

The Influence of Short Travel Videos on Travel Intention: The Mediating Role of Destination Image in Chengdu, China

อิทธิพลของปัจจัยวิดีโอการท่องเที่ยวแบบสั้นต่อความตั้งใจในการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยว: บทบาท
ตัวกลางของภาพลักษณ์จุดหมายปลายทางในเมืองเฉิงตู ประเทศจีน

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Abstract

This research aims to: 1) examine the direct effects of the content quality of short marketing videos, user experience of short marketing videos, and destination image on tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China; 2) examine the mediating role of destination image in the relationships among the content quality of short marketing videos, user experience of short marketing videos, and tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China; and 3) develop a conceptual model to enhance tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China for the tourism industry. Survey data were collected from 400 respondents who had watched Chengdu-related short tourism videos using a multi-stage non-probability sampling method, consisting of quota sampling across four major tourist attractions and purposive sampling based on respondents' eligibility criteria. The conceptual model was tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that both the content quality of short marketing videos and user experience of short marketing videos have significant positive direct effects on tourists' travel intention. Destination image also significantly predicts tourists' travel intention and partially mediates the relationships between the exogenous stimuli and tourists' travel intention. This study contributes to digital tourism research by empirically validating the mediating mechanism of destination image within the S-O-R framework. The findings also provide practical implications for destination marketers seeking to optimize short-video strategies to enhance tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China.

Keywords: Short travel videos; Tourist's Travel Intention; Destination Image

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาอิทธิพลทางตรงของคุณภาพเนื้อหาของวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้น ประสบการณ์การใช้งานวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้น และภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว 2) ศึกษาบทบาทการเป็นตัวแปรต้นกลางของภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวในความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างคุณภาพเนื้อหาของวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้น ประสบการณ์การใช้งานวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้น และความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว และ 3) พัฒนาโมเดลเชิงแนวคิดเพื่อส่งเสริมความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวไปยังเมืองเฉิงตู ประเทศจีน สำหรับอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว ทำการสำรวจจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 400 คนที่เคยรับชมวิดีโอการท่องเที่ยวระยะสั้นเกี่ยวกับเมืองเฉิงตู โดยใช้วิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบหลายขั้นตอน ซึ่งประกอบด้วยวิธีการสุ่มแบบโควตาตามแหล่งท่องเที่ยวสำคัญ 4 แห่ง และการสุ่มแบบเจาะจง

ตามเกณฑ์คัดเลือกผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม จากนั้นนำข้อมูลมาวิเคราะห์ด้วยการวิเคราะห์แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้างด้วย PLS-SEM ผลการวิจัยพบว่า คุณภาพเนื้อหาของวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้นและประสบการณ์การใช้งานวิดีโอการตลาดระยะสั้นมีอิทธิพลทางตรงเชิงบวกอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวของนักท่องเที่ยว นอกจากนี้ ภาพลักษณ์ของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวยังเป็นตัวแปรที่สามารถทำนายความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ และทำหน้าที่เป็นตัวแปรคั่นกลางบางส่วนระหว่างตัวแปรสิ่งเร้าภายนอกกับความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวของนักท่องเที่ยว งานวิจัยนี้ช่วยขยายองค์ความรู้ด้านการท่องเที่ยวดิจิทัลโดยยืนยันบทบาทของภาพลักษณ์แหล่งท่องเที่ยวในฐานะกลไกตัวกลางตามกรอบแนวคิด S-O-R และยังให้ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงปฏิบัติสำหรับผู้ทำการตลาดด้านการท่องเที่ยวในการใช้กลยุทธ์วิดีโอระยะสั้นเพื่อส่งเสริมความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยวไปยังเมืองเฉิงตู ประเทศจีน

คำสำคัญ: วิดีโอท่องเที่ยวระยะสั้น ความตั้งใจในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว ภาพลักษณ์แหล่งท่องเที่ยว

Introduction

With the continuous development of China's digital economy and the widespread adoption of mobile internet, short video platforms have emerged as a dominant force in information dissemination and consumer engagement. The short video market in China has experienced explosive growth, with the number of short-form video users steadily increasing from 417 million in 2017 to 1,053 million in 2023 (Lee & Mai, 2025). By 2024, the Chinese short video market had reached hundreds of billions of yuan with users exceeding one billion. Platforms such as Douyin (TikTok) and Xiaohongshu have fundamentally transformed how tourists discover, evaluate, and select travel destinations, offering immersive, visually compelling content that rapidly shapes viewers' perceptions and stimulates travel-related interest (Gan et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2025). Beyond passive content consumption, these platforms have also become key channels for tourists to actively seek travel information (Xu et al., 2023).

Unlike traditional promotional media, short videos are more immediate, visually engaging, and easily shared, making them particularly effective in influencing destination perceptions and driving travel intention. The tourism industry has increasingly leveraged short-form video content as a strategic marketing tool, recognizing its capacity to convey destination experiences in ways that static images or text-based information cannot replicate (Qiu et al., 2024).

Chengdu, China, presents a compelling research context for investigating the influence of short travel videos on tourist behavior (Zhu et al., 2022). As a prominent "internet-famous city," Chengdu has experienced explosive tourism growth intertwined with digital media engagement, with visitor numbers and tourism revenue increasing substantially in recent years. The city's tourism resources, which include cultural heritage sites and natural attractions, are highly compatible with short-form storytelling. The Chengdu research base of giant panda breeding serves as the city's most recognizable icon, continuously attracting global tourists through short video platforms. Notably, during the 2025 National Day holiday, the Panda Base was among the top attractions that consistently reached visitor capacity limits. Due to their traditional architecture, authentic local cuisine, and vibrant everyday atmosphere, Jinli Ancient Street and Kuanzhai Alley are popular sites of short video production. The 2025 Spring Festival celebration at Kuanzhai Alley drew 1.16 million visitors, including typical theater performances such as Sichuan opera face-changing and Kunqu opera, as well as intangible cultural heritage activities. Wuhou Shrine, with its deep cultural heritage in the Three Kingdoms period, provides rich historical narrative material for short video content. It attracted 770,000 visitors during the 2025 Spring Festival period. Recent scholars have

examined short travel videos in cultural heritage contexts and found that video content improves tourists' decision-making process through enhancing cultural involvement and positive emotions (Wu & Peng, 2025). With these salient features Chengdu seems to offer a suitable platform for examining how short travel videos convert destination resources to a perceived value and, thus, travel intention.

While short videos are widely used in tourist promotion, there still exists a critical research gap. Existing studies frequently assume that short videos create a single effect, claiming that "short videos increase intention" without a clear description of the underlying processes (Liu et al., 2023). In practice, two critical aspects — quality of travel video content (how informative, clear, and credible it is) and user experience (how smooth, engaging, and satisfying the viewing and interaction process feels) — are often studied independently, rather than in conjunction. In recent research on travel content in short-form videos, it has been found that recent studies on perceived quality cues in short-video social media have shown that such environmental quality, informational quality, and vlogger quality enhance behavioral motivation and intention (Yang et al., 2025). Although these stimuli can be theoretically linked to travel intention, the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship remain under-theorized. From a destination marketing perspective, the image of destination itself—the complete set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions an individual holds about a destination—is the most likely path between two possible pathways (Marques et al., 2021). Testing destination image as a mediator is necessary because external stimuli (video content and user experience) do not directly determine behavioral responses. According to the S-O-R framework, stimuli must first shape an internal psychological state—the organism. Destination image serves as this critical organism, representing the tourist's holistic perception of Chengdu. Without testing this mediating mechanism, the psychological process through which short videos influence travel intention would remain unexplained. Moreover, the short videos are found to be effective in shaping tourists' cognitive and affective images of destinations when viewed on-screen, and information quality and visual appeal were the antecedents of destination image formation as confirmed in the empirical studies (Gan et al., 2025). However, when this mechanism isn't explicitly modeled, the explanation is incomplete: The other stakeholders will appreciate that short videos matter, but they do not know whether the main driver is content, the user experience, the destination image, or a mix of these. This research thus pursues three goals, specifically to fill this void.

Research objectives

1. To examine the direct effects of the content quality of short marketing videos, the user experience of short marketing videos, and destination image on tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China.
2. To examine the mediating role of destination image in the relationships between the content quality of short marketing videos, the user experience of short marketing videos, and tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China.
3. To develop a conceptual model to enhance tourists' travel intention to visit Chengdu, China for the tourism industry.

Conceptual framework

As per the existing literature, the conceptual framework of this study is the influence of Short Travel Videos on Tourist's Travel Intention through the mediating role of Destination Image. There are two independent variables: content quality of short marketing videos and user experience of short marketing videos; one mediating variable: destination image; one dependent variable—tourists' travel intention. The conceptual framework of this study is presented in figure 1. The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

Hypothesis 1: content quality of short marketing videos has a direct influence on tourist's travel intention.

Hypothesis 2: user experience of short marketing videos has a direct influence on tourist's travel intention.

Hypothesis 3: destination image has a direct influence on tourist's travel intention.

Hypothesis 4: content quality of short marketing videos has an indirect influence on tourists' travel intention through destination image.

Hypothesis 5: user experience of short marketing videos has an indirect influence on tourist's travel intention through destination image.

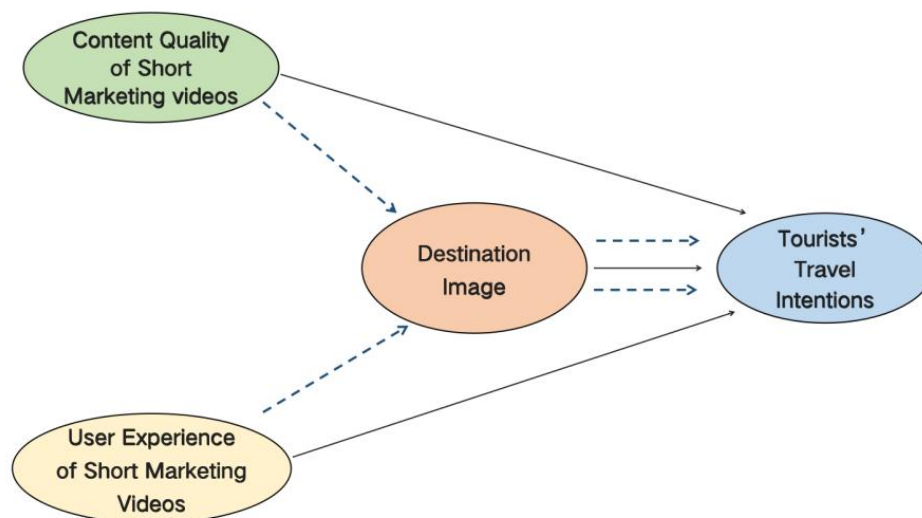


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of this research

Research methodology

Population and sample

The target population for this study was defined as adult social media users (aged 18 years and above) who (1) had watched short tourism videos about Chengdu on Douyin or Xiaohongshu within the past six months, (2) had no prior travel experience to Chengdu or had not visited Chengdu in the past two years (to avoid memory bias from recent visits), and (3) were able to state their current travel intention toward Chengdu based on their video viewing experience. Both Chinese domestic tourists and international tourists who met these criteria were included. No further restrictions on nationality were

imposed, as the study aimed to capture a broad cross-section of potential tourists influenced by short video content. 400 valid responses were derived using a multi-stage sampling procedure. First, quota sampling allocated 100 respondents each across four major Chengdu tourist attractions (Panda Base, Jinli Ancient Street, Wuhou Shrine, and Kuanzhai Alley) to ensure balanced coverage. The quota of 100 respondents per location was set based on two considerations. First, with a target total sample size of 400 (determined by the PLS-SEM requirement of 10-20 times the 17 observed variables), an equal split across four sites ensured balanced representation from different attraction typologies. Second, prior tourism research using multi-site sampling has recommended a minimum of 80–120 respondents per subgroup to achieve stable parameter estimates in structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019). The four locations were selected because they represent diverse attraction categories (ecological, cultural-commercial, historical-heritage, and urban-leisure) and consistently rank as the most frequently featured sites in Chengdu-related short videos. This variation across locations helps reduce location-specific bias and enhances the external validity of the findings. Second, purposive sampling only chose visitors who met eligibility criteria, confirmed by screening questions (e.g., "Have you watched short tourism videos about Chengdu?"). The 400-subject population more than fills the specifications for stable PLS-SEM estimation (Hair et al., 2011), being the recommended range of 10-20x of the total number of observed variables (17 observed variables $\times$ 20 = 340).

A non-probability sampling design was adopted because a complete sampling frame of social media users who have watched Chengdu-related short videos does not exist, making probability sampling infeasible. Quota sampling ensured balanced representation across four distinct attraction typologies, and purposive sampling ensured that only respondents with relevant viewing experience were included. While non-probability sampling limits generalizability, it is appropriate for theory-testing research using PLS-SEM, where the primary goal is to examine hypothesized relationships among constructs rather than to estimate population parameters (Hair et al., 2019).

Research instrument and instrument quality

partially adapted from relevant theories and past literature, was organized into four sections based on the study variables, with a total of 85 items. Specifically, content quality of short marketing videos was measured by 15 items, user experience of short marketing videos by 20 items, destination image by 25 items, and tourists' travel intention by 25 items. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

This questionnaire was composed of three parts. First, a screening and consent section to ensure participants met the eligibility criteria. Second, demographic profile of the participants: gender, age, education, organization, years of experience, and job title. Third, measurement items for the study constructs, totaling 85 items. All questions are modified from Weng et al. (2021), Cao et al. (2021), Mao et al. (2023), and Qiu et al. (2024) for content quality of short marketing videos; Li et al. (2023), Liu et al. (2024), Tsabita and Alfansi (2025), and Zhou et al. (2022) for user experience of short marketing videos; Yang et al. (2025), Wang et al. (2023), Guo (2022) for destination image; and Lin et al. (2025), Wu and Ding (2023), Fang et al. (2023), and Gan et al. (2023) for tourist's travel intention. Questions asked respondents to rate their extent of agreement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

After the translated version was finalized, the questionnaire was submitted to 5 experts to evaluate the consistency between each item and the research objectives using the Index of Item -

Objective Congruence (IOC). Items with an average IOC value of 0.50 or higher were retained, while items below this threshold were revised based on expert recommendations to ensure clear alignment with the operational definitions and constructs in the model (Turner & Carlson, 2003).

A pilot test was conducted with 52 respondents prior to the main data collection. The Cronbach's alpha values from the pilot test ranged from 0.68 to 0.82 across all dimensions, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Minor wording adjustments were made based on the pilot feedback.

Data collection

After approval from the ethics committee, the researcher designed, created, tested, and maintained the online questionnaire under the supervision of the advisors. Quantitative data were collected through on-site and online structured questionnaires. On-site surveys were conducted at four major tourist attractions in Chengdu, namely the Panda Base, Jinli Ancient Street, Wuhou Temple, and Kuanzhai Alley. The researchers approached tourists and distributed questionnaires through QR codes. Online distribution was conducted through the Wenjuanxing platform, with links shared through WeChat Moments and other social media channels. A multi-stage sampling method was adopted by combining quota sampling across locations with purposive sampling based on screening criteria to ensure that only respondents who had watched Chengdu-related short travel videos and were able to report their travel intentions were included. All participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire, and only fully completed responses that met the inclusion criteria were retained for analysis.

Data analysis

The measurement model was assessed for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 1, all constructs demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.779 to 0.936, and composite reliability (CR) values from 0.872 to 0.951, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was confirmed as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.623 to 0.796, well above the 0.50 benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All item factor loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold and were highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1 Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Dimensions	Cronbach's α	CR (rho_c)	AVE
CQSMV	3	0.779	0.872	0.694
UESMV	4	0.83	0.887	0.662
DI	5	0.859	0.899	0.639
TTI	5	0.864	0.902	0.648

Note: All item factor loadings > 0.70 , $p < 0.001$. COSMV= Content Quality of Short Marketing videos; UESMV=User Experience of Short Marketing Videos; DI=Destination Image; TTI=Tourist's Travel Intention.

The demographic characteristics of the 400 valid respondents are summarized in Table 2. In terms of the age distribution, the largest age group is 26-30 years (31.5%), followed by 18-25 years (29.0%), 31-40 years (23.75%), and 40-60 years (15.75%). It suggests that short travel video audiences are comprised mostly of young adults and millennials, which aligns with the user profile of Chinese short video platforms. In the gender group, male respondents contributed 65.0% ($n = 260$), and female respondents 35.0% ($n =$

140). Regarding organization type, respondents were distributed across three groups: state-owned enterprises (30.0%), civil service units (35.0%), and private, wholly foreign-owned, or Sino-foreign joint venture enterprises (35.0%). In terms of educational level, most had (55.0%) an undergraduate degree, a college degree (25.0%), a graduate degree and higher (15.0%), and a high school or lower (5.0%). In terms of work experience, half (50.0%) of the study subjects had been in the profession 3 – 10 years, 25.0% had 3 years or less, and 25.0% over 10. Grassroots employees were the highest percentage of employees by job title (55.0%) followed by general management (30.0%) and middle and senior management (15.0%). These demographic characteristics indicate that this sample is an adequate representation of the active workforce population that is likely to interact with short travel video content and have the capacity for travel decision-making (Dan et al., 2024).

Table 2 Information for participants

Participations	Information	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-25 years	115	29
	26-30 years	126	31.5
	31-40 years	95	23.75
	40-60 years	64	15.75
Gender	Male	260	65
	Female	140	35
Organization	State-owned enterprises	120	30
	Civil Service/Unit	140	35
	Private enterprise/wholly foreign owned/ Sino-foreign joint venture	140	35
Education	High school student or higher	20	5
	College degree	100	25
	undergraduate degrees	220	55
	Graduate and above	60	15
Experience	3 years and under	100	25
	3-10 years	200	50
	More than 10 years	100	25
Job Title	Grassroots employees	220	55
	General management	120	30
	Middle and senior management	60	15
Total		400	100

Table 3 Descriptive statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	R ²
CQSMV	3.606	0.904	0.695
UESMV	3.477	0.977	0.657
DI	3.363	0.965	0.490
TTI	3.580	0.960	0.502

Table 3: Descriptive statistics; correlation matrix for study constructs. Mean values for all constructs ranged from 3.363 to 3.606, all above the midpoint of 3.0 on the five-point Likert scale indicating that respondents generally held moderately positive perceptions of content quality of short marketing videos (CQSMV: M = 3.606, SD = 0.904), user experience of short marketing videos (UESMV: M = 3.477, SD = 0.977), destination image (DI: M = 3.363, SD = 0.965), and tourist's travel intention (TTI: M = 3.580, SD = 0.960). The standard deviations represent reasonable variation in responses.

Table 4 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Construct	CQSMV	UESMV	DI	TTI
CQSMV	1			
UESMV	0.578**	1		
DI	0.596**	0.644**	1	
TTI	0.556**	0.566**	0.671**	1

Table 4 Shown that the correlation analysis indicated that all constructs were significantly positively correlated at the $p < 0.01$ level. In particular, CQSMV showed moderate positive correlations with UESMV ($r = 0.578$), DI ($r = 0.596$), and TTI ($r = 0.556$). UESMV had strong positive correlations with DI ($r = 0.644$) and TTI ($r = 0.566$). Importantly, DI showed the strongest correlation with TTI ($r = 0.671$), suggesting its pivotal role in shaping behavioral outcomes. As such, on the whole R^2 values suggested that the model accounted for 69.5% of the variance in CQSMV, 65.7% in UESMV, 49.0% in DI, and 50.2% in TTI, indicating adequate explanatory power.

Research results

The structural model was evaluated using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to assess the significance of the path coefficients. Table 5 presents the results of the structural path analysis, including path coefficients, standard deviations, t-statistics, p-values, variance inflation factor (VIF), and tolerance values. Table 6 summarizes the hypothesis testing results. These tables are presented in this section to clarify the sequence of the research findings and avoid confusion for readers.

Table 5 Results of structural path analysis

	Original	Mean	S.D.	T	P	VIF	Tolerance
CQSMV -> DI	0.335	0.335	0.051	6.634	0.000	1.501	0.666
CQSMV -> TTI	0.193	0.191	0.064	3.015	0.003	1.722	0.581
DI -> TTI	0.449	0.453	0.075	6.020	0.000	1.960	0.510
UESMV -> DI	0.450	0.452	0.048	9.426	0.000	1.501	0.666
UESMV -> TTI	0.165	0.163	0.063	2.636	0.008	1.899	0.527

Note: CQSMV= Content Quality of Short Marketing videos; UESMV=User Experience of Short Marketing Videos; DI=Destination Image; TTI=Tourist's Travel Intention.

All VIF values were below 2.0, and Tolerance values ranged from 0.510 to 0.666, indicating no multicollinearity concern.

Table 6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	p	Result
H1	CQSMV $\rightarrow$ TTI	0.193	0.003	Supported
H2	UESMV $\rightarrow$ TTI	0.165	0.008	Supported
H3	DI $\rightarrow$ TTI	0.449	<0.001	Supported (Partial mediation)
H4	CQSMV $\rightarrow$ DI $\rightarrow$ TTI	0.151	<0.001	Supported (Partial mediation)
H5	UESMV $\rightarrow$ DI $\rightarrow$ TTI	0.202	<0.001	Supported (Partial mediation)

Based on Table 5 and 6, the path coefficients in the structural model show that the direct effects are statistically significant. Detailed explanations for each path are as follows:

1. Path from Content Quality of Short Marketing Videos (CQSMV) to Tourist's Travel Intention (TTI):

This path coefficient was 0.193, with a t-value of 3.015, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.003. This indicates a positive, direct, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level, suggesting that higher perceived content quality leads to stronger travel intention, supporting Hypothesis 1.

2. Path from User Experience of Short Marketing Videos (UESMV) to Tourist's Travel Intention (TTI):

This path coefficient was 0.165, with a t-value of 2.636, exceeding the critical value of 1.96, and a p-value of 0.008. This indicates a positive, direct, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level, suggesting that smoother, more engaging user experiences enhance viewers' intention to visit the destination, supporting Hypothesis 2.

3. Path from Destination Image (DI) to Tourist's Travel Intention (TTI):

This path coefficient was 0.449, with a t-value of 6.020, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.000. This demonstrates a positive, direct, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level, underscoring the critical role of destination image in shaping behavioral intentions, supporting Hypothesis 3.

4. Path from Content Quality of Short Marketing Videos (CQSMV) to Destination Image (DI):

This path coefficient was 0.335, with a t-value of 6.634, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a positive, direct, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level.

5. Path from User Experience of Short Marketing Videos (UESMV) to Destination Image (DI):

This path coefficient was 0.450, with a t-value of 9.426, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a positive, direct, and statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level. Notably, UESMV demonstrated a stronger influence on DI than CQSMV.

Regarding the indirect effects, the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples revealed the following:

6. Indirect path of Content Quality of Short Marketing Videos (CQSMV) through Destination Image (DI) to Tourist's Travel Intention (TTI):

This indirect path coefficient was 0.150, with a t-value of 4.451, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.000. This demonstrates that CQSMV has a positive, statistically significant indirect relationship with TTI, mediated by DI, supporting Hypothesis 4.

7. Indirect path of User Experience of Short Marketing Videos (UESMV) through Destination Image (DI) to Tourist's Travel Intention (TTI):

This indirect path coefficient was 0.202, with a t-value of 4.951, exceeding the critical value of 2.58, and a p-value of 0.000 (95% CI [0.123, 0.285]). This demonstrates that UESMV has a positive, statistically significant indirect relationship with TTI, mediated by DI, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Although the direct effects remained significant after accounting for the indirect effects (CQSMV to TTI: $\beta = 0.193$, $p = 0.003$; UESMV to TTI: $\beta = 0.165$, $p = 0.008$), these direct effects persisted as significant in both the relationships, hence a partial mediation for both relationships.

The structural model exhibited a good degree of explanatory strength. DI $R^2 = 0.490$, and TTI $R^2 = 0.502$ — the model explains 50.2% of the variance in tourist's travel intention. According to Hair et al. (2019), this indicates moderate to substantial explanatory power. All 5 hypotheses were supported.

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were further supported by the direct results which demonstrate that CQSMV, UESMV, and DI had direct effects on TTI. The significant indirect effects of CQSMV and UESMV on TTI via DI were consistent with Hypotheses 4 and 5, confirming the presence of partial mediation.

Conclusion and discussion

This section discusses the findings in alignment with the three research objectives: (1) the direct effects of CQSMV, UESMV, and DI on TTI; (2) the mediating role of DI; and (3) the development of a conceptual model for enhancing TTI. The present study aimed to examine the effect of short travel videos on tourists' travel intention in the context of Chengdu, China, using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. The results offer robust empirical support for the conceptual model (Figure 1), indicating that Content Quality of Short Marketing Videos (CQSMV) and User Experience of Short Marketing Videos (UESMV) are significant stimuli that have a direct and indirect impact on Travel Intention (TTI) through the mediating mechanism of Destination Image (DI).

First, the results support that CQSMV has a significant positive direct impact on TTI (H1 corroborated). This result is also consistent with the earlier literature which underscores the importance of the informational and visual quality to consumer behavior in digital tourism (Gan et al., 2023; Weng et al., 2021). When short videos are seen as informative, authentic, and well-produced, it increases the viewers' confidence and desire to visit the destination. The mean score of CQSMV ($M = 3.606$) indicates that respondents thought that the short travel videos that they watched were moderately high in quality,

contributing positively toward their travel intention.

Second, UESMV has also shown a considerable direct influence on TTI (H2 supported). This is in keeping with the increasing literature underlining the significance of the usability, interactivity, and engagement of platforms themselves in facilitating favorable behavior effects (Liu et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2022). A seamless, enjoyable, and immersive viewing experience not only captures attention but also facilitates psychological transportation, which in turn motivates travel. The slightly lower mean score for UESMV ($M = 3.477$) compared to CQSMV indicates an opportunity for improvement on short video platform content-delivery.

Third, DI emerged as the strongest direct predictor of TTI (H3 supported), consistent with established tourism literature (Marques et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2025). The correlation analysis revealed that DI had the highest correlation with TTI ($r = 0.671$), and the path coefficient ($\beta = 0.449$) was substantially larger than those of CQSMV and UESMV. This underscores that, in the context of short travel videos, DI serves as the most proximal and powerful determinant of whether viewers develop an intention to visit. The more positively tourists perceive Chengdu's destination image through short videos—whether cognitively (e.g., knowledge about attractions, cultural heritage) or affectively (e.g., emotional connection, aesthetic appreciation)—the more likely they are to express a willingness to visit.

Fourth, the mediating role of DI was supported for both CQSMV and UESMV (H4 and H5 supported). In so doing, the results support the S-O-R framework by empirically validating that DI serves as a critical psychological organism that translates external stimuli into behavioral responses. In other words, high-quality content and positive user experiences do not merely trigger travel intention directly; they also work by enhancing how tourists mentally represent and emotionally connect with the destination. Notably, the indirect effect of UESMV on TTI via DI ($\beta = 0.202$) was larger than that of CQSMV ($\beta = 0.150$), suggesting that UESMV may be a more potent driver of DI formation. This finding aligns with the notion that how users interact with and feel about short video content—the experiential dimension—may be more influential in shaping holistic destination perceptions than the informational content alone.

Even the partial mediation noted in both relationships suggests that DI is a key mechanism, but it is not the sole pathway. Other unmeasured mediators, such as emotional arousal (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), trust in content creators (Wang et al., 2023), narrative transportation (Cao et al., 2021), or flow experience (Liu et al., 2024), may also play significant roles in translating video stimuli into travel intention. This opens avenues for future research to explore additional mediating mechanisms.

Together, these results fill in the research gap identified in the introduction by going beyond a simple statement saying: “Short videos increase intention” and aiming at a more nuanced understanding of how and why this happens. Through a joint study of CQSMV and UESMV together, and by explicitly modeling the mediating effect of DI, this study provides a more comprehensive account of the digital tourism decision-making process within the context of an “internet-famous city.”

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, while this study found partial mediation of destination image, the remaining direct effects suggest that other unmeasured mediators (e.g., emotional arousal, trust, flow experience) may also play significant roles. Second, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences. Future research should explore alternative mediating pathways and employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causality.

Recommendations

Academic and practical contributions

Theoretically, this study extends the S-O-R framework by empirically validating destination image as a partial mediator between short video stimuli and travel intention. Future research should test this model across different cultural contexts and destination types to further establish its generalizability. Additionally, integrating other psychological constructs (e.g., flow experience, parasocial interaction) could enrich the explanatory power of the model.

This study developed an integrated conceptual model to examine the influence of short travel videos on tourists' travel intention, identifying content quality and user experience as key determinants. By focusing on Chengdu, an "internet-famous city," the research explored the mediating role of destination image and enriched theoretical research on digital tourism marketing.

The short travel video market is growing rapidly, but in order for destination marketers to influence tourists to travel, they need to provide high-quality video content and engaging user experiences. To build destination trust, first prioritize information accuracy and authentic storytelling. In terms of content quality dimensions, mean score 3.730 for information accuracy was calculated, showing that viewer trust is built on factual reliability. Secondly, enhance interactive features like commenting, sharing, and participating in challenges to trigger destination image formation. In terms of user experience dimensions, interactivity had the highest coefficient (mean = 3.854), and the mediating role played on destination image was significant (indirect effect = 0.202). Third, bridge the conversion gap for the lowest purchase intention (mean = 3.461) by integrating one-click booking links and clear calls to action within a short form video. Fourthly, use communicators as influencers through collaboration with trusted, authentic, and relatable content creators. Finally, focus on unique destination attributes (e.g., panda culture, Sichuan cuisine, teahouse lifestyle) to improve destination memory and the ability to differentiate from competition. The consideration of these issues systematically will lead to complete and reliable improvement in the tourists' travel intention.

Destination management organizations (DMOs) in Chengdu should consider the following policy-oriented actions: (1) establish content accuracy guidelines for tourism short videos to reduce exaggerated or fabricated information; (2) incentivize local tourism businesses to collaborate with credible content creators; (3) allocate funding for digital literacy training to help smaller tourism enterprises optimize their short video marketing strategies.

Recommendation for future research

This study adopted quantitative techniques and explored the impact of short travel videos on tourist travel intention through destination image. Limitations of the study suggest future research directions. First of all, the study scope is limited to Chengdu, and cross-regional comparison studies should be carried out in the future to test the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design; longitudinal or experimental designs could more effectively determine causal relationships and monitor changes in destination image and travel intention over time. Third, the study was on intention and not on actual behavior; future studies may include behavioral data like real bookings or click-through rates. Fourth, moderators such as tourist involvement, previous destination knowledge, or platform characteristics were not examined, and these could be a target for future inquiry. Fifth, because the site in which data were collected was four major tourist attractions in Chengdu — in order to efficiently reach respondents who had watched short travel videos about the city — this sampling method could have introduced potential bias, as respondents may have been more susceptible to direct

experience of the destination when conducting the survey. Later studies could also involve short video viewers prior to their travel, alleviating on-site priming effects, and obtaining travel intention in a more neutral context. Lastly, future studies may consider exploring additional mediating pathways (e.g., emotional engagement, trust, flow experience), given the partial mediation observed, which implies other pathways may be involved.

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