



The Influence of Vlog Content on Tourists' Variety-Seeking Behaviour and Cultural Connectedness: Evidence from a Quantitative Study

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Abstract. In the context of societal and tourism developments, travel vlogs have gradually become an important marketing approach for tourism destinations. However, the specific impact of vlog content characteristics on tourist behaviour remains to be further studied. This study examined the content characteristics of travel vlogs, examining the influences of novelty and information comprehensiveness on tourists' variety-seeking behaviour and cultural connectedness. Moreover, high levels of cultural connectedness may give rise to tensions between tourists' assimilation and differentiation motives. And this tension can engender adverse emotional responses, prompting individuals to seek variety as a means of asserting their unique identity. Using a quantitative questionnaire survey with 302 Chinese vlog viewers, this study finds that vlog novelty and comprehensiveness positively influence variety-seeking behaviour. In addition, both functionality and emotionality positively affect cultural connectedness, with the effect of functionality being more pronounced. Building on these results, the study integrates multidisciplinary theories, tests three core assumptions based on optimal distinctiveness theory and the media-driven tourist behaviour framework, and offers practical insights for tourism marketing, particularly vlog marketing, emphasizing specific information and cultural narratives.

Keywords: Tourist Behaviour, Travel Vlogs, Cultural Connectedness, Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

1 Introduction

Currently, international tourism is experiencing resilient growth. At the same time, the core driving force is tourists' renewed pursuit of novelty and cultural authenticity [1]. Besides, digital platforms such as travel vlogs (video blogs) have emerged as critical tools for destination storytelling and marketing, thus shaping global tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions [2]. In particular, vlogs, characterised by immersive visuals and personalized narratives, not only document travel experiences but also actively construct cultural meanings for individual viewers. However, little is known about how vloggers' narrative strategies strategically balance cultural connectedness (the representation of familiar cultural elements) and appeals to distinctiveness (the

emphasis on exotic differences), consequently influencing viewers' variety-seeking behaviour, defined as the tendency to explore diverse and non-repetitive tourism experiences [3]. According to optimal distinctiveness theory, vloggers may frame culture in ways that are either highly or minimally connected to familiar elements, which may interact with viewers' self-concept to co-construct a near-optimal balance between assimilation and differentiation needs [4]. Furthermore, by combining visual, linguistic, and para-social elements, vlogs offer a rich context for examining the role of digital affordances in cultural perception. This study uses quantitative methods based on questionnaires to investigate correlations of vlog content and tourists' behaviour. In general, it examines how vlogs influence tourists' variety-seeking behaviour and cultural connectedness. By analysing vlog content and conducting surveys, the study seeks to:

- Decode narrative patterns in vlogs that emphasize cultural connectedness or distinctiveness;
- Test the causal effects of these patterns on viewers' variety-seeking intentions;
- Examine the role of viewers' cultural identity strength and travel experience.

Therefore, this study advances theory on media-driven tourist behaviour and provides practical insights for marketers and content creators to craft narratives that meet tourists' dual needs for belonging and distinction. It also demonstrates how vlogs reflect cultural identity and encourage exploratory travel.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Influence of Travel Vlogs on Tourist Intentions

Tourism intention refers to the likelihood and strength of an individual's or group's participation in tourism activities [5]. Its formation is influenced by multiple complex factors, mainly including personal characteristics, such as age, gender, income [5-7]. In terms of marketing communication and information sources, travel vlogs have become a powerful marketing tool as well. Existing research has explored the impact of vlogs from multiple perspectives. For example, Dewantara et al. identified three core actors in the vlog ecosystem, including bloggers, audiences, and destination marketers, and analysed their interactions [2]. Similarly, Zorlu and Candan highlighted intergenerational differences in audiences, showing that short-video platforms like TikTok are more popular among younger users [8]. Though existing research has identified certain characteristics of the importance and credibility of vlogs as information sources, the underlying causal chain remains unclear. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the specific pathways and boundary conditions through which vlogs affect tourism intentions.

2.2 Variety Seeking Behaviour

In consumer decision-making, variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) occurs when individuals choose options different from those they have selected previously [9]. This can

involve switching between brands for a single product or extending to related service choices. VSB is driven by a combination of internal motivations, such as satiation and stimulated demand; external factors, including promotions and situational changes; and future uncertainty, such as fluctuating preferences and the desire to protect interests [10]. Retailers can influence VSB by adjusting their product mix, promotional strategies, or environmental design. Satiation refers to a reduced desire resulting from repeated exposure to the same stimuli, whether food, music, or social interactions, and studies show that both quantity and frequency of exposure contribute to hedonic decline [11,12].

Existing studies demonstrate that VSB is related to, but distinct from, impulse consumption behaviours [13-15]. Impulse consumption is typically low-involvement, emotion-driven, and spontaneous [16,17]. By contrast, VSB is also emotion-driven and spontaneous but generally involves more engagement, including systematic information gathering and multi-brand or multi-attribute comparison [14]. Moreover, unlike impulsive consumption, which is emergent and unplanned, VSB is strategic and entails conscious product evaluation. Despite extensive research on psychological and environmental drivers of VSB, limited attention has been given to how media content characteristics, particularly in immersive digital narratives, stimulate variety-seeking in tourism. Thus, the current study empirically examines how vlog characteristics affect tourists' variety-seeking intentions. According to Kahn, consumers may seek novelty or sophistication to satisfy curiosity or gain psychological excitement through diverse choices [10]. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: The novelty of vlogs has a positive impact on the variety of choice behaviour of tourists.

H2: Comprehensiveness of Vlog information has a positive impact on variety-seeking behaviour of tourists;

2.3 Cultural Connectedness

According to Torelli et al., cultural connectedness (CC) is a psychological state in which a person interacts with their own culture in a variety of contexts [18]. This psychological condition frequently arises among particular groups and can also be induced by contextual factors [19]. Tourism has seen the steady emergence of several empirical research on the cultural linkages of diaspora Chinese [20,21]. In order to improve their sense of self-identity and local belonging, people who travel to their ancestral homeland to sample authentic cuisine, see cultural landmarks, and hope to keep a cultural connection with the locals are said to be engaging in diaspora tourist. Diaspora travel is primarily motivated by cultural ties to the place of origin [20]. Cultural connectedness encompasses both functional (e.g., economic ties) and affective (e.g., nostalgia) dimensions, and different Vlog themes (e.g., travel tips or family stories) may differentially affect connectedness [22].

Existing studies primarily analyze the phenomenon of overseas Chinese traveling to China from five theoretical perspectives [20]. First, the theory of local attachment explains the mechanisms underlying the emotional connection between diaspora groups and their ancestral homeland. Second, the transnationalism paradigm reveals the spatial

reconfiguration of cross-border mobility in the context of globalization. Third, cultural reconnection motivation examines the pathways through which cultural identity is reshaped across generations. Fourth, hybrid identity construction explores the strategies that separated groups employ to negotiate their identities in cross-border practices. Fifth, the consideration of national power dissects the governance system with Chinese characteristics embedded in policies concerning overseas Chinese travel.

Despite growing attention to cultural identity and diaspora tourism, few studies have quantitatively tested how media narratives influence cultural connectedness or compared the relative effects of functional versus emotional communication cues. This study bridges that gap by situating cultural connectedness within a media-driven tourism framework, examining how vlog content characteristics can foster cultural identification and belonging [23]. As there is still a lack of quantitative research on the impact of vlog characteristics on CC, this research suggests:

H3a: Functionality of Vlogs has a positive impact on cultural connectedness;

H3b: Emotionality of Vlogs has a positive impact on cultural connectedness.

2.4 Perceived Cultural Distance and its Role in Tourist Behaviour

Perceived cultural distance (PCD) refers to the subjective perception of differences between an individual's culture and that of another group [24,25]. Even culturally similar groups may be perceived as distant. In tourism research, PCD is recognized as a key factor affecting tourist behaviour and attitudes. For example, Tasci et al. found that PCD, including both cultural and social distance, indirectly affects destination loyalty by shaping emotional resonance [26]. While humanistic orientation factors such as cultural distance have weaker predictive power than local orientation factors like destination image, high social affinity can enhance emotional resonance and promote loyalty.

In the context of travel vlogs, vlog content can influence viewers' perceptions of cultural distance. Content emphasizing novelty or exoticism tends to increase PCD by highlighting unfamiliar cultural customs. Therefore, PCD is expected to mediate the effects of vlog content on tourist behaviour. Specifically, it is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between vlog novelty and variety-seeking behaviour (H4a) and between vlog emotionality and cultural connectedness (H4b).

H4a: PCD mediates the effect of vlog novelty on tourists' variety-seeking behaviour.

H4b: PCD mediates the relationship between vlog emotionality and cultural connectedness.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Rationale and Study Design

This study used quantitative methods to collect and analyze numerical data, including means, variances, and regression. And these methods allowed hypothesis testing and generalization from large samples with statistical rigor [27]. Prior studies on cultural connectedness have mostly relied on qualitative methods, while empirical evidence on

variety-seeking behaviour in new media contexts, including travel vlogs, remains limited. To address these gaps and enhance the generalisability and rigour of findings, this study adopted a quantitative design to test Hypotheses H1–H4 using large-sample surveys and experiments.

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine the relationships between vlog content and variety-seeking behaviour (H1-H2) and cultural connectedness (H3). Participants were selected based on their recent vlog viewing experience to ensure relevance to the research context. The survey component collected data from a broader sample of Chinese tourists who had viewed travel vlogs within the past month. An initial pilot dataset (N = 262) explored direct links between vlog content and tourist behaviour. The main dataset (N = 302) included measures of perceived cultural distance, enabling analysis of mediation effects (H4) and assessment of general tourist responses. This combined design offers insight into underlying behavioural mechanisms as well as broader trends, as shown in Figure 1.

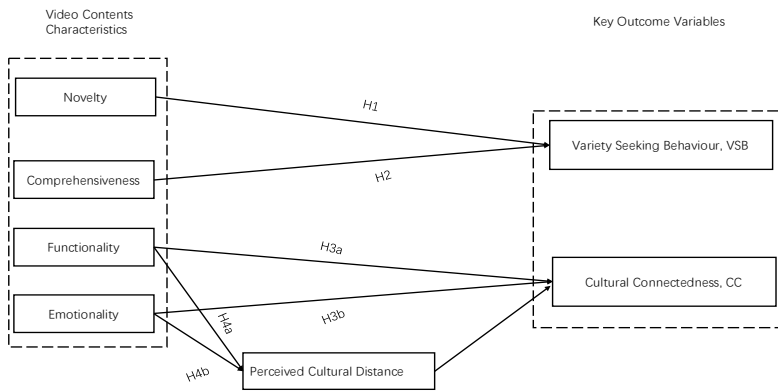


Fig. 1. Research Framework

3.2 Participants Selection and Data Collection

Participants were recruited through the Wenjuanxing platform, targeting Chinese tourists who had viewed travel vlogs within the past month. After data collection, 302 of the 333 responses were retained as valid. Listwise deletion for missing values on specific variables resulted in analytical samples ranging from 259 to 302 across regression models. Subsequently, a post-hoc power analysis confirmed that this final sample size (N = 302) was sufficient for the planned analyses [28].

Based on the cleaned dataset, the demographics of the 302 respondents are shown in Figures 2-3 and Table 1. In terms of gender, the composition was approximately balanced, with 152 males (51.0%) and 146 females (49.0%) as shown in Figure 2 and 3.

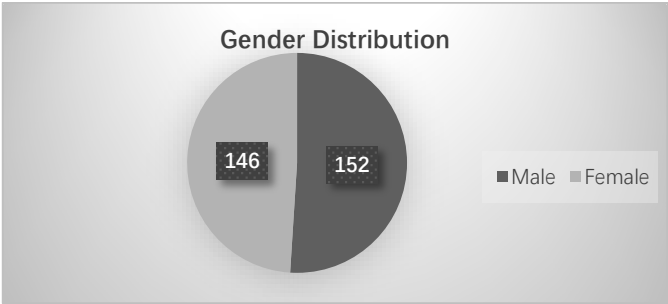


Fig. 2. Gender Distribution of Participants (n=302)

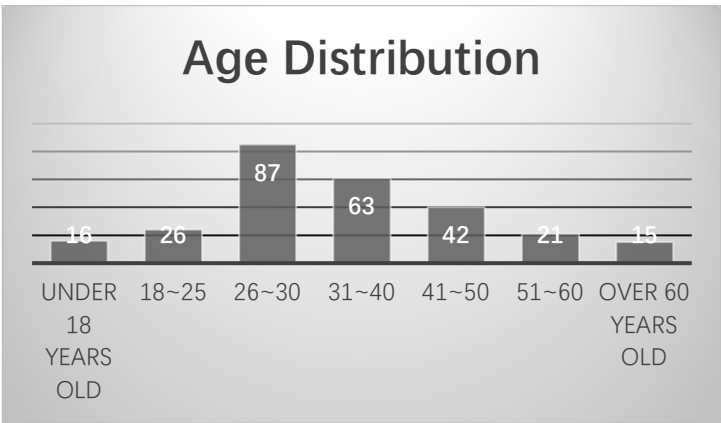


Fig. 3. Age Distribution of Participants

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	152	51.01
	Female	146	48.99
Age	Under 18 years old	16	6.11
	18~25	26	9.16
	26~30	87	32.44
	31~40	63	23.28
	41~50	42	15.27
	51~60	21	8.02
	Over 60 years old	15	5.73
	Below 3000 yuan	45	17.18
Monthly Income	3001 – 5000 yuan	41	15.65
	5001 – 8000 yuan	71	27.1
	8001 – 12000 yuan	50	19.08
	12001 – 20000 yuan	34	12.98
	Over 20000 yuan	21	8.02

Thus, respondents were predominantly young and middle-aged adults, and the age distribution was approximately normal. Income varied, with the largest group earning between 5001 and 8000 yuan (27.1%).

3.3 Measurement Instruments and Questionnaire Development

The study used seven variables in total. The independent variables were Vlog novelty, comprehensiveness, VSB, and CC. The dependent variables were variety-seeking behaviour and cultural connectedness, and perceived cultural distance (PCD) served as a mediator. In order to measure variety-seeking behaviours of Chinese tourists, three items adapted from Udunuwara et al. and Van Trijp & Steenkamp were used in this study; while items from Torelli et al. were used to measure perceived cultural connectedness. Perceived cultural distance (PCD) is measured using three items adapted from existing literature on cross-cultural perception and tourism research. Participants rated statements reflecting subjective differences between their own culture and the culture presented in travel vlogs [29]. Briefly, the items will be used have been shown in table 2:

Table 2. Constructs and Measurements

Construct	No. of items	Scale type	Sample source (recommended citation)
Novelty (Vlog content)	3	5-point Likert	Adapted from tourism novelty seeking literature (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Assaker et al., 2011)
Comprehensiveness	3	5-point Likert	Adapted from online information quality scales (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Cheung et al., 2008)
Functionality	3	5-point Likert	Perceived usefulness / information diagnosticity (Davis, 1989; Jiang & Benbasat, 2007)
Emotionality	3	5-point Likert	Narrative transportation / emotional engagement (Green & Brock, 2000; Escalas, 2004)
Perceived Cultural Distance (PCD)	3	5-point Likert	Ward & Kennedy (1992); Lee et al. (2018)
Variety Seeking Behaviour (VSB)	3	5-point Likert	Variety seeking scales (Van Trijp & Steenkamp, 1992; Assaker & Hallak, 2013)
Cultural Connectedness (CC)	3	5-point Likert	Cultural identification / connectedness (Kim & Kim, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018)

3.4 Scale Reliability and Construct Validity

To ensure the reliability of the study, all scale items used in the survey are derived from widely used and mature scales from the literature, which have demonstrated excellent reliability in numerous formal studies. This choice laid a solid foundation for the study and ensured the integrity of the scale by utilizing the validation results of previous researchers. Prior to the official finalization of the questionnaire, a pre-test was conducted among the target participants (31 participants) to evaluate the reliability of the scale and thoroughly address any potential logical, language, and formatting issues in the questionnaire. Subsequently, the questionnaire was improved based on pre-test feedback, including minor adjustments to wording and logic to enhance clarity and overall quality.

Before the main analysis, the reliability and validity of the measurement structure were assessed. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha (CA). In general, a CA of 0.70 or higher indicates good reliability, which is considered sufficient in most studies. This threshold is commonly cited, especially for attitude scales. As shown in Table 3, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceed 0.70, indicating that the scale is overall reliable.

Table 3. Scale Reliability Test

Variable	Item Count	CA Coefficient	Assessment
Novelty	3	0.793	Acceptable
Comprehensiveness	3	0.797	Acceptable
Functionality	3	0.831	Good
Emotionality	3	0.839	Good
VSΒ	3	0.819	Good
CC	3	0.806	Good
PCD	3	0.806	Good

This study tested the construct validity of the scale via exploratory factor analysis, and the results are presented in Table 4. Firstly, all measurement items converge to the preset dimension, with factor loadings (λ) ranging from 0.82 to 0.88 and a commonality higher than 0.67, indicating that the measurement model has ideal item convergence; Secondly, the cumulative variance explanatory rate of each dimension is 69.57%-75.89%, meeting psychometric standards. KMO values (0.702-0.726) and Bartlett's sphericity test ($\chi^2=216.377-315.268$, $p<0.001$) confirm that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 4. Validity Analysis Results

Dimension	Factor Loading	Communality (h^2)	Explained Variance Ratio (%)
Novelty	0.82-0.85	0.676-0.730	69.93
Comprehensiveness	0.85-0.87	0.726-0.762	74.66
Functionality	0.86-0.88	0.745-0.779	75.89
Emotionality	0.83-0.84	0.693-0.706	69.9
VSΒ	0.82-0.85	0.692-0.730	69.93
CC	0.83-0.84	0.684-0.713	69.57

3.5 Data Analysis Approach

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS to examine the effects of travel vlog factors on Chinese tourists’ cultural connectedness and variety-seeking behaviour.

Firstly, descriptive analysis was conducted on demographic variables to understand the distribution of the vlog viewer sample, including gender, age, and wage income, in order to provide basic data support for subsequent analysis. Meanwhile, a detailed examination was conducted on control variables that might affect the research results, particularly whether vlogs had been viewed recently (within one year), to clarify their role in the study and their relationship with other variables. Operational testing involved the Pearson correlation coefficient to evaluate the intervention effect of experimental materials, thereby ensuring the reliability and validity of the study.

This study used the Pearson correlation coefficient to test H1-H3 and employed hierarchical regression analysis to examine the predictive effects of vlog content on tourist behaviour while controlling for perceived cultural distance. Given the cross-sectional design, PCD was treated as a covariate rather than a formal mediator. Regression analysis was also used to explore how vlog content features affect user behaviour intentions. Regression analysis can identify core driving factors through standardized regression coefficients (β values) and establish mathematical equations to predict user behaviour. This study revealed a series of psychological effects and influences of vlogs on users through the precise data analysis methods described above.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Correlation Analysis Results

The Pearson correlation test indicates a significant impact of vlog content on tourism decision-making, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlation Analysis Results between Key Variables (n=302)

Variable pairs	r	Mean (standard deviation)
Novelty→VSB	0.3	3.41 (1.11) / 3.41 (1.15)
Comprehensiveness→VSB	0.4	3.46 (1.13) / 3.38 (1.13)
Functionality→CC	0.27	3.38(1.16) / 3.39 (1.11)
Emotionality→CC	0.25	3.35 (1.11) / 3.34 (1.01)

Guided by Cohen’s (1988) benchmarks for correlation strength (where $|r| \geq 0.50$ indicates a strong relationship, $|r| \approx 0.30$ a moderate one, and $|r| \approx 0.10$ a weak one), the result show that all correlations reported were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). In terms of strength, the relationship between Comprehensiveness and VSB ($r = 0.40$) can be considered moderate, suggesting that more thorough vlog content is appreciably associated with higher perceived believability. The correlations for Novelty and VSB ($r = 0.30$), Functionality and CC ($r = 0.27$), and Emotionality and CC ($r = 0.25$) fall within the

weak to moderate range. This implies that while all content characteristics have a statistically detectable influence on decision-making factors, their individual linear associations are not as strong as that of Comprehensiveness.

4.2 Regression Analysis Results

The Impact of Vlog Content Feature on VSB. The linear regression analysis shows that both the novelty ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 7.18$, $p < 0.01$) and comprehensiveness ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 6.48$, $p < 0.01$) of vlogs positively influences tourists' variety-seeking behaviour. The model explains 42.1% of the variance in this behaviour (adjusted $R^2 = 0.421$, $F(2259) = 95.78$, $p < 0.01$), and no multicollinearity issues were detected ($VIF < 1.4$). Therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Regression Analysis Results on Vlog Contents

Items	B	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.43	7.04	0.000**	-
Novelty	0.36	7.18	0.000**	1.36
Comprehensiveness	0.34	6.48	0.000**	1.36
R ²		0.425		
Adjusted R ²		0.421		
F	F (2,259) =95.781, p=0.000			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01				

The Impact of Vlog Features on CC. The linear regression analysis shows that both the functionality ($\beta = 0.40$, $t = 7.82$, $p < 0.01$) and emotionality ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 6.47$, $p < 0.01$) of vlogs positively influence tourists' cultural connectedness, supporting H3a. The model explains 49.7% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.493$, $F(2259) = 127.83$, $p < 0.01$), and the multicollinearity test ($VIF = 1.56$) exhibits no significant collinearity, supporting H3b.

Table 7. Regression Analysis Results on Vlog Features

Items	B	t	p	VIF
Constant	1.08	6.18	0.000**	-
Functionality	0.40	7.82	0.000**	1.56
Emotionality	0.34	6.47	0.000**	1.56
R ²		0.497		
Adjusted R ²		0.493		
F	F (2,259) =127.830, p=0.000			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01				

From a psychological and behavioural perspective, functionality helps tourists understand and engage with destination culture by providing practical information such as cultural background, enhancing both cognitive understanding and behavioural inte-

gration, and thereby promoting CC. Emotionality fosters emotional resonance, allowing tourists to experience engagement and a sense of belonging while watching vlogs, strengthening their emotional connection and identification with the culture. These mechanisms together make vlogs an important medium for enhancing tourists' cultural connectedness, as shown in Table 7.

The explanatory power of the two models, with adjusted R^2 values ranging from 0.42 to 0.49, is considered acceptable in the social sciences, particularly in tourism behaviour research, and can even be regarded as strong given that human behaviour is typically influenced by multiple factors and R^2 values are generally low. Both models passed statistical tests, all variables were significant, and no collinearity issues were detected, indicating that the model specifications are reasonable and possess practical explanatory value.

Mediating Analysis. A linear regression analysis was performed with CC as the dependent variable and functionality and perceived cultural distance as independent variables. The results show that the model is significant ($F(2, 300) = 16.688, p < 0.001$) and explains 9.4% of the variance in CC (adjusted $R^2 = 0.094$).

Linear regression analysis with CC as the dependent variable and emotionality and perceived cultural distance (PCD) as independent variables revealed that the model was significant ($F(2, 300) = 17.822, p < 0.001$) and explained 10.0% of the variance in CC (adjusted $R^2 = 0.100$). This shows that PCD boots CC and serves as psychological mechanism linking emotionality and functionality to cultural connectedness.

PCD demonstrated significant associations with CC when entered as a covariate alongside functionality and emotionality, suggesting it is a related psychological variable in the nomological network. However, formal mediation testing was precluded by the cross-sectional design. Future experimental research is needed to clarify whether PCD operates as a mediator or moderator in the relationship between vlog content and tourist behaviour.

5 Conclusion

This study investigated how travel vlog content characteristics, including novelty, comprehensiveness, functionality, and emotionality, affects tourists' VSB and CC. The results indicate that vlog features significantly influence both behaviour and psychology, with functionality and emotionality supporting cultural identification. By quantitatively linking specific vlog characteristics to tourist behaviour, the study extends prior qualitative research. More importantly, it underscores the important role of functional content in fostering cultural connections alongside emotional narratives. Furthermore, it integrates insights from communication, psychology, and tourism behaviour into a unified framework, thereby enhancing understanding of how digital media influences travel decisions. In practice, the findings suggest that vlog content should combine practical information, such as local customs and travel tips, with engaging storytelling, while balancing novelty and comprehensiveness to encourage diverse travel choices and cultural engagement. However, data were collected from a single cultural context

and platform, which limits generalisability. In addition, the cross-sectional design does not capture the longitudinal effects of sustained vlog exposure on tourist behaviour. Future research should employ cross-cultural and longitudinal designs to validate these findings and explore how the influence of vlogs evolves over time.

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