

# SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN TOURISM: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL TIES AND ITS IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT

**SOFIA BLANCO-MORENO**

UNIVERSITY OF LEÓN

**ANA MARIA GONZALEZ-FERNANDEZ**

UNIVERSITY OF LEÓN

**Pablo Antonio Muñoz-Gallego**

Universidad de Salamanca

**Luis V. Casaló**

University of Zaragoza

Cite as:

BLANCO-MORENO SOFIA, GONZALEZ-FERNANDEZ ANA MARIA, Muñoz-Gallego Pablo Antonio, Casaló Luis V. (2025), SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN TOURISM: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL TIES AND ITS IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (125546)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



# **SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN TOURISM: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL TIES AND ITS IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT**

This study explores the influence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on user engagement with destinations on Instagram. Key characteristics examined include the influencers' follower count, the sentiment of their posts, and their geographic ties to the destination. While conventional wisdom suggests that influencers with larger followings and positive content generate higher engagement, this research, grounded in the theory of weak ties, reveals surprising trends: influencers with smaller followings achieve higher engagement rates. Moreover, local influencers outperform global ones, and posts with negative sentiment surprisingly attract more engagement than positive ones. These insights highlight the potential for destination marketing organizations to refine their strategies by partnering with SMIs who exhibit these impactful traits, offering a nuanced perspective on leveraging influencers to enhance destination branding.

***Keywords:*** *Influencers, Social Media Engagement, Artificial Intelligence*

***Track:*** *Tourism Marketing*