

**TRAVEL VLOG INDUCED INTENTION TO
VISIT: THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG VLOG'S
STORYTELLING, NARRATIVE
TRANSPORTATION AND DESTINATION IMAGE
WITH THE MODERATING EFFECT OF
TECHNICAL QUALITY**

ZHANG XI

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

ZHANG XI

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Appropriateness of Language Style
DIM	Destination Image Formation
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
ETIM	Extended Transportation-imagery Model
NS	Narrative Structure
NT	Narrative Transportation
PA	Physical Attractiveness
PDI	Perceived Destination Image
SA	Social Attractiveness
TI	Travel Intention
TIM	Transportation-imagery Model
TOP	Topicality of Story Theme
TQ	Technical Quality of Video
UGC	User Generated Content

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**PENGARUH VLOG PERJALANAN TERHADAP KEINGINAN UNTUK
MELAWAT: HUBUNGAN ANTARA PENCERITAAN VLOG,
PENGANGKUTAN NARATIF DAN IMEJ DESTINASI DENGAN KESAN
PENYEDERHANAAN KUALITI TEKNIKAL**

ABSTRAK

Pelancong cenderung mengalami kandungan perjalanan melalui vlog sebelum melakukan perjalanan sebenar. Walau bagaimanapun, permintaan yang semakin meningkat terhadap kandungan yang diperibadikan dan pelbagai telah melebihi apa yang disediakan oleh kerja profesional standard dan jumlah besar kandungan yang dihasilkan pengguna. Terdapat kekurangan kajian mengenai elemen-elemen yang membentuk vlog perjalanan yang dapat membangkitkan niat lawatan penonton daripada perspektif penceritaan. Sejajar dengan itu, kajian ini telah membangunkan rangka kerja teori dengan mengintegrasikan elemen penceritaan, transportasi naratif, imej destinasi, dan niat perjalanan, berdasarkan Teori Transportasi Naratif, Teori Penceritaan Pengguna, dan Teori Pembentukan Imej Destinasi. Model yang dicadangkan dianalisis menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur sisihan minimum separa (PLS-SEM) dengan 303 sampel sah dalam konteks China. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa topicaliti tema cerita, struktur naratif, dan gaya bahasa vlogger meramalkan secara signifikan transportasi naratif dan imej destinasi, manakala daya tarikan sosial vlogger turut mempengaruhi transportasi naratif. Transportasi naratif seterusnya merangsang pembentukan imej destinasi. Kualiti teknikal memoderatkan secara positif hubungan antara keaslian dan transportasi naratif, tetapi memoderatkan secara negatif kesan topicaliti tema cerita terhadap transportasi naratif. Kajian ini

memberikan sumbangan penting dari segi teori dan amali kepada para sarjana serta pengamal dalam bidang penceritaan dan pemasaran destinasi.

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ABSTRACT

Tourists tend to experience travel content through vlogs prior to undertaking real travel. However, the growing demand for personalized and diversified content has exceeded what standardized professional work and the large volume of user-created material provide. There is a lack of research on what and how elements compose a travel vlog that can arouse viewers visit intention from the perspective of storytelling. In response to this, the current study has developed a theoretical framework by integrating storytelling elements, narrative transportation, destination image and travel intention, based on Narrative Transportation Theory, Consumer Storytelling Theory and Destination Image Formation Theory. The proposed model was analysed using partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with 303 valid samples in the context of China. Findings showed that story theme topicality, narrative structure, and the vlogger's language style significantly predicted narrative transportation and destination image, with the vlogger's social attractiveness also influencing narrative transportation. Narrative transportation, in turn, stimulated destination image. Technical quality of video positively moderated the relationship between authenticity and narrative transportation, but negatively moderated the effect of story theme topicality on narrative transportation. This study provided several important theoretical and practical contributions for both scholars and practitioners in storytelling and destination marketing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The previous knowledge suggests that humans find it easier and more natural to understand and accept stories than arguments (Lundqvist et al., 2013; Mckee & Fryer, 2003; Woodside & Megehee, 2010), as narrative processing reduces critical thinking compared to analytical, which, in turn, can lead to stronger behavioural intention (Pachucki et al., 2022; Van Laer et al., 2014). Storytelling may be uniquely suitable in the context of tourism (Pera, 2017; Van Laer, et al., 2019), especially through visual storytelling, such as vlogs (Alamäki et al., 2019; Shubic, 2019). In these videos, destination representatives and tour operators sell experiences, using vivid stories to introduce destinations and activities to potential consumers before the actual journey begins.

As the premiere global community for filmmakers, tourism organizations, lifestyle and media brands, the Travel Video Alliance hosts the annual Travel Video Awards (TVAs) honouring excellence in independent and branded travel videos. It is clearly and strongly emphasized in the introduction to participants regarding the qualifications required for a travel video, “*Videos just about turtle racing wouldn’t count. But if it uses a story about turtles as a lens to view the community and location tied to that sport and in a way that inspires travel, that counts*” (Travel Video Alliance, 2022).

The travel vlog is deemed as a space of storytelling (Lund et al., 2018), and serves as one of the potential tools for implementing storytelling marketing, easily evoking consumers’ emotions (Cheng et al., 2020; Dewantara et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2021). The peculiarity of travel vlogs lies in the unique travel story with personal experience during journey, which connects viewers in a way that is arguably

unmatched by any other medium (Expedia Media Solution, 2016). A storytelling travel vlog not only supplies the tourism information in traditional method, but also creates a scenario that makes future customers feel like being part of it.

The aim of this study is to investigate how travel vlogs influence viewers' travel intention to the destination depicted in the video from the perspective of storytelling. This chapter focuses on the details about background of the study, research problem, question and objectives, significance of the study and the organization of the remaining chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Vlog as a Popular Form of Social Media

The digital technology has undergone a huge transformation and change the world over the last decade, in which the video-based blog has developed into a popular form of social media and been a powerful tool to tell personal stories. A vlog is a neologism composed of the words “video” and “blog” (Cheng et al., 2020), indicating a video-based medium compared to text-based blog, has become one of the most popular genres of blog (Zhang et al., 2009).

The creators of vlogs, known as vloggers, record their daily lives, feelings, and thoughts with cameras. The format and style of the videos are typically very casual (Li & Zheng, 2021), and the vloggers are usually amateurs (Aran et al., 2013). The first vlog was posted by Adam Kontras on January 2, 2000. Adam Kontras shared the video on his personal blog to inform his friends and family about his cross-country move to Los Angeles in pursuit of show business (Sanchez, 2022; Wikipedia, 2022).

Because vlogs contain much more content than traditional blogs that rely on text or photos, emphasising stories or personal information of the vloggers, they can convey more information to viewers (Başarangil, 2020; Griffith & Papacharissi, 2010). The vital reason for the popularity of vlogs is that vloggers use storytelling techniques to convey their own lifestyles and life philosophies through lens, which enhances audience engagement (Zhang, 2020). Additionally, the way vloggers talk to the viewers through the camera is like a personal face-to-face conversation, showing greater authenticity than traditional media (Holland, 2016).

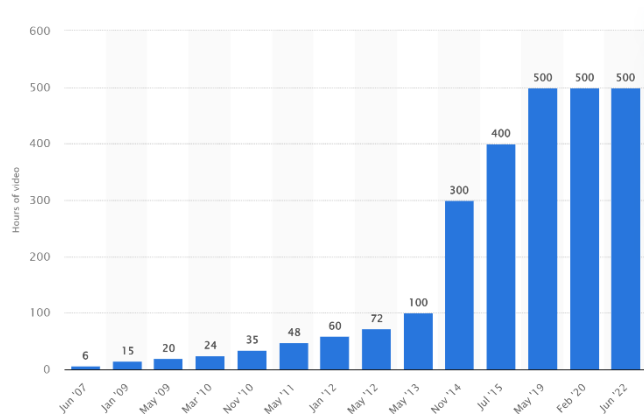


Figure 1.1 Hours of Video Uploaded to YouTube Every Minute as of February 2022

Source: Statista (2023)

As more people like to share their vlogs on various social media platforms, YouTube becomes one of powerful video-sharing channel and was ranked the second in the most popular social media in the world (Statista, 2022c). More than 500 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and 27 percent of internet users worldwide watch more than 10 hours of online videos on a weekly basis in 2020 (Statista, 2022b). The travel-related videos on YouTube have produced the second-highest searched results from its users, more than 70% travel-related searches on YouTube are based on destination names (Roy et al., 2020).

1.1.2 The Impact of Travel Vlog in Destination Marketing

Vlog is a powerful form of consumer-generated content for marketing (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Zhang, 2020). Since vloggers had become key opinion leaders (Lee & Watkins, 2016), marketer start to recruit them as influencers to post videos about the product or brand on their own vlog sharing site, which is called sponsored vlogging or vlog advertising (Steffi De Jans et al., 2018). Due to the intangibility of travel, purposive travellers find information from amateur vlogs more convincing and attractive because of its visual representations (Zhang et al., 2009). It is proved by many previous studies that travel vlogs help to strengthen the perceived destination image and influence more potential consumers (Abad & Borbon, 2021; Peralta, 2019; Purwadi, et al, 2017). The exploration of the local place is portrayed in vlogs in a way that photos or text cannot achieve (Peralta, 2019). Vloggers influence the followers' perceived destination image through grabbing attention, self-discovery, audience involvement and sharing information (Gholamhosseinzadeh et al., 2021). Furthermore, online videos, such as vlogs, acted as a means of narrative transportation, providing mental pleasure to viewers by stimulating fantasies and daydreams, as well as evoking past travel memories (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). The narrative told by vloggers is a vivid source of the destination image from the perspective of tourists (Alrawadieh, Dincer, Dincer, et al., 2018; Mak, 2017). Therefore, DMOs and tourism board should leverage travel vlogs to improve destination marketing (Abad & Borbon, 2021; Peralta, 2019).

1.1.3 The Rise of Vlog in China

Despite a late start of vlog marketing in China compared to the West, it has experienced accelerated development. As shown in Figure 1.2, the number of short video users (including vlogs users) in China is 1.012 billion, which is 77.7 million

more than that in December 2020, accounting for 94.8 percent of the total Internet users (CNNIC, 2023). The number of vlog users in China was 126 million in 2018, 249 million in 2019, and 368 million in 2020, a total increase of 242 million compared to 2018 (iiMedia, 2021). With the growth of vlog consumption, it has been found that Chinese vlog users prefer watching influencer videos, whereas US users are more interested in social interaction (Yang, 2022). Consequently, Chinese participants are more susceptible to influencer persuasion in their purchase decisions (Yang, 2022).

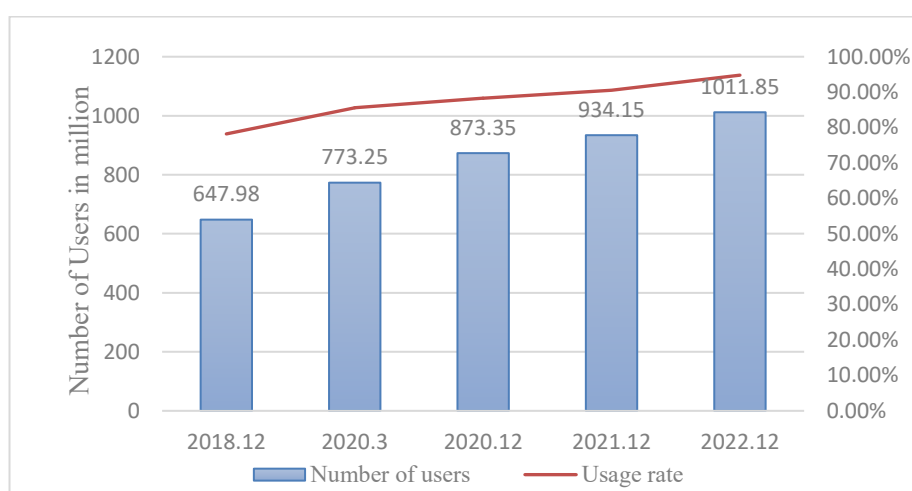


Figure 1.2 Number of Users and Usage Rate of Short-video from December 2018 to December 2022

Source: CNNIC (2023)

While vlogging gained popularity in the West through extensive coverage on YouTube, it has witnessed rapid growth in China since 2018, supported by a series of launched campaigns and favourable policies (Wang, 2022). From then on, vlogs started to go ‘viral’ in China, and it surged to the top of the list of 10 English words searched by Chinese people in the YouDao Dictionary (Baidu, 2020). Among those popular vlogs posted in 2019, the most attracting ones are travel-related videos shared by a famous star “Ouyang Nana” (Biannews, 2020). She used vlogs to record her daily

experiences and opinions during her study abroad, which made her appear more like an ordinary person than a celebrity.

While the YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat have been the worldwide popular platforms for travel vlog marketing, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Weibo and Bilibili are the regional social media sites which play significant role in promoting destinations in China. Similar to the global situation, travel vlogs are all very popular among these four top social media apps (Eefung, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2020; Tencent, 2022; Wang et al., 2024). Among all the online platform related to travelling information, XiaoHongshu has become the most popular new application used for travel decision-making in the first half of 2020, as its powerful capability of triggering people's demand for travel (BDR, 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

According to the data from China Tourism Academy, Chinese citizens' suppressed travel intentions, a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, have rebounded in the first half of 2023, reaching levels comparable to those observed in 2019 (Bin, 2023). However, the pandemic has caused accelerating change in strategic pattern of destination marketing and tourists' travel intention. Vlog marketing became very useful and prevalent for destination promotion as many state and international borders were inaccessible to travellers (Dewantara et al., 2022). Social media platforms like TikTok and XiaoHongshu start to played a prominent role in tourism marketing, attracting customers and facilitating transactions (Bin, 2023). It is reported that 82.4% people tend to search for online information shared by other tourists before making a travelling decision, among which vlogs and related comments on XiaoHongshu turn out to be the most influential (Topklout, 2023). Furthermore, an increasing number of

tourists in China are opting for destinations that resonate with their personal values, lifestyle, and aesthetics, rather than the more commonly popular ones (Lei et al., 2018). They tend to experience travel content through vlogs prior to undertaking real travel (Wang et al., 2024).

However, the growing demand for personalized and diversified content has exceeded what standardized professional work and the large volume of user-created material provide (Liu, 2021). On the one hand, there is fierce competition for eyeballs between vlog producers, tour operators and DMOs (Shubic, 2019). Taking XiaoHongshu as an example, the number of travel-related videos posted on the platform has increased by 250% year-on-year, and the number of travel vloggers has surged by 672% compared to last year (XiaoHongshu, 2023). On the other hand, problems like homogenization and authenticity of the content in many vlogs have appeared, which resulted in adverse effects such as audience aesthetic fatigue and reduced user engagement (Zhao, 2023). Reflecting the current state of vlog marketing in China, the fragmented, superficial and homogeneous content in travel vlogs is hard to maintain tourists' continuous interest and also fails to stimulate their travel intention (Shan, 2025). How to promote a destination and draw people to the place is one of the most challenging issues for DMOs, tourism authorities and tour operators (Jianyun, 2021).

Research on vlog marketing remains at an early stage (Zhang et al., 2024), and existing literature regarding the impact of travel vlogs on destination marketing is insufficient (Dewantara et al., 2022). The underlying mechanism of how travel vlogs affect potential tourists' behaviours remains unclear (Cheng et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). What is more, despite travel vlogs possess the strong capability of storytelling (Expedia Media Solution, 2016), the unique characteristics of storytelling and multi-

dimensional content in vlogs (Decrop et al., 2020) have been neglected. According to the systematic literature review by Zhang et al. (2024), vlog content, vloggers' characteristics and video quality are key factors for vlog marketing.

Making use of storytelling elements to convey an experiential narrative can enhance the future visit (Kim & Youn, 2017). Specifically, narrative transportation, an individual's mental response to stories, demonstrates the impact of storytelling on potential visitors' travel intentions (Pachucki et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2016) and perceived brand image (Ryu et al., 2019). However, there is limited research focusing on the influence of narrative transportation in the context of audio-visual storytelling. The empirical research examining association between narrative transportation and travel intention is insufficient (Pachucki et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2016). It is noted that understanding the essential components of a story and the interaction between different storytelling elements is the key prerequisite for marketers to leverage storytelling to effectively transform marketing (McKee & Gerace, 2018; Moin, 2020). Although extant studies provide a lens for understanding the components of storytelling, knowledge on this topic remains fragmented and lacks empirical research (Pachucki et al., 2022; Van Laer et al., 2019). Hence, to identify elements that may contribute to a compelling travel vlog from the perspective of storytelling is crucial to producing and utilizing travel vlogs to arouse viewers' travel intention.

Most of research on effect of travel vlog on travel intention has been carried out in western countries. The development of social media platforms in China is distinct from those outside China (Fitzgerald et al., 2022). This creates a need for a study the topic the context of China. There are a few studies have explored relevant topics, like viewers' involvement and consumption of travel vlogs, or the impacts of vlogging on the tourist experience in the context of Mainland China (Xu, Chen, 2021;

He et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021). Another study by Wang et al. (2024) further revealed the effect of travel vlogs on travel intention of slow tourism from the perspective of resonance. Moreover, it is found that the app of XiaoHongshu is more influential on users' travel decisions due to its key attributes, like the aesthetics layout (Wang et al., 2022). However, prior research has not provided a clear answer as to whether the storytelling characteristics of travel vlogs are effective.

Overall, a travel vlog is a helpful source of information, as it has a strong influence on people making travel decisions and inspires viewers to travel (Lodha & Philip, 2019). However, making high-quality but generic video content is far from enough to reach the right consumer in experiential marketing (Alamäki et al., 2019), stories and images should be included in the vlogs fundamentally (Peralta, 2019). In response to prior research calls for study the effects of multi-modalities (e.g., visual, verbal and audio) in social media communication (Lim & Childs, 2020), the present research endeavours to answer the question how travel vlogs affect audiences' travel intention through storytelling elements.

1.3 Research Objectives

To provide better insights into the effect of travel vlog on travel intention from the perspective of storytelling, there are a set of research goals as below:

1. To examine the effect of story content attributes (i.e. topicality of story theme, narrative structure, and authenticity) on narrative transportation.
2. To examine the effect of vlogger's characteristics (i.e. physical and social attractiveness, plasticity, and appropriateness of language style) on narrative transportation.

3. To examine the effect of story content attributes (i.e. topicality of story theme, narrative structure, and authenticity) on destination image.
4. To examine the effect of vlogger's characteristics (i.e. physical attractiveness) on destination image.
5. To determine whether narrative transportation affects perceived destination image.
6. To determine whether narrative transportation affects travel intention.
7. To determine whether destination image affects travel intention.
8. To investigate the moderating effect of technical quality of video on the relationship between story content attributes (i.e., topicality of story theme, narrative structure, authenticity) and narrative transportation.
9. To investigate the moderating effect of technical quality of video on the relationship between story content attributes (i.e., topicality of story theme, narrative structure, authenticity) and destination image.

1.4 Research Questions

In the corresponding research objectives, the problems discussed in the previous section pose several important questions which the present study attempts to answer:

1. Do story content attributes (i.e. topicality of story theme, narrative structure, and authenticity) influence narrative transportation?
2. Do vlogger's characteristics (i.e. physical and social attractiveness, plasticity, and appropriateness of language style) influence narrative transportation?

3. Do story content attributes (i.e. topicality of story theme, narrative structure, and authenticity) influence destination image?
4. Does vlogger's physical attractiveness influence destination image?
5. Does narrative transportation affect destination image?
6. Does narrative transportation affect travel intention?
7. Does destination image affect travel intention?
8. Does technical quality of video moderate the relationship between story content attributes (i.e., topicality of story theme, narrative structure, authenticity) and narrative transportation?
9. Does technical quality of video moderate the relationship between story content attributes (i.e., topicality of story theme, narrative structure, authenticity) and destination image?

1.5 Scope of the Study

As reported by CNNIC (2023), 94.8% of the internet users in China watch short videos (including vlogs) during 2022, among which travel vlog has become one of the most popular types (Eefung, 2019; Li & Zhang, 2020). Accordingly, it can be inferred that China is a good location to conduct a study on travel vlog in the context of eastern culture.

Millennials, commonly known as Generation Y, were born approximately from 1980 to the mid-2000s (Pentescu, 2016). These group of tourists are reported to actively share their travel experiences via travel vlogs on YouTube in the worldwide (Chakravarty et al., 2021). Similarly, millennials have emerged as a significant force in the travel and tourism market in China, constituting nearly 80% of online trip bookings (CBNData & Airbnb, 2019). As 70% of millennials view social media as

their primary source of information (KAWO, 2023), they keep up with traveling trends on social media, preferring to visit Internet-famous and unconventional destinations (CBNData & Airbnb, 2019). Millennials have attracted researchers' interests to examine social media user behaviour (Chakravarty et al., 2021; Pop et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). On Xiaohongshu, millennials form an influential segment of the user community (Christian, 2024). Therefore, millennials in China are selected as target population to investigate the effect of storytelling travel vlog on viewers' visit intention to certain destination. Specifically, this study follows the common criterion for millennials, defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019).

Current study is a cross-sectional analysis, in which data will be collected at a single point in time. After watching the offered vlog, data on variables of interest will be gathered from the viewers through an online questionnaire. The chosen travel vlog is elaborately selected from a popular social media- "XiaoHongshu", a platform initiated in 2013 in Shanghai. Xiaohongshu attracted a predominantly female audience due to its focus on fashion, beauty, and health at the very beginning. By 2021, women accounted for about 90% of users, but the demographic has since shifted, with men now comprising 30% of the user base in 2024 (Christian, 2024). XiaoHongshu's success lies in its integration of social media and e-commerce, with its marketing value increasingly recognized (Christian, 2024; Sun & Ly, 2023). More importantly, it has been one of the most influential platforms for potential tourists to gain travel information (Topklout, 2023). Hence, this study chose XiaoHongshu as the focal social media platform.

Since the purpose of this study is to examine the effect of amateur audio-visual storytelling on viewers' travel intentions, the context is limited to tourist-generated video blogs. Textual blogs, photos shared on social media, and vlogs produced by

DMOs or professional organizations are excluded from the current study. To choose an appropriate travel vlog, the numbers of viewer interactions (e.g. likes, favourites, and comments) should be considered as they reflect the viewers' level of engagement with the vlog and interests in the topic (Dewantara et al., 2022). In addition, previous work by Cao et al. (2021), which studied a similar context (i.e., tourism short video), also provided specific guidelines for selecting a suitable travel vlog in the present study, such as the destination's popularity and the level of narrativity.

Based on the above, a storytelling vlog recording a girl's travel experience in Gannan posted on XiaoHongshu is selected. Gannan is located in the western part of China, southwest of Gansu Province, the junction between the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Loess Plateau of Gansu Province, Qinghai Province and Sichuan province. Although Gannan is considered as "China's little Tibet, Gansu's back garden", it is a less well-known place, primarily owing to its remote geographical location and a weak economic and industrial foundation. The reason for choosing Gannan rather than famous tourism destinations is to constrict the influence of preconceived notions prior to watching experience (Cao et al., 2021).

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will enhance the body of knowledge relating to storytelling, destination image formation and travel intention in the context of travel vlogs, and help to reveal the practical implications of video content marketing using travel vlog in China. Considering the above discussion, the specific and expected theoretical and practical significance for both academicians and practitioners in tourism is explained in the following subsections.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Firstly, this study integrates Narrative Transportation Theory into analysis of the impact of travel vlog on visit intention from the perspective of storytelling. Proposed framework of the study aims to develop and specify the key antecedents and consequences of Extended Transportation-imagery Model in the context of tourism and vlog. Although the study of the impact of exposure to vlogs on intention has been a central concern for researchers in the digital era, little empirical attention has been paid to the specific mental processing how vlogs affect prospect viewers' purchase intention. The application of Narrative Transportation Theory in the framework will add and examine new factor to explain the future visit intention in tourism context which extend behavioural intention research from the experiential perspective. Moreover, it is argued that narrative transportation has not been widely researched in the tourism field (Chen et al., 2019). Since people appear to rely more on storytelling travel vlogs, this construct needs to be fully investigated. Hence, the current study will also strengthen the validity of Narrative Transportation Theory.

Secondly, this study can help enrich the literature on storytelling and especially fill the gap in research on vlog's storytelling. Vlogs are an effective form of digital storytelling by amateurs, not like written stories or film and television stories. Knowledge from extant literature on traditional storytelling components is highly fragmented and not entirely appropriate for explaining this new phenomenon. Vlog's storytelling has its own uniqueness, as it is based on personal experience created by ordinary internet users. Travel vlogs are full of real tourist experience stories, providing audiences with an imaginary chance to vicariously experience the destination (J. He et al., 2021; Zhumadilova, 2016). In another word, storytelling is inherent in travel vlogs because of the nature of tourist experience. The novelty of the

present research is to reveal key storytelling elements in the context of travel vlogs. Furthermore, the study attempts to synthesize and evaluate the impact of important vlogs' storytelling elements on travel intention from three different facets including story content, the vlogger and technical quality, in response to prior calls for research on storytelling's components and implications on the people and their behavioural intentions within travel marketing (Akgün et al., 2015).

Thirdly, prior research finds that media channels are vital in tourist destination promotion, however, there remain significant gaps in cross-disciplinary fertilization between tourism and media studies (Arora & Lata, 2020; Gong & Tung, 2017; Kim, 2012). Considering travel vlogs are the integrated products of tourism and media, the study will contribute to address the cross-disciplinary gaps between these two fields. In addition, study the moderating effect of the media attribute (technical quality of video) on the relationships between the independent and dependant variables will be of theoretical interest.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

By understanding the relationships between the characteristics of various information sources and consumers' destination choice, tourism managers can improve their marketing efforts (Chen et al., 2014). It has always been vital for destination tourism managers to have a clear sight of tourists' behavioural intentions and its determinants, specifically they would better know how to build up an attractive image and improve their marketing efforts to maximize their use of resources (Chen & Tsai, 2007). To make decisions of travel destinations, tourists usually depend on the projected and perceived images from DMO or word-of-mouth (WOM). Therefore, showing a pleasing destination image towards prospective tourists is the cornerstone of destination marketing.

This study helps to increase the understanding of the underlying mechanism of what and how storytelling elements matters for attracting audiences and then triggering travel intention toward the destination featured in the vlog. Basing on this, it can provide DMOs practical advices on: 1) how to make an attractive video of a certain destination through storytelling approach; 2) how to choose a suitable vlogger to represent the destination; 3) whether technical quality of video is essential in story consumption in the context of vlog storytelling context; 4) how to deliver a clear and appealing destination image to potential tourists via vlogging technique. As recording travel vlogs has become very popular among tourists of all ages, this study also aims to help tourists enhance their capabilities in creating video stories that capture their unique and unforgettable experiences during their trips, thereby increasing their enjoyment of traveling and creating lasting memories.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The abbreviations and the definitions for each term used for this study are listed below.

1.7.1 Appropriateness of Language Style

Appropriateness of language style denotes the extent to which the audience expects the vlogger's use of language style in accordance with social norms (Gretry et al., 2017).

1.7.2 Attractiveness

A vlogger's attractiveness includes physical and social attractiveness. Physical attractiveness describes the person's beautiful and attractive appearance; Social attractiveness implies the extent to which one holds another's belief and social status to be similar to his or her own (Le & Hancer, 2021).

1.7.3 Authenticity

Authenticity indicates a sense that readers obtain from material that makes them believe and associate the story with reality. (Chiu et al., 2012).

1.7.4 Extraversion

Extraversion denotes a dynamic disposition towards both social and practical aspects of life, and encompasses characteristics such as sociability, dynamism, self-confidence, and optimistic affect (John & Srivastava, 1999).

1.7.5 Language Style

Language style refers to the way people speak or write, which encompasses how the message is conveyed (Ireland & Pennebaker, 2010; Liu et al., 2019).

1.7.6 Narrative Structure

Narrative structure represents the organization of events or episodes in a narrative or story in terms of their chronology and causality (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004; Escalas, 2004b).

1.7.7 Narrative Transportation

Narrative transportation refers to the integrative mental process of the story receiver while reading, listening to, or watching a story. This process includes the extent to which the receiver empathizes with the story's characters and how the story's plot activates the viewer's imagination, leading to an experience of suspended reality during story reception (Green & Brock, 2000; Van Laer et al., 2014).

1.7.8 Openness to Experience

Openness to experience indicates the range, profundity, novelty, and intricacy of an individual's cognitive and perceptual experiences (John & Srivastava, 1999).

1.7.9 Perceived Destination Image

Perceived destination image connotes an audience's overall perceptions, conceptions or impressions with regard to a specific destination based on his/her watching the vlog (Wang, 2012).

1.7.10 Plasticity

Plasticity, which consists of being openness to experience and extraversion, indicates an inclination to flexibly explore and engage with new things, both in actions and thoughts (DeYoung et al., 2002; Deyoung, 2006).

1.7.11 Storytelling

Storytelling is an art of describing real or imaginary events with word, photo, audio and video, a marketing tool to encourage consumer loyalty through entertainment or emotional connection (Akgün et al., 2015).

1.7.12 Technical Quality of Video

Technical quality of video indicates the audiences' perception toward the overall quality of the video with regard to visual quality, audio quality and quality of editing (Hautz et al., 2014).

1.7.13 Topicality of Story Theme

Topicality of story theme is defined as the degree to which the story theme is thought to be relevant to the viewer's current area of interest (Xu & Chen, 2006).

1.7.14 Transportability

Transportability indicates an individual trait of propensity to be transported by narratives (Dal Cin et al., 2004), which means how likely an individual is transported by a story in general.

1.7.15 Travel Vlog

Travel vlogs refer to tourist-generated videos that usually represent the creators' travelling experience and can be publicly viewed online, often through social media sites (Xu et al., 2021).

1.7.16 Travel Intention

Travel intention is defined as an individual's behavioural intention to visit the actual travel destination featured in the vlog (Cheng et al., 2020).

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

There are five sections total in this thesis, starting with this one. The initial section introduces the current scenario of travel vlogs in destination marketing, research problems, the significance of the study, and the definitions of terms. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review that includes the underpinning theories in this study and past research which is relevant to travel intention, storytelling elements in travel vlog context, destination image and narrative transportation. Besides, the research framework is proposed and hypotheses are formulated on the basis of an elaborative review of the existing literature. The research methodology is covered in detail in Chapter 3, including the research design, population and sampling procedures, methods of data collection, research instruments and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 presents the outcomes of the examination of the empirical data. The study's discussion, conclusions on research findings, and suggestions for future studies in related areas are offered in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter expands on prior knowledge relevant to the topic, forming the foundation of the research framework for this study. It begins with a review of key theoretical perspectives, including Narrative Transportation Theory, Consumer Storytelling Theory, and Destination Image Formation Theory. This is followed by a detailed examination of previous studies on travel intention toward specific destinations, covering the primary theories and determinants investigated in this field. Subsequently, the chapter explains the relationships between variables in the research framework. Finally, it discusses the proposed framework by detailing the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

2.2 Overview of the Theoretical Underpinning

In quantitative studies, a theory is deemed as a structured framework of related variables, definitions, and propositions, which aims to clarify the relationships among these variables and systematically explain various natural phenomena (Creswell, 2014). A theory can be presented as a series of hypotheses, assumed logical statements, or a visual model. To establish the foundational framework of this study, three theories are applied: Narrative Transportation Theory, Consumer Storytelling Theory and Destination Image Formation Theory.

2.2.1 Narrative Transportation Theory

2.2.1(a) Transportation-imagery Model (TIM)

Coined by Gerrig (1993) and then developed by Green & Brock (2000), the original Narrative Transportation Theory explains the extent to which viewers become

immersed in a story or transported into a narrative world, and as a result of that, viewers' attitudes and beliefs may be influenced (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2000). Gerrig used the metaphor of traveling to illustrate the concept of narrative transportation: someone (the “traveller”) is transported by a mode of transportation (such as novels, anecdotes, or movies), resulting in them performing certain actions. The traveller goes some distance from his or her world of origin, making some aspects of the origin world inaccessible. The traveller returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey (Gerrig, 1993). Following Gerrig, Green and Brock postulated TIM, theoretically illuminating how the persuasive effect is induced by narratives (Green & Brock, 2002). TIM emphasizes the mental processing of being transported and the role of imagery in belief change. Three attributes—the recipient, the text, and the medium—are proposed to affect the extent of transportation and the formation of vivid mental images, thereby enhancing the persuasive power of a story (Green & Brock, 2002; Green, 2008).

Compared to cognitive elaboration, narrative transportation emphasizes induced persuasive effect on people through reducing negative cognitive responding, imitating real experience, creating strong feelings toward story characters and finally getting influenced by characters’ experiences or beliefs (Green & Brock, 2000).

2.2.1(b) Extended Transportation-imagery Model (ETIM)

Based on the basic theoretical structure of TIM by Green and Brock, a more comprehensive model was developed by Tom Van Laer et al. (2014), which is ETIM. The extension model clarified the antecedents and consequences of narrative transportation, providing an interdisciplinary framework for a better understanding of narrative transportation. As outlined in Figure 2.1, the ETIM considers both attributes

of storyteller and story receivers as the antecedents of narrative transportation, and intention as one of the consequences.

In ETIM, several factors influencing narrative transportation were specifically identified from two relative perspectives, the narrators and the recipients. While identifiable characters, imaginable plot and verisimilitude constitute storyteller antecedents of narrative transportation, affecting factors affecting story receivers include familiarity, attention, transportability, education and sex. Identifiable characters play a fundamental role in transportation effect because people need a clear identifiability for protagonists to feel empathy for. Story plots as causally sequenced events are usually highlighted in narrativity (Egan, 1978; Shapiro & Hudson, 1991). The imaginable plot is another essential factor to narrative transportation with which stories can arouse the interest of the audience (Ryan, 2017). Verisimilitude is defined as the likelihood that story events may actually happen (Van Laer et al., 2014), which emphasizes the believability of the story in real life. It is argued that verisimilitude allows story receivers to have a vicarious experience of being in a similar situation, thereby enabling them to empathize with the characters' situation and emotion (Loh, 2013). Familiarity refers to the extent to which the audience is familiar with the story's topic or genre due to his or her own prior knowledge or personal experience. Attention is defined as the story receiver's degree of focused concentration on the story. Transportability is described as a story receiver's chronic propensity to be transported (Van Laer et al., 2014). It has been verified by Van Laer (2014) that the higher level of familiarity, attention, and transportability, the greater narrative transportation recipients will experience.

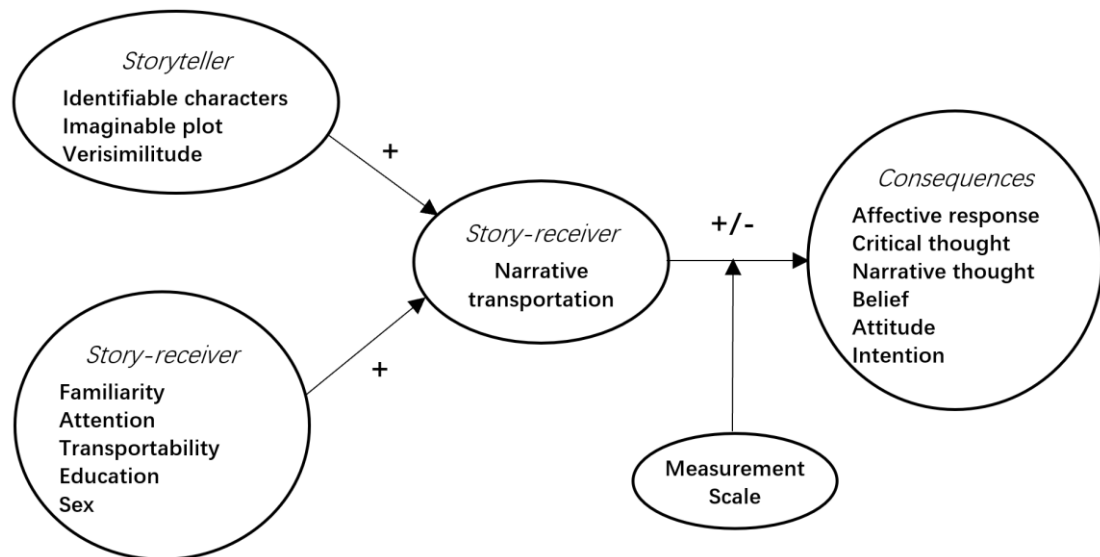


Figure 2.1 Extended Transportation-imagery Model

2.2.2 Consumer Storytelling Theory

Storytelling is ubiquitous through human being's life, and it refers to narrative practices rather than stories themselves. In the field of consumption, it is common for consumers to communicate with others about their perceptions of products, services, or brands in a narrative-structured manner (Delgadillo & Escalas, 2004). Hence, storytelling is deemed to be the central to understanding consumer psychology (Rooney et al., 2016; Woodside, 2016) and then the key to attract and retain customers (Pulizzi, 2012).

Woodside advanced ten propositions as main elements of Consumer Storytelling Theory, emphasizing the vital role of consumers in representing products or services' brands as archetypical icons and their mundane, improvisational experiences through which consumers express and transmit their thoughts and insights into life (Woodside et al., 2008). The series of propositions comprise the following statements:

P1: Narrative storytelling on purchasing/consumption requires a protagonist consumer to experience an "inciting incident" (McKee & Fryer, 2003). P2: Consumer

storytelling theory extends beyond highly risky consumption acts to the more mundane and improvisational presentations-of-self (to oneself and others) in everyday life. P3: Consumption stories protagonists tell about themselves consciously and/or unconsciously often match the plot lines scripted by brand controllers or by deep-seated cultural archetypal myths. P4: Consumers' presentations-of-self storytelling presents a protagonist engaging in actions to achieve goals. P5: These stories inform the listener or reader about conscious and/or unconscious thoughts of the protagonist and other actors. P6: These stories frequently describe epiphanic personal realizations and changes that occur in the life of the protagonist. P7: The story informs how events involving the protagonist take place. P8: The stories frequently include a second inciting event (a crisis or turning point) involving the protagonist, along with a beginning inciting incident and a resolution. P9: The stories present the protagonist in clear-cut situations. P10: The storytellers frequently provide a lesson learned a gloss/gist of wisdom—in a sense-making summary comment in the closing or opening emic interpretation to the story.

In addition to the set of propositions, Woodside also noted in his study that a blog is one form of personal journals for consumer storytelling, and provided a set of degrees-of-freedom instrument for assessing how well a specific WOM/blog communication matched with the storytelling paradigm was addressed (Woodside et al., 2008). In short, storytelling can be considered an approach to building connections between consumers and brands in marketing. Woodside's Consumer Storytelling Theory, provides a framework and rationale for understanding and analysing consumers' storytelling behaviour, highlighting consumers' experiences as the core story content and the inseparable interaction between the story content and its protagonists. This serves as a supplement to Narrative Transportation Theory,