-Purchase -> Post-purchase	.0767	.0538	-.0245	.1870
Influencer credibility -> Purchase -> Post-purchase	.1688	.0538	.0803	.2941
Influencer credibility -> Pre-purchase -> Purchase -> Post-purchase	.1809	.0400	.1135	.2763

Zaključno, rezultati potvrđuju da vjerodostojnost *influencera* ne djeluje isključivo izravno, već kroz proces koji se postupno odvija u predkupovnoj i kupovnoj fazi, prije nego što se očituje u poslijekupovnim ishodi-ma. Predkupovna faza pritom primarno djeluje kao prijenosnik učinka vjerodostojnosti prema kupovnoj fazi, koja zauzvrat zauzima središnje mjesto u posredovanju između vjerodostojnosti *influencera* i poslijekupovnih reakcija.

5. RASPRAVA

Nalazi pružaju zanimljiv uvid u ulogu *influencera* na društvenim medijima na korisničkom putu turista. Rezultati deskriptivne analize upućuju na to da se turisti oslanjaju na *influencere* tijekom cijelog korisničkog puta, no utjecaj je umjeren i znatno varira ovisno o fazi. Utjecaj je najsnažniji u predkupovnoj fazi, što potvrđuje da *influenceri* na društvenim medijima najučinkovitije djeluju na vrhu lijevka kao primarni izvori inspiracije i informacija, što je u skladu s zaključcima Pop *et al.* (2021) te Babu i Philip (2025). Nasuprot tome, kupovna faza bilježi najskromniji utjecaj, što upućuje na to da se njihov izravni utjecaj smanjuje kada se radi o konkretnim transakcijskim ponašanjima, poput korištenja specifičnih ponuda ili popusta. Poslijekupovna faza pokazuje mješoviti obrazac: turisti oprezno slijede savjete *influencera* za vrijeme putovanja i vjerojatno će se na njih ponovno osloniti ako budu zadovoljni, no manje su skloni aktivnom dijeljenju iskustava ili izravnom uspoređivanju očekivanja na njihovim platformama, što je u skladu s nalazima Pop *et al.* (2021).

Ukupna percepcija vjerodostojnosti *influencera* bila je također umjerena. Stručnost i pouzdanost bile su pozitivnije ocijenjene dimenzije, čime se potvrđuje njihov značaj u oblikovanju prvotne inspiracije kada točne informacije i percipirana iskrenost pružaju temelj za početni poticaj. Dimenzija privlačnosti također je ocijenjena pozitivno, ali u

Overall, the results provide strong evidence that influencer credibility operates through a process that unfolds across the pre-purchase and purchase stages, rather than exerting its influence on post-purchase outcomes in a purely static or direct manner. The pre-purchase stage primarily facilitates the effect of credibility by feeding into the purchase stage, while the purchase stage plays a central mediating role between influencer credibility and post-purchase responses.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings provide an interesting insight into the role that social media influencers play in traveler's customer journey. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis suggest that travelers rely on influencers across the customer journey, but the impact is moderate and varies significantly by stage. The influence is strongest in the pre-purchase stage, confirming that social media influencers function most effectively at the top of the funnel as primary sources of inspiration and information in line with Pop *et al.* (2021) and Babu and Philip (2025). As a contrast, the purchase stage exhibited the most modest impact, suggesting that their direct influence weakens when it comes to concrete transactional behaviors like using specific deals or discounts. The post-purchase stage exhibits a mixed pattern: travelers moderately follow influencers' advice during the trip and are likely to rely on them again if satisfied but are less likely to engage actively in sharing experiences or comparing expectations directly through the influencer's platform corroborating the findings of Pop *et al.* (2021).

The overall perceptions of influencer credibility were also moderate. Expertise and trustworthiness were more positively rated reinforcing their importance in shaping early-stage inspiration where accurate information and perceived honesty provide the foundation for initial persuasion. The attractiveness dimension was also rated positively,

manjoj mjeri, što vodi zaključku da vizualna privlačnost *influencera* manje doprinosi procjenama vjerodostojnosti kod turista. Ipak, ovi nalazi u skladu su s rezultatima Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds (2025), prema kojima korisnici koje *influenceri* percipiraju kao vjerodostojne izvore informacija doživljavaju i njihove sadržaje informativnijima i poticajnijima.

Korelacijska analiza snažno podupire temeljnu pretpostavku rada da vjerodostojnost *influencera* određuje njihov utjecaj kroz cijeli korisnički put. Umjerene do snažne pozitivne veze između predkupovne, kupovne i poslijekupovne faze pokazuju da se turisti koji *influencere* doživljavaju kao vjerodostojne oslanjanju na njih dosljedno tijekom cijelog korisničkog puta. Nadalje, snažne veze između rezultata predkupovne, kupovne i poslijekupovne faze potvrđuju procesnu prirodu korisničkog putovanja turista, ukazujući na to da se oslanjanje na *influencere* u početnim fazama prenosi na sljedeće faze. Ovaj nalaz jača okvir turističkog korisničkog puta koji su predložili Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds (2025).

Regresijska analiza dodatno pojašnjava ovu dinamiku. Jednostavna regresijska analiza (Modeli 1, 3 i 5) potvrđuje ukupni utjecaj vjerodostojnosti na korisničko putovanje turista, podupirući hipoteze H1, H2 i H3. Ukupna vjerodostojnost *influencera* pokazala se snažnim, pozitivnim prediktorom za sve tri faze, objašnjavajući značajan udio varijance: 44,7 % u predkupovnoj fazi ($\beta = 0,0668$, $p < 0,001$), 36,1 % u kupovnoj fazi ($\beta = 0,600$, $p < 0,001$) i 43,7 % u poslijekupovnoj fazi ($\beta = 0,661$, $p < 0,001$). Robusni i dosljedni beta koeficijenti u svim modelima ukazuju na to da je, bez obzira na specifičnu fazu korisničkog puta, viša percepcija vjerodostojnosti *influencera* izravno i značajno povezana s većim utjecajem na ponašanje turista.

Međutim, modeli višestruke regresije (Modeli 2, 4 i 6), koji su testirali specifične dimenzije vjerodostojnosti, otkrili su dosljedan i iznenađujući obrazac u svima trima

but to a smaller extent, which lead to the conclusion that the influencer's visual appeal contributes less to credibility assessments among travelers. Despite the moderate level, these findings confirm Pourazad, Stocchi, and Simmonds (2025) on once customers recognize influencers as credible sources of information, they are more likely to perceive their content as more informative and persuasive.

The correlation analysis strongly supports the paper's core premise that influencer credibility defines their impact across the entire customer journey. The moderate to strong positive relationships across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages show that travelers who view influencers as credible tend to rely on them consistently throughout the journey. Besides, the strong interrelationships between the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase scores confirm the process nature of the traveler's customer journey indicating that reliance on influencer in the initial stages are carried forward to subsequent stages. This finding enhances the customer journey framework as suggested by Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds (2025).

The regression analysis further clarifies these dynamics. The simple regression analysis (Models 1, 3, and 5) also strongly confirms the overall influence of credibility across the traveler's customer journey, supporting hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. The overall influencer credibility proved to be a powerful, positive predictor for all three stages explaining a significant portion of the variance: 44.7 % in the pre-purchase stage ($\beta = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$), 36.1 % in the purchase stage ($\beta = 0.600$, $p < 0.001$), and 43.7 % in the post-purchase stage ($\beta = 0.661$, $p < 0.001$). The strong consistent beta coefficients across all models indicate that, regardless of the specific journey stage, higher perceptions of influencer credibility are directly and substantially linked to greater reported influence over traveler behavior.

However, the multiple regression models (Models 2, 4, and 6), which tested the specific credibility dimensions, revealed a consistent

fazama korisničkog putovanja. Pouzdanost i privlačnost pokazale su se kao jedini statistički značajni prediktori u predkupovnoj fazi (H1a i H1c potvrđene), fazi kupnje (H2a i H2c potvrđene) te poslijekupovnoj fazi (H3a i H3c potvrđene). Neočekivano, stručnost se nije pokazala kao značajan prediktor ponašanja u svima trima fazama (H1b, H2b i H3b nisu potvrđene), s tek marginalnim učinkom u modelu nakon kupnje. Ovi rezultati upućuju na to da privlačnost i pouzdanost *influencera* imaju daleko važniju ulogu od njihove percipirane stručnosti u motiviranju ponašanja turista tijekom cijelog putovanja, čime se problematizira uvriježena pretpostavka da je tehnička kompetentnost ključni pokretač utjecaja u marketingu u turizmu (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan i Altıntaş, 2021). Nalaz da stručnost nije značajan prediktor ni u jednoj fazi putovanja sugerira pomak u načinu na koji turisti procjenjuju vjerodostojnost izvora, odmičući se od isključivo kognitivne procjene „tehničke kompetentnosti”, što je u skladu s nalazima Wanga i Scheinbauma (2018), koji sugeriraju da je pouzdanost, a ne stručnost, ključna komponenta vjerodostojnosti izvora. Slično tome, u svome istraživanju utjecaja vrste promotora i učinkovitosti oglašavanja Schouten, Janssen i Verspaget (2019) utvrdili su da povjerenje, a ne stručnost, posreduje u ovom odnosu, budući da je povjerenje uglavnom društveno-afektivni konstrukt temeljen na percipiranom integritetu i vjerodostojnosti, zbog čega *influenceri* djeluju pristupačnije i samim time poticajnije potrošačima. Stručnost može više služiti kao temeljni preduvjet koji *influencerima* omogućuje privlačenje početne pozornosti, ali čini se da nije dovoljna da potakne turiste na djelovanje kada se uzmu u obzir povjerenje i privlačnost. Ovaj je obrazac posebno značajan jer sugerira da turisti komuniciraju s *influencerima* ne samo radi informacija, već i radi relacijskih i aspiracijskih poticaja. Čini se da turisti više cijene pouzdanost *influencera* za umanjivanje psihološkog rizika i aspiracijskog stila života (tj. privlačnost) kao motivaciju za putovanje

and surprising pattern across all three journey stages. Trustworthiness and attractiveness emerged as the only statistically significant predictors in the pre-purchase (H1a and H1c supported), purchase (H2a and H2c supported) and the post-purchase stage (H3a and H3c supported). Surprisingly, expertise was found to be a non-significant predictor of behavior across all three stages (H1b, H2b and H3b not supported), showing only a marginal effect in the post-purchase model. These results indicate that influencers' attractiveness and trustworthiness play a far more important role than their perceived expertise in driving traveler behavior throughout the entire journey challenging the well-established notion that technical competence is the key driver of influence in tourism marketing (Yılmazdoğan, Doğan and Altıntaş, 2021). The finding that expertise is not a significant predictor at any stage of the journey suggests a shift in how travelers process source credibility, moving away from a purely cognitive assessment of “technical competence”, which is in line the findings of Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) who suggest that trustworthiness, not expertise, is a key component of source credibility. Similarly, in the research on the influence of the endorser type and advertising effectiveness Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2019) found that trust, not expertise, mediates this relationship as trust is largely a socio-affective construct based on perceived integrity and credibility making influencers appear more relatable and therefore more persuasive to consumers. Expertise may serve more as a threshold requirement that enables influencers to gain initial attention, but it does not appear sufficient to compel travelers to act once trust and attractiveness are taken into account. This pattern is particularly significant because it suggests that travelers engage with influencers not only for information but also for relational and aspirational cues. Travelers appear to value the influencer's trustworthiness to reduce psychological risk and aspirational lifestyle (i.e. attractiveness) in motivating travel more

nego njihovu tehničku kompetentnost u pronalaženju optimalnih ponuda ili ruta.

Nadalje, analiza medijacije potvrđuje procesnu prirodu korisničkog putovanja koju opisuju Lemon i Verhoef (2016) te Pourazad, Stocchi i Simmonds (2025), ukazujući da vjerodostojnost *influencera* djeluje kroz korisničko putovanje turista uz izravan utjecaj na svaku pojedinu fazu. Vjerodostojni *influenceri* najprije osnažuju procjene u predkupovnoj fazi, koje zauzvrat potiču snažnije ponašanje u fazi kupnje, a to ponašanje u fazi kupnje ključan je put kojim vjerodostojnost prelazi u reakcije poslije kupnje. Neizravni učinak tijekom same kupnje kao i serijski put kroz faze prije kupnje ili kupnje bio je značajan u obje faze, dok to nije bio tijekom pretkupovne faze, što ističe središnju ulogu stvarnog ponašanja pri kupnji u prenošenju utjecaja vjerodostojnih *influencera*. Drugim riječima, *influenceri* imaju veliki značaj ne samo zato što oblikuju stavove prije putovanja, već zato što ti stavovi vode do konkretnih odluka o kupnji koje u konačnici oblikuju način na koji turisti doživljavaju i vrednuju svoja putovanja.

6. ZAKLJUČAK

S obzirom na sve veću važnost digitalnih kanala i sveprisutnost *influencera*, njihova uloga u suvremenom turističkom marketingu postaje sve značajnija. Ovaj rad daje relevantan doprinos razumijevanju uloge *influencera* na društvenim medijima u procesu korisničkog putovanja turista s posebnim naglaskom na vjerodostojnost *influencera*. Istraživanjem triju dimenzija sukladno teoriji vjerodostojnosti izvora u svim sekvencijalnim fazama korisničkog putovanja, rad se osvrće na postojeći jaz u literaturi i uočeni dominantni fokus na predkupovnu fazu. Rezultati su potvrdili postojeće spoznaje o važnosti *influencera* u korisničkom putovanju te pružaju dodatni teorijski doprinos temeljem nalaza da stručnost nije statistički značajan prediktor u ni u jednoj fazi. Navedeno impli-

than their technical competence in finding optimal deals or routes.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis confirms the procedural nature of the customer journey described by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds (2025) by establishing that the influencer credibility operates throughout the traveler's customer journey in addition to exerting its impact on each stage directly. Credible influencers first strengthen pre-purchase evaluations, which in turn foster stronger purchase behaviors that are a key pathway through which credibility translates into post-purchase responses. The indirect effect via purchase alone and the serial path via pre-purchase and purchase were both significant, while the path through pre-purchase alone was not highlighting the central role of actual purchase behavior in carrying forward the influence of credible influencers. In other words, influencers matter most not only because they shape attitudes before the trip, but also because those attitudes lead to concrete purchase decisions that ultimately shape how travelers experience and evaluate their trips afterwards.

6. CONCLUSION

Given the growing importance of digital channels and the pervasive presence of influencers within them, their role in modern tourism marketing is becoming increasingly significant. This article provides a relevant contribution to the scientific understanding of the role of social media influencers in the traveler's decision journey with a special focus on influencer credibility. By exploring the three dimensions of the Source Credibility Theory across all three sequential stages of the customer journey, the study explicitly addresses the existing gap in the literature and the observed dominant focus on the pre-purchase stage. The results have corroborated the existing knowledge on importance of influencers in the traveler's customer jour-

cira da su za turiste povjerenje i privlačnost primarni pokretači bihevioralnog utjecaja koji dovode u pitanje pretpostavku da je tehnička kompetentnost ključni alat uvjeravanja. Dodatni doprinos vidljiv je u empirijskoj potvrdi serijskog procesa u korisničkom putovanju turista. Detaljna analiza medijacije otkrila je da utjecaj vjerodostojnosti teče sekvencijalno kroz predkupovnu i kupovnu fazu prije no što se pretvori u reakciju turista u poslijekupovnoj fazi.

Na temelju stečenih uvida u ulogu *influencera* na društvenim medijima i njihove vjerodostojnosti u procesu korisničkog putovanja turista, iznosi se nekoliko menadžerskih implikacija. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da *influenceri* na društvenim medijima imaju značajnu ulogu u svim fazama korisničkog putovanja, ali da je taj utjecaj izraženiji u prvoj, predkupovnoj fazi. U toj fazi, menadžeri bi trebali koristiti *influencere* za oblikovanje interesa i percepciju potencijalnih turista imajući na umu da trajniji utjecaj *influencera* na društvenim medijima ovisi o pretvaranju te početne inspiracije u konkretnu odluku o kupnji. Stoga bi se marketinške strategije trebale usredotočiti na besprijekorne prijelaze od inspiracijskog prema prodajnom sadržaju koji potiče rezervacije.

Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na umjerenu do snažnu pozitivnu povezanost između vjerodostojnosti *influencera* (posebice njihove pouzdanosti i privlačnosti) i različitih faza korisničkog putovanja, što je važan uvid za daljnji razvoj učinkovitih strategija digitalnog marketinga u turizmu. Menadžeri bi trebali usmjeriti svoje napore i resurse na suradnju s *influencerima* koje pokazuju visoku razinu pouzdanosti i snažnu privlačnost kroz vizualnu privlačnost i poželjan stil života, budući da su ti čimbenici najsnažniji izravni prediktori aktivnosti turista tijekom cijelog putovanja. Budući da je izravan učinak stručnosti slab i nije statistički značajan, menadžeri bi tehničku kompetentnost *influencera* trebali smatrati temeljnim preduvjetom, ali ne i primarnim alatom uvjeravanja.

ney and provide a theoretical contribution in finding that the direct effect of expertise is non-significant across all stages. This implies that for travelers trust and attractiveness are the primary drivers of behavioral influence challenging the assumption that technical competence is the key persuasive tool. Additional theoretical contribution is evident in the empirical confirmation of the serial process of influence in the traveler's customer journey. Thorough mediation analysis revealed that credibility's impact flows sequentially through pre-purchase and purchase before translating into post-purchase responses.

Based on the acquired deep insight into the role of social media influencers and their credibility in the process of traveler's customer journey we provide several managerial implications. The research results show that social media influencers have a significant role at all stages of the customer journey but that influence is more prominent in the first, pre-purchase stage. At that stage, managers should employ influencers to shape interests and perception of potential travelers. It is important to have in mind that the more lasting impact of social media influencers depends on translating that initial inspiration into a concrete purchase decision. Therefore, marketing strategies should focus on seamless transitions from inspirational content to booking actions.

The research results revealed moderate to strong positive associations between influencer credibility (especially their trustworthiness and attractiveness) and different stages of customer journey, which is an important insight for the further development of effective digital marketing strategies in tourism. Managers should focus their efforts and resources on collaborating with influencers who demonstrate high trustworthiness and strong attractiveness through visual appeal and desirable lifestyle, as these factors are the most potent direct predictors of travelers' activities across the entire journey. Since the direct effect of expertise is weak, managers should view technical competence of an in-

Istraživanje ima nekoliko ograničenja koja bi trebalo uzeti u obzir prilikom interpretacije rezultata. Prvo, uzorak je bio relativno mali i demografski neuravnotežen, s velikim udjelom mladih (18–30 godina), ženskih i visoko obrazovanih ispitanika. Posljedično, generalizacija rezultata na starije turiste, muškarce ili osobe s nižom razinom obrazovanja ili različitim socio-ekonomskim pozadinama je ograničena. Drugo, svi konstrukti mjereni su temeljem samoprocjene ispitanika, česticama Likertovog tipa prikupljenih u jednoj vremenskoj točki, što povećava mogućnost pristranosti koja nastaje korištenjem iste metode i učinaka društvene poželjnosti. Relativno visoke korelacije između predkupovne, kupovne i poslijekupovne faze mogu odražavati općenitu tendenciju oslanjanja na *influencere*, kao i pristranost koja nastaje korištenjem iste metode.

Buduća istraživanja koja bi koristila longitudinalne ili eksperimentalne dizajne, raznolikije i reprezentativnije uzorke te višestruke izvore podataka (npr. podatke o ponašanju ili korištenju platformi) olakšala bi prevladavanje tih ograničenja.

fluencer as a threshold requirement rather than the primary persuasive tool.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the sample was relatively small and demographically skewed, with a large majority of young (18–30 years), female and well-educated respondents. As a result, the findings may not generalize to older travelers, men, or individuals with lower levels of education or different socio-economic backgrounds. Secondly, all constructs were assessed using self-report Likert-type items collected in a single survey session, which raises the possibility of common method bias and social desirability effects. The relatively high correlations between the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase scales suggest that these measures may partly reflect a general underlying tendency to rely on influencers, as well as shared method variance.

Future studies using longitudinal or experimental designs, more diverse and representative samples, and multiple data sources (e.g., behavioral or platform usage data) would help to address these limitations.

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