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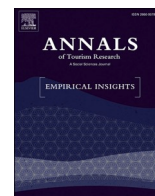
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A framework for analysing the individual capital of travel vloggers

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ABSTRACT

This study employs an individual capital theoretical framework to analyse travel vlogs and identify ways to maximise vlog performance success. The first phase analyses the social media content of ten vlogs and their viewer comments ($n = 816$). This was followed by a second phase comprising in-depth interviews with ten viewers and ten destination marketers to validate and re-evaluate the initial findings. Thematic analysis of the vlogs reveals six attributes of individual capital. This study extends the theory of individual capital within the context of destination marketing and travel vlogging by detailing each attribute and identifying a new one.

1. Introduction

Travel vlogs are videos published by travellers on social media. They play a crucial role in contemporary tourism marketing (Cheng et al., 2020). Vlogs are used during the information-seeking stage to inform future travel plans, and can also form part of the earlier dreaming stage, as often consumers view vlogs as a form of entertainment (Peralta, 2019). Cheng et al. (2020) mention that a destination promoted through online visual communication via YouTube, influenced by public relations skills, could differentiate a destination from its competitors. Le and Hancer (2021) propose that, in the online era, travel vlogs can be used to project a particular destination image. Cheng et al. (2020) claim that travel vlogs and their accompanying comments are valuable for understanding consumer opinions and perceptions of a destination or tourism experience.

This article was written following the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, consumption of vlogs and other video content increased (Galvin et al., 2021). This growth in interest in watching vlogs, led to an increase in vlog content and inspired more people to become vloggers (Lo et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2023). Pandemic conditions prompted more frequent internet use (Tan et al., 2023) and increased further once international travel borders reopened (Tan et al., 2023). More people captured their travel activity as travel vloggers with strong motivation and more viewers. According to Tan et al. (2023), consumers were keen to know the current situations in the countries they intended to visit, as well as the travel trends. Meanwhile, travel vloggers need to maximise their own capital to differentiate themselves, to develop distinct brand to viewers and build stronger collaboration with tourism marketers

(Stein et al., 2022).

In the context of social entrepreneurship, Sahasranamam and Nandakumar (2020) argue that individual capital relates to a person's capacity to achieve – and ideally maximise – their economic potential. This definition is strengthened by other literature, which defines individual capital as each person's human capital (Brooks et al., 2021; Langner et al., 2013). In the social media context, using the term 'celebrity capital', Brooks et al. (2021) identify how individuals can use such capital to accrue media attention. Carrillat and Ilicic (2019) also discuss celebrity capital, proposing a four-stage cycle for the endorsement of celebrity. While these studies (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Langner et al., 2013) discuss individual or celebrity capital to understand how media figures can develop their values, all the studies discuss such capital in the context of entrepreneurship and general media identities. Although it is critical to build awareness of and interest in the context of travel and tourism vlogs and destination, there remains a need to elaborate the role of individual capital in the context of travel vlogs.

Individual capital of media figures has been studied in business and marketing (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Hess et al., 2022), yet tourism marketing presents unique contextual factors that require a more nuanced understanding of a travel vlogger's individual capital. Tourism marketing, in contrast to common business and marketing environments, relates on collective of experiences thereby increasing the disparity in information between hosts and guests (Su & Swanson, 2017). Travel vlogs are unique because they help visualise intangible travel products that cannot be seen or evaluated before purchase (Su & Swanson, 2017; Tan et al., 2023). Moreover, the vlog

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content itself is a result of a co-creation process between the vlogger and the destination (Mohammadi et al., 2021), capturing a perishable experience that cannot be stored or replicated, but only lived and shared in the moment (Su & Swanson, 2017). Consequently, the travel vlogger must translate an intangible and fleeting moment into compelling visual and emotional storytelling that resonates with viewers who have not yet visited the destination (Liu et al., 2023). Because the travel product is perishable and co-created, the vlogger must visit the destination to frame the experience. Therefore, the way of travel vlogger individual capital being presented and informed potentially different compared to other vloggers. As the gap, there remains lack of precise understanding of how a vlogger's individual capital manifests in their travel vlog content.

Individual capital may include attributes such as personal presence, character strength, weakness, traits and talents (Sahasranamam & Nandakumar, 2020). Celebrities are thought to have high levels of individual capital (Driessens, 2013). These studies argue that individual capital can build the vlogger's reputation; therefore, understanding the attributes of individual capital is critical for vloggers to optimise their success. Yet prior research fails to operationalise this theory. To address this, this study has two primary objectives. First, it aims to provide a framework to analyse the vlogger attributes using the existing research that analyses the capital used by media figures. Second, given that limited literature discusses the alignment between vloggers' individual capital and viewers' motivation to travel, this study aims to address this gap. Hence, the first research objective is to explore the key attributes of a travel vlogger that leads to them developing individual capital. Furthermore, the second research objective is to identify relationship between vloggers' individual capital and their influence on viewers' travel motivation.

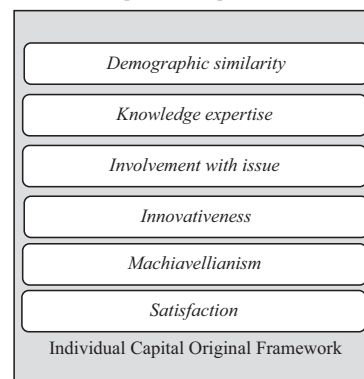
2. Literature review

The concept of capital belonging to specific individuals was introduced as a term to represent an economic view of talent (Langner et al., 2013). Wiedmann et al. (2010) initially proposed this term to understand how the influencers exert social influence in the context of fashion marketing. Accordingly, it is often employed in studies on media personalities and used to explain their socioeconomic characteristics (Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019). Individual capital includes internal skills and personality traits, such as creativity and empathy; it also often features an invention or untold story attached to an individual (Brooks et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2022). Moreover, individual capital relates to a person's physical appearance and their intangible appearance, such as creativity, empathy and leadership (Brooks et al., 2021; Hess et al., 2022).

In the social media context, several studies have linked influencers' abilities to individual capital by referring to their ability to be unique (self-positioning) compared with other vloggers (Hess et al., 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2010). Recent studies have explored the individual capital of social media influencers to show their ability to build social ties and perceived competence (Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Hess et al., 2022). Hess et al. (2022) propose the term 'reputational capital', which can help influencers build clear positioning among other social media figures. Meanwhile, other studies from Brooks et al. (2021) and Carrillat and Ilicic (2019) underline the concept of celebrity capital to understand how a media figure gains popularity and endorsements. Although the concepts of celebrity and reputational capital are being discussed and do have a close connection with the concept of individual capital (e.g., Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Hess et al., 2022), the discussion of these two concepts concentrate only on how an individual gains popularity and enriches their celebrity status.

Table 1 captures the original attributes of individual capital from the previous studies (Langner et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2010). It reflects that individual capital primarily consist of six elements (demographic similarity, knowledge expertise, involvement with issue, innovativeness, Machiavellianism, and satisfaction).

Table 1
Individual capital conceptual model.



innovativeness, Machiavellianism, and satisfaction). Demographic similarity reflects how well the vlogger's story, experiences and background, such as age, interest, or culture, aligns with the viewers' identity (Yousaf, 2022). Both knowledge expertise and innovativeness define the value proposition of vlogger. Knowledge expertise shown by the contents displayed prominently in the vlog such as any cultural insights, new tips, or in-depth guides (Ladhari et al., 2020). Furthermore, innovativeness is most evident in the creative use of technology, such as video camera and editing (Gong & Zhu, 2021). In this primary framework, issue involvement refers to how vlogger addresses current trending or relevant topic (Al-Mulla et al., 2022). Machiavellianism defined as a manipulation strategy or being self-centred as part of vlogger's character (Wiedmann et al., 2010). Finally, satisfaction element encapsulates how well the vlog's content meets viewers' expectations, which is measured through the viewers' comments and other engagement metrics (Stein et al., 2022). Further details are elaborated in this section.

2.1. Demographic similarity

Demographic attributes refer to how suitable travel vloggers appear in the perception of viewers. Most social media recommender systems today use demographics to elicit common interests on the basis of suitability, such as age, gender, educational background, interests and social status (Yousaf, 2022). In the travel vlogging context, demographic suitability also includes the similarity of social background and economic status between the vlogger and viewers (Yousaf, 2022). Viewers always want to find vloggers who are like them because they then try to compare their abilities, knowledge and attitudes – this is known as perceived similarity (Xie et al., 2021; Yousaf, 2022). In particular, vloggers in the youth demographic with a cosmopolitan lifestyle will gain higher media exposure than other demographics (Cheng et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2021; Yousaf, 2022). Demographic similarity has also been considered as similarity of affiliation, regarded as important to parasocial interaction (Dewantara et al., 2023; Stein et al., 2022). Understanding how demographic similarity is involved in creating individual capital for travel vloggers is therefore critical and will be investigated in this study.

2.2. Knowledge expertise

Knowledge expertise is related to the ability of travel vloggers to convey accurate information that will be perceived as credible by the viewer (Ladhari et al., 2020; Wiedmann et al., 2010). According to Ladhari et al. (2020), travel vloggers can create personal financial wealth by promoting their abilities and knowledge related to their travel interests. Travel vloggers must present qualified information and

background knowledge in order to be perceived as having expertise in the topic about which they are vlogging (Dewantara et al., 2023; Le & Hancer, 2021). In doing so, travel vloggers often label themselves as experts on a specific topic (Le & Hancer, 2021). Knowledge expertise is also often related to their experience. For example, a paragliding athlete will find it easier to explain the essential aspects that need to be considered for a paragliding tour (Ladhari et al., 2020). Guo et al. (2022) argue that expertise positively influences vloggers' individual capital and increases their utilitarian value.

2.3. Involvement with issues

The individual capital of a travel vlogger is closely related to their ability to be involved in current issues (Al-Mulla et al., 2022). Current issues at the time of data collection included travel after the pandemic (Chakravarty et al., 2021) and pro-environmental travel relating to zero plastic use and eliminating carbon emissions (Al-Mulla et al., 2022). The ability of travel vloggers to involve themselves in the latest travel issues may increase the motivation of viewers to view their content (Qiu et al., 2024). According to Chung et al. (2023), viewers' comments on specific vlogs can influence the importance of perceived issues. This study shows that involving in a specific issue affects the agenda-setting process and improves intentions to watch the vlog. As a result, there is an increase in viewer-vlogger interaction and an impact on the accumulation of brand endorsements for travel vloggers (Chung et al., 2023).

2.4. Innovativeness

The travel vlogger's credibility is usually proven through work experience and educational background (Chakravarty et al., 2021). However, to build individual capital and prove its trustworthiness, travel vloggers also need to be innovative. Innovation shapes viewers' perceptions of a specific standard of technology and how it can affect their attitude (Gong & Zhu, 2021; Xie et al., 2021). This innovation is often related to the use of technology and video editing skills to make the productive quality of the videos more attractive (Briciu & Briciu, 2020). As well as technological skills, innovativeness is also related to the ability of travel vlogs to maintain the attention of viewers watching the content (Gong & Zhu, 2021; Lo et al., 2024). Currently, travel vlogs tend to be of short duration and located in specific applications such as Instagram reels, YouTube reels or TikTok; they then become a trigger to look for longer vlogs (Chakravarty et al., 2021). Another innovation relates to how up to date the content is. It is important to know how perceived innovativeness from viewers can influence travel vloggers' individual capital.

2.5. Persuasion and self-centred – Machiavellian character

As key opinion leaders, travel vloggers should have a Machiavellian character. This refers to the travel vlogger's natural ability to seek attention combined with a self-centred attitude that helps them to persuade or convince others, or known as self-centred (Wiedmann et al., 2010). In their study, Wiedmann et al. (2010) found that Machiavellianism can distinguish travel vloggers and increase the ability of an individual to spread information by word of mouth. Sparavec et al. (2022) outlined that Machiavellianism is part of the dark triad character which can affect narcissism and use social media pro-socially. Several scholars also argue that Machiavellian character associated with doing manipulation and possibly as a form of attention seeking (Sparavec et al., 2022). Their presence can exhibit a sense of charisma that enables them to persuade a particular market about their agenda and can sometimes lead to intensive social media viewing (Kumpasoğlu et al., 2021). This character trait can impact actions and beliefs held by viewers about travel vloggers. Furthermore, Langner et al. (2013) argue that Machiavellian vloggers will prove their positioning as pioneers or leaders both consistently and convincingly (Langner et al., 2013). A

Machiavellian character not only relates to being innovative in creating the vlog but also to leading online public opinion through the vlog, so viewers gain self-assurance from the content they share (Langner et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2010).

2.6. Satisfaction

Individual capital's final attribute is ensuring viewers' satisfaction (Wiedmann et al., 2010). The main product offered by travel vloggers is vlogs, which should provide the information needed by their viewers (Stein et al., 2022). In the next step, vlogs must also be able to provide the information (such as travel options or what is mentioned in the vlog's title) that the travel vlogger promises to viewers and, through this post, to successfully promote the companies they endorse (Stein et al., 2022). For example, if viewers are unhappy with the first content offering that they view from a particular vlogger, they will be less likely to watch the following video. Likewise, if the travel vlogger cannot deliver the vlogs needed by the company, the company may not continue to endorse them. According to Kim (2022), satisfaction with the vlogger can motivate viewers to follow the vlogger's behaviour and content.

Several studies explore the attributes of individual capital in the context of social media influencers (e.g. Langner et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2010), yet they do not examine these attributes in the context of travel vloggers, which might be quite different from other forms of communication mediums. Travel vloggers publish their content only through video, which is a more specific medium than that used by social media influencers. Furthermore, the previous literature discusses how celebrity capital can enhance the marketing in fields such as the fashion industry (Brooks et al., 2021; Carrillat & Ilcic, 2019); therefore, a the study aimed at understanding how individual capital can attract viewers' motivation to travel will fill a gap in the tourism context. In relation to travel motivation, a study from Nieto-Ferrando et al. (2024) revealed that a film can affect tourists attitude and their travel motivation. None of previous studies has specifically discussed how the individual capital of a travel vlogger can attract viewers to travel, particularly in the context of destination marketing activities.

3. Methodology and methods

This study employs interpretivism as research paradigm as it emphasises the exploration of subjective meanings and perceptions from the researchers, viewers, and destination marketers, to investigate how individual capital is interpreted differently. This paradigm recognises that the individual capital is socially constructed which involves vlogger-viewer interaction. The research paradigm is translated into two research phases, starting from the vlog content analysis (Phase 1) followed by in-depth interviews (Phase 2) as research design. This paradigm was selected to accommodate diverse perspectives and enable the study to capture richer insights, in the evolving phenomena of vlogger's identity and viewers interaction. Therefore, researchers can ensure the strong alignment of the research objectives, potential empirical evidence, and theoretical contributions.

3.1. Phase 1: Vlog selection and individual capital identification

3.1.1. Phase 1 data collection and analysis

YouTube was chosen as the source of vlogs for this study for two reasons, YouTube is recognised as youth viewers' most favoured social media and, identified as the most credible platform for watching vlogs (Gerhards, 2019). Accordingly, all vlogs were selected through YouTube using Bali as the focal destination. This phase used three keywords to select the vlogs: 'travel vlog Bali', 'vlog trip to Bali' and 'holiday vlog to Bali'.

Six criteria were used to select the ten vlogs that were analysed. First, the content had to be published and posted in English. Second, the travel vlog needed to have a publication date after 2021, considering most

international borders opened in early 2022. Third, all vlogs should not contain any referral link, product placement or destination endorsement. This was important to validate the authenticity and originality of the content. Fourth, travel vlogs had to have been published by a credible travel vlogger who had more than 10,000 subscribers, consistent with [Le and Hancer's \(2021\)](#) study. Fifth, the travel vlog's duration had to be between approximately five and 15 min, as mentioned by [Bhatia \(2018\)](#). Finally, all vlogs needed to be about Bali. All vlogs were collected on 15 December 2022. Following the six criteria, ten vlogs were selected for analysis. In Phase 1, the researchers downloaded the text and visual content from the vlog post. Viewer-generated text (i.e., comments), vlogger-generated text (i.e., captions), and visual content were analysed separately but within the same coding framework.

Visual content data were coded into four main components: (1) narration; (2) destination and attractions depicted; (3) camera framing; and (4) vlogger's presentation (gestures, body languages, and facial expressions) following the study from [Burgess and Green \(2018\)](#) and [Vlahović et al. \(2023\)](#). The coding process involves several steps. First, in the narration aspect, the theme was captured when vloggers included relevant information. For example, vloggers demonstrated the attribute of knowledge expertise by narrating and outlining proper etiquette when visiting sacred locations. Second, in the destination and attractions depicted, the theme was captured when vloggers focused more on showcasing places and attractions (such as restaurants, clubs, or beaches) than on themselves. For example, if the travel vlogger displayed visual a cultural attraction and presented its history, then it is included in the theme of "knowledge expertise." Furthermore, this element also helped the researchers identify involvement with current topic, by highlighting the most popular attractions. Third, the camera framing component enabled researchers to explore technology innovation used to enhance visual appeal. Finally, the vlogger's presentation provided insights particularly related to the persuasive and self-centred attribute. Every element contributed uniquely to how the travel vlogger performed in the video. This multi-approach allowed researchers to capture both the informational (narration and attraction) and theatrical (camera framing and presentation) dimensions of the visual content ([Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021](#); [Vlahović et al., 2023](#)). [Masset et al. \(2024\)](#) defined the theatrical aspects of video from the perspective of viewers' emotions, excitement, and resonance. Following [Masset et al.'s \(2024\)](#) suggestion, the vlogger's presentation and theatrical dimensions were analysed in the study accordingly. It reflects how a product's image (the destination and attraction) and vlogger's point of views are co-constructed through verbal, visual, and non-verbal cues ([Burgess & Green, 2018](#); [Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021](#); [Motahar et al., 2024](#)). In this process, verbatim transcripts and descriptive summaries of each vlog are also prepared to capture the essence of the visual elements in words.

Both the vlog content and viewer comments from travel vlog are essential to gain comprehensive understanding the themes of each individual capital attribute. Text data were also thematically analysed. This included captions, transcriptions of the voice of the presenting vlogger, subtitles and quotes portrayed in the vlog. For example, when the travel vlogger discussed the current situation on visa regulations, then it was included as the theme of "involvement with current topic." Simply, when viewers commented "this travel vlogger is friendly and entertaining", for example, then it was coded to the theme of "viewers engagement and satisfaction." The video content and viewers' comments were analysed independently to ensure methodological rigor. In the initial data preparation phase, narration from the vlogger were transcribed, alongside an analysis of non-verbal elements such as visuals, gestures, and scenery. Viewer comments were exported, organised based on relevance, and cleansed of any irrelevant or duplicate entries. While the coding frameworks for both datasets shared structural similarities, their focal points diverged. For instance, the coding of video content centred on storytelling techniques, narrative structures, and representations of the destination. Conversely, the analysis of comments prioritised engagement-related themes, such as feedback and viewers'

responses.

Data of viewers' comments from each vlog were scraped using a web scraping tool ($n = 816$). There were 100 comments screened from vlogs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9, to limit the maximum comments in these vlogs; meanwhile, all comments were used from vlogs 1, 5, 8 and 10 (see [Fig. 1](#)). A total of 100 comments were selected from each vlog by considering the language, relevance, length and quality. All data were recorded in a table. Further, they were screened using the coding framework that was developed through the literature review process. Each vlog was analysed using the framework and the results of content analysis were recorded in the table. Only one vlog with the most attributes was selected for the next phase, the in-depth interview. [Fig. 1](#) informs the overall process of Phase 1.

Content analysis was employed to analyse the ten selected vlog contents and viewer comments. Content analysis refers to the systematic classification of patterns and codes to identify key categories in a qualitative data set ([Yang et al., 2021](#)). Accordingly, in this phase the contents and comments from each vlog were then coded using a coding framework based on the literature review.

3.1.2. Phase 1 results and discussion

Ten travel vlogs were found using the selected keywords. These vlogs were produced after the pandemic had effectively ended, following the reopening of several international borders in early 2022. The results of this monitoring are shown in [Table 2](#).

Not all attributes were found in the ten travel vlogs previously explored. The results of the content analysis review can be seen in [Table 2](#). From the ten vlogs found in the pre-screening process, the vlog content and viewers' comments were analysed. The content analysis performed through the definitions and meanings from the six attributes of individual capital can be found in the literature review (see [Fig. 1](#)). Phase 1 found the attributes of individual capital inside the comments and content of each vlog, as reported in [Table 3](#).

The review results from the content analysis show that Vlog 9 was the vlog with the highest number of individual capital attributes. These results were then submitted to 20 research participants to validate each attribute and find essential items in these attributes.

3.2. Phase 2: In-depth interviews

3.2.1. Phase 2 data collection and analysis

The focal destination of this study was Bali, Indonesia, a popular international tourist destination. Two groups of samples were included in this research: destination marketers who have knowledge of the Australian market and young vlog viewers residing in Australia (as potential travellers). Australian youth consumers aged 18 to 34 were chosen as they represent a significant segment of Bali's visitor market, accounting for approximately 1.25 million arrivals in 2019 ([Statistics Indonesia, 2021](#)). Youth consumers typically watch vlogs and enjoy being connected to social media ([Gerhards, 2019](#)). According to the [Australian Communications and Media Authority \(ACMA\) \(2021\)](#), some 83 % of the youth generation in Australia aged 18–34 years are likely to be connected to YouTube vlogs, with a watching duration of 29.9 h each week.

Phase 2 was conducted for three specific reasons. First, to validate the results found in Phase 1. Second, to find out and elaborate the items that could answer both research questions. Third, to allow participants to provide a rating in each attribute according to one specific vlog chosen in Phase 1. Twenty research participants were recruited for Phase 2 of the study, invited based on two categories: destination marketers and youth Australian vlog viewers. [Table 4](#) profiles the Phase 2 participants.

Before the interview, participants were asked to watch Vlog 9. Vlog 9 was selected and watched from Phase 1. This vlog has a duration of 15 min and 20 s, with a decent quality and considered in Phase 1 as a travel vlog that shows the individual capital of a travel vlogger. Only one vlog

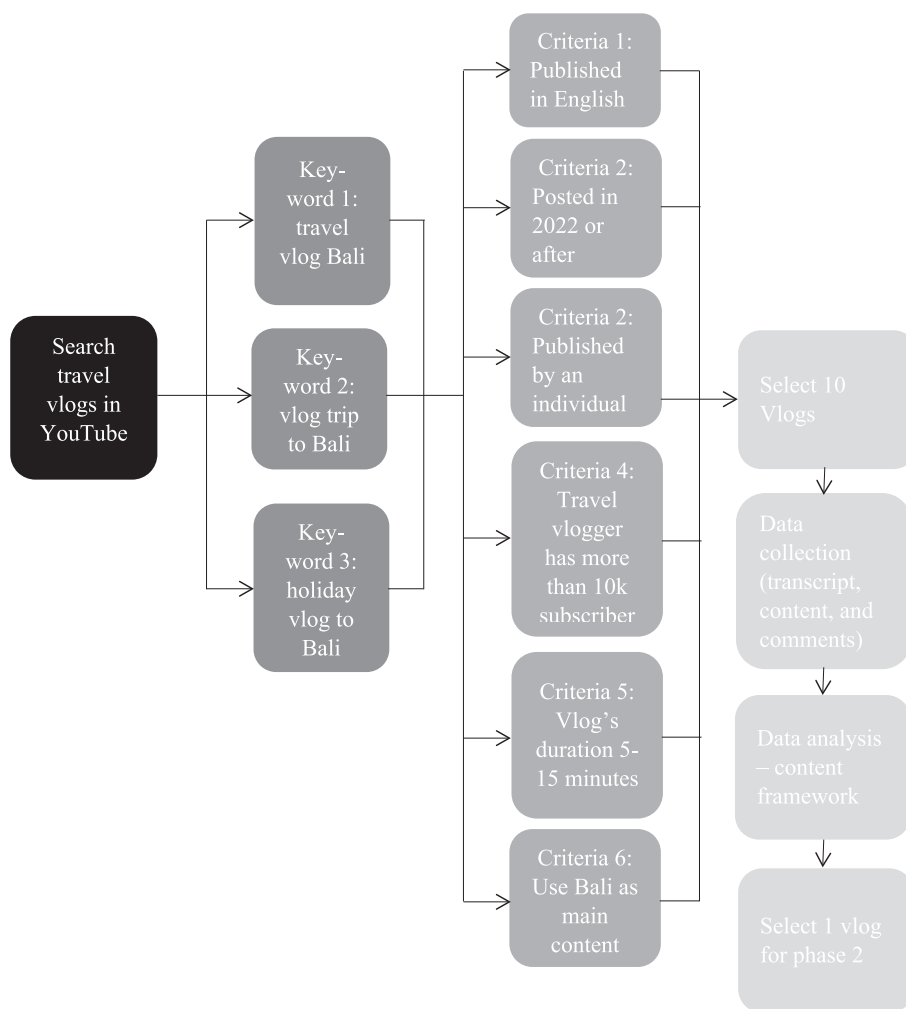


Fig. 1. Phase 1.

Table 2
Ten vlogs and their metrics.

Vlog's title (modified) (metrics found on 31 January 2022)	Number of subscribers	Number of viewers	Number of likes	Number of comments
V1. Bali Travel Guide	19.9 k	24 k	461	84
V2. Exploring Canggu	90.4 k	161.0 k	NA	186
V3. Bali with My Boyfriend	84.9 k	14.0 k	732	36
V4. I Wish I Knew Before Travelling to Bali	59.0 k	290.0 k	4.6 k	366
V5. Bali 2023	159.0 k	397.0 k	9.4 k	543
V6. Sydney to Bali	12.3 k	2.6 k	54	27
V7. Bali Swing	114.0 k	19.0 k	1.1 k	144
V8. Bali 2022 Vlog	136.0 k	10.0 k	378	69
V9. Bali is Open!	298.0 k	164.0 k	3.2 k	189
V10. I Finally Went to Bali	13.2 k	8.5 k	140	23

was chosen for Phase 2 considering the duration of the in-depth interviews. Questions were asked according to the framework created in Phase 1 – related, for example, to whether the participant feel similarity with the travel vlogger and whether they believed the travel vlogger was an expert in providing travel tips. Participants were also asked about how the individual capital of the travel vlogger affecting their travel motivation. They were also asked to rate each attribute of individual

capital, from 1 (lowest attribute found in the vlog) to 10 (highest). They gave the highest score if they felt the attributes were more evident inside the vlog. Twenty face-to-face or online interviews were conducted before data saturation was reached. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams and thematically analysed using NVivo20.

The methodology employed in this study is designed to comprehensively and rigorously generate the individual capital framework for travel vloggers by integrating qualitative content analysis and stakeholders' validation. In Phase 1, all components of the vlogs (visual content, captions or subtitles, and audience comments) are analysed thematically using a coding framework meticulously developed from an extensive literature review. This approach ensures that the analysis captures the multifaceted nature of individual capital. In Phase 2, the findings from the thematic analysis are validated through in-depth interviews with 20 informants. This dual validation process ensures that the framework is both audience-centred and industry-relevant. The integration of these two phases demonstrates methodological rigor, ensuring the study generates a well-rounded, evidence-based framework with industry significance.

3.3. Phase 2: Results and discussion

The results of Phase 2 show that the six attributes are evident in Vlog 9. Table 5 presents each attribute found during the interview with the rating given by the participants.

The findings show seven attributes that contributed to travel

Table 3
Individual capital attributes identified in each vlog during phase 1.

Vlog no.	Keywords found in each attribute					
	Perceived similarity	Knowledge expertise	Involvement with current topic	Innovation in technology	Persuasive and self-centred	Viewers engagement and satisfaction
V1	Young, same motivation	Travel budget	Safety and security, visa	Subtitle	Persuasive, energetic	Intend to subscribe, fun, friendly
V2	Well educated, same interest	Itinerary, cultural knowledge	Visa issues, safeties	Decent camera	Down to earth, clear	Likes and follows, fun, friendly, smart, enjoy
V3	Young, millennial	Budget arrangement	Travel procedure	Subtitle, caption, drone	Clarity, persuasive	Willing to explore, friendly, entertaining
V4	Millennial, same hobby, same lifestyle	Cultural knowledge	Travel itinerary, safety	Video editing, sound effect	Confident, opportunist	Very recommended, enjoyable, fun, pleasant
V5	Educated, same lifestyle	Itinerary, travel tips	Safety protocol	Video editing	Influential, manipulative	Enjoyable content
V6	Youth female	Travel tips	Visa, regulation	Video editing	Opportunist	Well recommended
V7	Young couple	Travel tips	Green travel, environment	Musical instrument	Storytelling, manipulative	Friendly, fun, pleasant
V8	Grow millennial	Travel budget	Environment	Video editing, quality of camera	Persuasive, opportunist, self-centred	Very recommended, enjoy, fun
V9	Digital nomad, young, same lifestyle	Travel tips, cultural knowledge	Safety, security, visa regulation	Video editing, drone, subtitle	Persuasive, confident, energetic	Wants to follow, intend to explore, entertaining
V10	Luxurious, millennial	Cultural knowledge	Environmental protection, visa regulation	Sound effect, caption	Energetic, self-centred	Friendly, fun, enjoyable

Table 4
Phase 2 participants.

Participant's ID	Gender	Age (in years)	Location	Role ¹
P1	Male	32	Brisbane	VV
P2	Male	31	Brisbane	VV
P3	Female	28	Gold Coast	VV
P4	Female	27	Sydney	VV
P5	Female	30	Sydney	VV
P6	Male	26	Melbourne	VV
P7	Male	27	Sydney	VV
P8	Male	30	Brisbane	VV
P9	Female	28	Brisbane	VV
P10	Male	30	Gold Coast	VV
P11	Female	27	Bali	DM
P12	Female	25	Bali	DM
P13	Male	23	Bali	DM
P14	Male	32	Bali	DM
P15	Male	29	Bali	DM
P16	Female	33	Bali	DM
P17	Female	33	Bali	DM
P18	Male	35	Bali	DM
P19	Male	35	Jakarta and Bali	DM
P20	Female	30	Jakarta and Bali	DM

¹VV: vlog viewers; DM: destination marketers.

Table 5
Individual capital attributes found in Vlog 9 – validated in phase 2.

Attribute	Items on each attribute				
	Age	Gender	Interest or hobby	Social status	Lifestyle
Perceived similarity					
Score	112	104	70	138	162
Knowledge expertise					
Score	126	84	70	120	154
Involvement with current topic					
Score	140	156	144	70	92
Innovation in technology					
Score	64	154	75	174	
Persuasive and self-centred					
Score	96	68	130	72	
Viewers engagement and satisfaction					
Score	80	116	56	154	46
Respect and empathy*					
Score	73	84	108		

*Score is out of 200. For each participant, rated each item from 1 to 10.

**Identified in phase 2.

vloggers' individual capital. Fig. 2 describes each of them. The attributes found after all research participants had been interviewed are based on the results of Phase 1. Interestingly, this study also found a new attribute, named as respect and empathy. This is shown by how a travel vlogger demonstrates a positive attitude externally. This new attribute was performed through several elements, such as showing empathy to locals and viewers, respecting the local customs and engaging actively with the local community while vlogging.

3.4. Perceived similarity

The research shows that perceived similarity attributes are influenced by the commonality of age, gender, education, social status and lifestyle items. Perceived similarity was identified by analysing how viewers relate to the vlogger's travel experiences, motivations and the travel perspectives. This was assessed through narrative elements and viewers' comments, such as the personal travel motivation shared by the vlogger, the lifestyle attractions depicted, and the alignment with the target viewers' travel interests. The opening of international borders after the pandemic has led to several lifestyle changes, including travelling and working styles. Travellers who prefer to vacation for extended periods resonate with travel vloggers who are part of a similar demographic. Travel vloggers benefit from demographic advantages, such

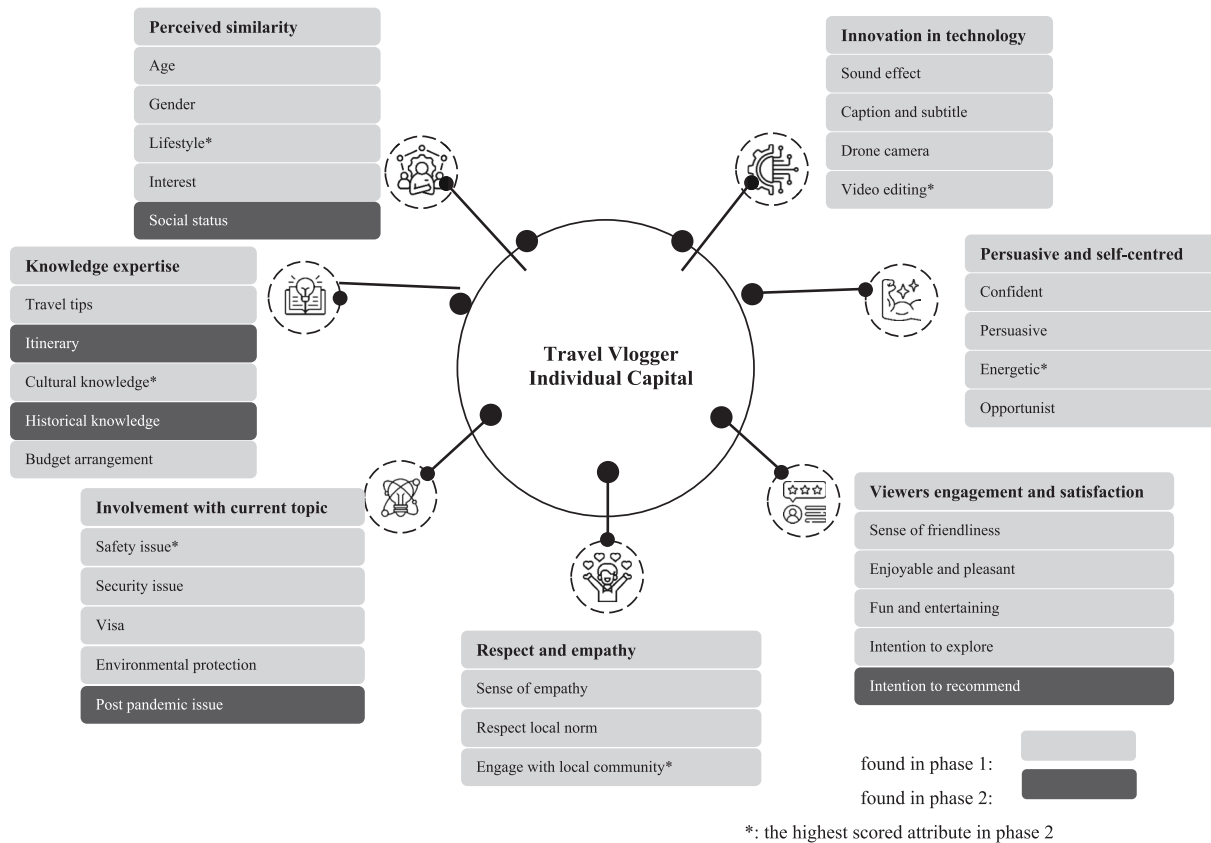


Fig. 2. Individual capital within travel vlog.

as being under 35 and belonging to an upper middle-class social status.

This result extends the previous study about demographic alignment among influencers (Yousaf, 2022). The literature suggests that travel vloggers with a cosmopolitan style and younger demographic will gain more exposure (Xie et al., 2021; Yousaf, 2022). Yousaf (2022) found that travel vloggers with these characteristics have higher individual capital than their competitors, finding that viewers prefer vlogs created by travel vloggers with some demographic similarities to themselves. This finding also confirms the existing literature, which argues that perceived similarity is a tool to build parasocial interaction with viewers in the context of individual capital (Lu et al., 2023; Stein et al., 2022). The results of the present study reinforce this – for example, a participant commented, ‘It is very important for travel vlogger to tap target viewer according to his lifestyle’ (P8). Another participant commented, ‘I found this travel vlogger has similar interest like me which enhance the overall interaction’ (P12).

3.5. Knowledge expertise

The study results show that knowledge expertise strengthens the individual capital of travel vloggers. This expertise may come from support by expert teams or from the vlogger’s own research. Study participants believed the travel vlogger dug up qualified and accurate information. The knowledge that becomes individual capital includes knowledge of historical sites and cultural resources in these destinations. Furthermore, the travel vlogger can provide some travel budget tips relevant to viewers. In a destination marketing context, the travel vlogger has explored and covered all important information. Even so, viewers also see that knowledge of designing travel itineraries must be included in the content.

These findings align with those of a previous study by Ladhari et al. (2020), who stated that viewers would trust accurate information from travel vloggers. Knowledge expertise is also considered to be the most

influential attribute in individual capital for media figures to influence viewers (Langner et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2010). Moreover, viewers are concerned about obtaining knowledge related to planning a travel budget and special tips when travelling to unfamiliar destination (Guo et al., 2022). This finding also extends the findings of the previous study by Le and Hancer (2021) about a few specific pieces of information required by modern viewers. For instance, one participant commented, ‘Viewers keen to trust travel vlogger who has cultural knowledge about the destination’ (P5). Another participant commented, ‘This travel vlogger has a strong cultural knowledge about the destination’ (P14).

3.6. Involvement with current topic

Many topics are discussed among netizens on social media. When this research was conducted, the five fundamental issues that were the primary discussion material in the travel sector were safety, security, post-pandemic behaviour, visas and environmental protection. The results of the study show that prospective travellers are still concerned about their security and safety while travelling, from travelling on a plane and arriving at the destination to being the destination and returning to their hometown. Regulatory changes related to COVID-19 are a major concern. Regulation changes have meant that travel vloggers now always include this topic in their content. The results of our study also show that topics related to visa regulation concern potential travellers. Moreover, Indonesia is launching two new visa programs: the second home visa and the digital nomad visa.

Another issue of concern to travellers is protection of the environment. This confirms Qiu et al.’s (2024) findings about the current issues of most interest to travellers. Travel vloggers who raise this topic in their vlogs will usually get more attention from viewers (He et al., 2022). The findings confirm previous research from Chung et al. (2023), which argues that viewers’ comments on vlogs can impact the perceived importance of issues. The finding also extends the previous findings

from Galvin et al. (2021), which show the main content searched by viewers during and potentially after the pandemic. This attribute has become the most crucial attribute pointed out by our participants as contributing to the vlogger's capital. For example, a participant commented that 'visa issues are very interesting as it keeps changing after the pandemic' (P2). Another participant commented, 'The travel vlogger posted several relevant topic to travellers such as visa regulation and safety concern' (P15).

3.7. Innovation in technology

Viewers appreciate the innovations of travel vloggers. Along with technological advances, travel vloggers create innovations and translate them into their travel vlogs. One innovation that has been implemented is camera operation. Travel vloggers with more viewers currently use the highest quality cameras and increasingly use drone cameras to better capture scenery. Another innovation is adding subtitles, as it is generated from specific software with creative font size and styles. It is an innovative way for the vlogger to enable viewers that speak different language or do not have sound available when watching the vlog. Research participants agreed that the trend of watching vlogs with subtitles will continue to grow, considering that they watch vlogs in public spaces.

These findings confirm the findings of a previous study by Briciu and Briciu (2020), which showed that travel vloggers' innovations are inseparable from their video-editing skills. They also confirm the findings of He et al. (2022), who suggest that the vlogging process is constructed through four steps: designing, filming, editing and posting. According to Chakravarty et al. (2021), this video editing involves shortening the duration, creating a flowing story and inserting background music into the video. The findings also confirm previous literature that underlines the importance of consistent innovation to build individual capital, maintain viewers' attention and influence their attitude (Gong & Zhu, 2021; Xie et al., 2021). As an example, one participant commented that a 'travel vlogger knows that subtitle is very essential, in the future all vlogs need to have subtitle subtitles' (P4). Another participant commented that 'this travel vlog used several innovations in recording and editing the video which makes it outstanding' (P16).

3.8. Persuasive and self-centred

The participants could find several persuasive characters among the travel bloggers who were associated with someone who is energetic, confident and tends to be narcissistic. Nonetheless, the research results show that this character is supported by the travel vlogger's ability to confidently appear in front of the camera, have a persuasive style in front of tourist attractions and be friendly to the people around them. Participants agreed that this character is quite opportunistic when it comes to discovering current trends in the travel experience, which increases the individual capital of travel vloggers, as it enables them to persuade viewers with a self-centred attitude. Participants also believed the persuasive style of travel vlogger could influence viewers' beliefs and convince viewers about a specific agenda or topic in modern travel activities.

The findings elaborate the results of previous studies and explain the self-centred characteristic as the ability of travel vloggers to speak without hiccups, to exhibit charisma and to directly make the main points they want to convey (Kumpasoglu et al., 2021; Langner et al., 2013). Langner et al. (2013) put this character into their study and term it 'social persuasion with a sense of confidence'. The results of this research expand the findings of the previous study by Wiedmann et al. (2010) by providing additional meaning to Machiavellianism which originally come from the dark triad character into more persuasive and self-centred (Sparavec et al., 2022). The findings also extend the previous study by He et al. (2022), who mentions that an opportunist travel

vlogger creates a self-other divide and mediates the experiences of the self. The findings associate this character with Machiavellian from another angle, which often referred as a self-centred, persuasive, and manipulative (Kumpasoglu et al., 2021; Wiedmann et al., 2010). As one participant commented, 'To be endorsed by media and trusted by the viewers, travel vloggers should be confident and have charisma and specific persuasion skills' (P9). Another participant commented that 'the travel vlogger looked very energetic and charismatic which invite me to travel to the destination' (P18).

3.9. Viewer engagement and satisfaction

A credible travel vlogger will usually be able to convince their viewers to keep enjoying their content to gain the information they require. The study's results show that viewer satisfaction is affected by the enjoyable and entertaining content made by the travel vlogger, which is indicated by intentions ranging from commenting and following the account. When they find the content fun and pleasant, viewers tend to leave positive reviews for both vloggers and endorsed destinations. Participants also believe that the contents of a vlog can provide the information they need in an enjoyable way. Destination marketers are also satisfied when a travel vlogger is friendly, but also able to follow the appropriate procedure when they travel and when they record the whole destination.

The attitudes shown by viewers in recommending vlogs through social media, as found in this study, extend the findings of a previous study by Xie et al. (2021), showing that individual capital can enhance the co-creation experience. It is not easy for travel vloggers to ensure that their clients will always be satisfied. The sense of relatedness motivates satisfied viewers to recommend the vlog content as a kind of electronic word-of-mouth (Kim, 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2010). According to Wiedmann et al. (2010), satisfaction is also shown by being loyal viewers of the content. As a participant commented, 'I could see from many comments that viewers enjoying the content and keep following the content to show they are satisfied' (P7). Another participant commented, 'I feel, enjoy and engage with the content as it explains several new information about the destination' (P9).

3.10. Respect and empathy

Finally, the findings identify a new attribute of respect and empathy which refers to the vlogger's attitude for being respectful to the cultures and showing empathy to the local community. This attribute is described through three unique elements found by the participants. It refers to the travel vlogger's attitude when engaging with the local community, respecting the norms and empathy with the viewers and local host. These three elements of attitude are categorised as respect and empathy because they show positive statements towards the audience and host. These attitudes can help the travel vlogger to overcome negative situation and thoughts. Travel vloggers build their capital by leaving respect and empathy, not only in vlogs but also at the destinations they visit. Furthermore, the travel vlogger shows the attitude of respectful and empathy by being more empathetic towards the local community at the destination. Empathy is shown by helping the community and tourism businesses, buying local products and protecting the environment at the host destination.

Respect and empathy remain part of the attribute of individual capital through respecting local norms and regulations. The findings confirm the previous literature, where being respectful and showing empathy is becoming more essential in the modern era of social media sharing. It becomes important since many travel vloggers fail to respect the culture or norms of their destinations (Le & Hancer, 2021; Stein et al., 2022). Travel vloggers also positively affirm by engaging with local communities (He et al., 2022). This result extends the previous literature, which mentions how respect and empathy improves the quality of parasocial interaction between the travel vlogger and viewers

and can also strengthen the travel vlogger's social attractiveness (Dewantara et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2023; Yousaf, 2022). Some vloggers participated in the host's ceremonies and customs. For example, a participant commented, 'Many travel vloggers need to respect local values and norms' (P6). Another said, 'It is important for the vlogger nowadays to understand local knowledge as shown by this travel vlogger' (P8).

3.11. Travel motivation and impact to the destination marketing

The results of this study show that travel vloggers with high individual capital will be able to arouse travel motivation. Research participants in Phase 2 were asked whether a travel vlogger with individual capital would increase their motivation to travel. One participant commented, 'This travel vlogger gives me some awareness about current travel trends to this destination' (P15). In addition, post-pandemic travellers' attitudes and habits can be observed by travel vloggers with high individual capital, particularly in the issue involvement's element. As a participant commented, 'The travel vlogger who has more post-COVID content about a destination attracts me to engage and interact with them and I feel more educated' (P20). Destination marketers can collaborate with travel vloggers who have authentic and novel perspectives about destinations, as shown in their individual capital (Briciu & Briciu, 2020; Qiu et al., 2024). According to Cheng et al. (2020), travel vloggers with some innovative content can strengthen their ties with destination marketing objectives. Peralta (2019) argues that destination marketers always need media figures to convey messages and invitations to potential travellers, who have strong capital in their content. Consequently, it is essential for the travel vlogger to understand their individual capital if their entrepreneurship skills need to be scaled up.

Travel vloggers need to maintain their capital to retain viewers' loyalty, which means the collaboration with destination marketers can be maintained. The participants feel that they are invited to strengthen the parasocial interaction with the travel vlogger. As one participant commented, 'The travel vlogger is very persuasive and motivated to build the interaction with the audience' (P6). Studies found that these phenomena usually occur when content is available on multiple channels (Lo et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). As a participant explained, 'This travel vlogger motivates me not only to follow his other social media channel but also to visit the destination to validate his content' (P19). This confirms previous research by Xie et al. (2021), which discuss the influence of competing concepts, such as social capital owned by travel vloggers, which can affect viewers' intentional behaviour. Wang et al. (2022) argue that travel post on social media can affect travel decisions. According to Lu et al. (2023), livestreaming from travel vloggers impacts viewing and travel intention as a continuous relationship has been built. In essence, destination marketers can build loyalty with potential or existing travellers while the viewers revisit the vlog to find out about the latest updates regarding the destinations.

4. Implications and contribution

The findings elaborate and re-evaluate the theory of individual capital framework. While the four main attributes are rooted in existing literature on general media figure (e.g., perceived similarity, knowledge expertise, involvement with current topic, and innovation in technology), three additional attributes are developed with development of new term and items. First, this study captures a Machiavellianism character which previously proposed by Wiedmann et al. (2010) as narcissistic and manipulative, now viewed from a different angle as persuasive and self-centred. Second, this study also extends the attribute of satisfaction to the viewer engagement and satisfaction with shows the level of viewers engagement that vlogger should make to build the individual capital. Third, the findings introduce a new attribute of respect and empathy, referring to the vlogger's respectful attitude towards local cultures and

empathy for the local community. This is also the first study to identify specific items for each attribute and have them rated by research participants. While AI-driven and streaming media have become dominant on social media, their use in video creation has introduced new risks, such as deepfake videos and unethical digital depictions (Liu et al., 2025). Furthermore, they lack the depth of interaction between viewers and vloggers (Liu et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025). Therefore, analysing the individual capital of personal travel vloggers remains relevant.

Unlike previous studies that focus broadly on social media influencers (e.g., Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Hess et al., 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2010), our analysis delves into the specific dynamics of travel vlogs, where destination-specific knowledge and cultural adaptability play crucial roles. This nuanced approach provides deeper insights into how travel vloggers cultivate and leverage their individual capital to create compelling and trustworthy content. The attributes can be operationalised to distinguish travel vloggers from other types of influencers. For example, the attribute of knowledge expertise is assessed through the accuracy and depth of destination or tourist attraction via content analysis and viewers' comments. Therefore, by systematically operationalising these individual capital attributes, travel vloggers' unique capacity to blend expertise innovation, and parasocial interaction can be effectively distinguished from other influencer types, highlighting their specialised role in shaping perceptions of tourist attraction and destination. These enhancements not only solidify the theoretical underpinnings of the research but also offer novel insights into the unique factors that drive the capital success of each individual travel vlogger.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the research agenda on individual capital and destination marketing. The previous literature has suggested attributes in forming individual capital for media figures (Carrillat & Ilicic, 2019; Hess et al., 2022; Wiedmann et al., 2010), but none of them specifically discuss these in the context of travel vloggers. While these studies have discussed the individual capital of social media influencers (e.g. Brooks et al., 2021; Langner et al., 2013), they have not specifically referred to vloggers in the study. Hence, this study expands the previous literature by exploring the attributes of travel vloggers' individual capital. This research is the first to clearly address this gap by providing a framework to identify their individual capital attributes in the travel vlogger context. Moreover, this study extends previous research from Nieto-Ferrando et al. (2024) that a video promotion (such as movie or vlog) can affect travel motivation from its viewers.

The findings also offer several practical contributions to destination marketing. They extend the previous destination marketing framework in the travel vlog ecosystem developed by Dewantara et al. (2022). Understanding individual capital has important implications for the travel vloggers to enable them to capitalise on their ability in producing content and increase their popularity. Using the framework presented in this study, they can position themselves as credible travel sources, establish a personal brand and better demonstrate their value to destination marketers. For example, this study found being innovative, involve with current topic, and ensure viewers' satisfaction can drive higher interaction rates to strengthen the parasocial interaction with the viewers. These outcomes can, in turn, assist in marketing a destination. Destination marketers can work collaboratively with travel vlogs to provide more accurate and credible insights of a destination.

In the era of short videos, travel vlogger can maximise their individual capital attributes to have better position as a credible and trustworthy travel information sources. For instance, in developing the attribute of knowledge expertise, travel vlogger must be able to include several knowledges around the destination, in a concise form of video. Furthermore, to enhance the attribute of innovation in technology, video editing and informative captions must be included although the content is not comprehensive. Overall, while short videos rely on rapid storytelling (Gong & Zhu, 2021; Qiu et al., 2024), individual capital is still able to be performed.

5. Limitations and future research agenda

Three limitations provide opportunities for future research. First, this study employed qualitative methods. Future studies could explore individual capital among travel vloggers using triangulation. Various methods could be adopted, such as eye tracking, emotional tracking, or big data analytics could potentially uncover large-scale patterns and trends in travel vloggers' individual capital. Second, this initial study focused only on reputable travel vloggers who published their vlogs on well-established platforms like YouTube. Future research could examine other types of travel vloggers, including amateurs, who share their content on popular platforms such as TikTok or Instagram. Third, this study examined travel vloggers' content produced since the pandemic. Future research could investigate contexts beyond tourism crises. Finally, while this study concentrated on general vlogs, future research could explore how the attributes are evident in short-form vlogs.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Made Handijaya Dewantara: Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Xin Jin (Cathy):** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization. **Sarah Gardiner:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Author statement

We wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication and there has been no significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

We confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved by all named authors and that there are no other persons who satisfied the criteria for authorship but are not listed. We further confirm that the order of authors listed in the manuscript has been approved by all of us.

We confirm that we have considered the protection of intellectual property associated with this work and that there are no impediments to publication, including the timing of publication, with respect to intellectual property. In so doing, we confirm we have followed our institutions' regulations concerning intellectual property.

We understand that the Corresponding Author is the sole contact for the Editorial process (including Editorial Manager and direct communications with the office). He is responsible for communicating with the other authors about progress, submissions of revisions and final approval of proofs.

We confirm we have provided a current, correct email address accessible by the Corresponding Author.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Made Handijaya Dewantara reports administrative support was provided by Griffith University Griffith Institute for Tourism. Made Handijaya Dewantara reports a relationship with Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education that includes: non-financial support. If there are other authors, they declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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