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Content Credibility in Short-Form Travel Videos and Travel Intention of Millennials and Young Consumers in Indonesia

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Abstract:

Background: Short-form travel videos on social media increasingly shape how millennials and young consumers form travel perceptions and intentions. However, limited research explains how credibility embedded in such content influences travel intention through psychological mechanisms.

Purpose: This study examines the effect of content credibility in short-form travel videos on travel intention by incorporating emotional engagement and destination image as mediators, and social media engagement as a moderator.

Method: Drawing on the S-O-R framework, this study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design. A total of 421 Indonesian Gen Y and Gen Z social media users aged 18 and above were recruited through purposive online sampling. Eligible respondents were active social media users with prior exposure to short-form travel videos. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM.

Findings: This study found that content credibility, comprising content trustworthiness, informativeness, and visual appeal, has both direct and indirect positive effects on travel intention. In particular, emotional engagement and destination image have a mediating relationship on participants' affective and cognitive pathways, respectively. Meanwhile, social media engagement strengthens selected relationships, meaning that more actively engaged users are more responsive to credibility cues.

Conclusion: These findings confirm content credibility as a key predictor of travel intention, operating through complementary emotional and cognitive processes in short-form video contexts.

Research implication: This study extends the S-O-R framework by conceptualizing credibility at the content level and integrating dual psychological pathways with a behavior-based moderating mechanism, offering deeper insights into digital tourism persuasion.

Keywords: content credibility, destination image, emotional engagement, short-form video, travel intention

JEL Classification: M31, L83



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. This research was conducted independently and objectively, without any financial, personal, or institutional influences that could have affected the research process or its outcomes.



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1. Introduction

The rapid growth of short-form travel videos on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts has reshaped how young consumers form travel-related perceptions and intentions (Wu & Ding, 2023; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). For generations Y and Z, these brief and visually engaging videos have become a primary source of inspiration, particularly in the early stages of decision-making (Fahlevi et al., 2023; Li & Tu, 2024; Liao et al., 2020). In practice, many users now rely on short-form videos as a quick way to check destinations before considering them more seriously.

Existing studies highlight the roles of entertainment value, information richness, and interactivity in shaping engagement and travel intention (Li & Tu, 2024; Zhou et al., 2023). These roles are typically contained in short-form videos. More recent research has emphasized credibility, particularly source trustworthiness (Agnihotri et al., 2025; Leite et al., 2024; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). In this perspective, users evaluate who delivers the message more than the message itself. However, other research argues that credibility is not always taken into account in short-form video environments. Frequently, users respond first to what they see and experience in the content, not necessarily to who created it (Lamia et al., 2021). The quick, repeated nature of such videos demands that viewers make rapid judgments based on visible cues such as clarity, usefulness, and visual appeal, without verifying the credibility of the video source. As a result, the role of content-level credibility remains insufficiently explained in tourism research.

Indeed, many scholars have investigated the roles of short-form videos in shaping viewers' engagement and travel intention. However, they barely distinguish how credibility operates at the content level. Existing studies may overlook the effect of persuasive pathways that actually emerge in these environments (Carvalho, 2024; Zhu et al., 2022). In fact, based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), digital content can be understood as a stimulus that shapes internal psychological states and behavioral outcomes (Chen, 2025; Tan et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2025). In other words, both content characteristics and source attributes are central in shaping user responses.

Another limitation in previous studies is related to how internal processes are conceptualized. Prior studies often treat emotional (affective) and cognitive responses separately. Emotional engagement captures affective involvement, while destination image reflects cognitive evaluation (Li & Jiang, 2024; Suban, 2024). In fact, when watching short-form travel videos, users do not separate how they feel from their evaluation. They tend to experience both pathways at the same time. Moreover, studies on emotional engagement have mainly been conducted in general digital contexts. Its role as a mediator in short-form tourism content remains limited and fragmented. Similarly, destination image has been widely studied in traditional tourism settings. Short-form video contexts where information is brief, visual, and highly condensed may lead to a different pattern.

From a theoretical perspective, existing studies are limited to using constructs such as parasocial interaction and usage intensity. These constructs may not fully capture actual user behavior. Social media engagement is reflected in observable interactions such as liking, commenting, and sharing. It offers a more behaviorally grounded perspective of user involvement (Aldous et al., 2026). These interactions directly signal attention and interest in specific content, making engagement a more immediate indicator of how users respond to what they watch.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a content-level perspective, conceptualizing content credibility through content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal. It further integrates emotional engagement (affective pathway) and destination image (cognitive pathway) as complementary mediators within the S-O-R framework, while incorporating social media engagement as a moderating variable. By focusing on how users actually process and interact with short-form content, this study offers a more grounded explanation of digital persuasion in contemporary tourism contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory

The S-O-R framework can be defined as the extent to which internal psychological states are influenced by external stimuli, which in turn shape people's behavioral responses (Aruman et al., 2025; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This framework was chosen because it contains not only cognitive and behavioral responses, but also affective domains. In tourism research, this model has been widely used to examine the relationship between digital media and other variables, such as perceptions, emotions, and intentions (Chen, 2025; Qiu et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2025).

Recently, short-form travel videos have been extensively used to promote tourism. In the S-O-R framework, these videos offer a noticeable stimulus due to their visual intensity and experiential nature, thus quickly attracting the viewer's attention. Such content is particularly influential among younger audiences, who tend to rely on quick and experience-based judgments (Serrano-Malebrán et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2025). These may also touch viewer's affective pathways by encouraging the viewers to emotionally engage with the content. However, prior studies have largely emphasized cognitive evaluations and often overlooked affective responses. Thus, understanding how users process persuasive content is often incomplete.

To address this limitation, this study adopts a dual-process perspective within the S-O-R framework. Content credibility is positioned as the stimulus, while emotional engagement and destination image represent affective and cognitive organismic responses, respectively. Travel intention is treated as the behavioral outcome, and social media engagement is included as a moderating factor.

2.2 Content Credibility as Stimulus

Credibility has long been recognized as a central factor in persuasion. While Source Credibility Theory traditionally focuses on the communicator, recent research suggests that it can also be evaluated at the content level (Li & Sun, 2024; Ohanian, 1990). This shift is particularly relevant in short-form video environments, where users often focus more on the message than on its source. Accordingly, this study does not adopt source credibility in its classical sense. Instead, it focuses on content-level credibility, as the unit of evaluation in short-form video environments is the message itself rather than the communicator. Content credibility can be associated with content's reliability, usefulness, and believability, especially regarding the information it delivers. Platforms that display visual content are evaluated rapidly through viewer's direct interaction with the content (Carvalho, 2024; Zhu et al., 2022).

This study conceptualizes content credibility through three dimensions: content trustworthiness (perceived honesty and reliability), content informativeness (usefulness and relevance of information), and visual appeal (the aesthetic quality of the content). These dimensions are arguably believed to shape how users interpret and respond to short-form travel videos (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025).

2.3 Emotional Engagement and Destination Image as Organism

Short-form videos typically contain immersive and visually rich elements to capture viewers' attention quickly (Joo et al., 2023; Suban, 2024; Tan et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2025). These elements trigger viewers' affective involvement, such as excitement, enjoyment, and connection, which are commonly referred to as emotional engagement (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Meanwhile, destination image represents cognitive evaluation, referring to how individuals interpret and assess destination attributes (Li & Jiang, 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Suban, 2024). In short-form content, this evaluation is shaped by concise visual and informational cues (Chenchen et al., 2020; Han et al., 2022). These evaluative processes are carried out simultaneously. Emotional engagement captures how users feel, while destination image reflects how they evaluate what they see. Considering both processes provides a more comprehensive explanation of travel intention.

2.4 Travel Intention as Response

Evaluating users' affective and cognitive pathways enables us to predict individual's readiness to perform behavior. In this research, this behavior is defined as travel intention. It has been broadly considered a proximate antecedent of true travel behavior (Li & Jiang, 2025). Travel intention is viewed as a behavioral response following affective and cognitive organismic states activated by media stimuli (Tan et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2025).

2.5 Social Media Engagement

In addition to travel intention, this study also measures social media engagement, which reflects users' active interaction with content through behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing. Unlike passive consumption, engagement indicates higher involvement and attention (Han & Chen, 2022; Omeish et al., 2024). Recent research conceptualizes engagement as observable interaction with individual posts, signaling user attention and involvement (Aldous et al., 2026). In short-form video contexts, highly engaged users are more likely to process content cues more intensively. Therefore, engagement is positioned as a moderating variable influencing how content credibility affects internal responses.

2.6 The Effects of Content Credibility on Travel Intention

Content credibility is expected to directly influence travel intention. When users perceive content as trustworthy, they are more likely to believe the information presented, reducing uncertainty. Informative content provides practical value, helping users evaluate destinations more effectively. At the same time, visually appealing content captures attention and enhances the overall persuasive effect (Li & Sun, 2024; van Reijmersdal et al., 2024; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021).

Prior research suggests that credible information plays a significant role in shaping behavioral intention in tourism contexts (Han & Chen, 2022; Li & Tu, 2024; Liao et al., 2020). Consumers are generally more willing to act on information that they perceive as credible and useful, especially when making decisions based on online sources (Lamia et al., 2021).

H1a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on travel intention.

H1b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on travel intention.

H1c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on travel intention.

2.7 The Effects of Content Credibility on Emotional Engagement

Content credibility is also expected to influence emotional engagement. Trustworthy content may foster a sense of authenticity, making users feel more connected to the content. Informative content can increase relevance, encouraging deeper engagement. Meanwhile, visually appealing content enhances immersion and emotional response (Cheng et al., 2020; Wahba et al., 2025). Studies have shown that credible content can reduce skepticism. It allows users to engage more openly and experience content more positively (Li & See-To, 2024; Carvalho, 2024; Tan et al., 2023; Wu & Ding, 2023). This relationship reflects the affective pathway within the S-O-R framework.

H2a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on emotional engagement.

H2b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on emotional engagement.

H2c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on emotional engagement.

2.8 The Effects of Content Credibility on Destination Image

Destination image is formed as viewers interpret destinations through cues presented in short-form travel videos (Han et al., 2022; Li & Sun, 2024). Content perceived as trustworthy enhances confidence in the accuracy of information, while informative content improves cognitive evaluation by providing relevant and useful details. In addition, visually appealing content strengthens favorable impressions by attracting attention and facilitating clearer mental representations of destinations (Li & Sun, 2024; Qiu et al., 2023). Prior studies suggest that credible content plays an important role in shaping positive destination images in digital tourism contexts (Li & Jiang, 2024; Omeish et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2023). Research on visually rich social media content further suggests that aesthetic presentation can shape how audiences interpret destinations and form more favorable evaluations (Mir & Salo, 2024).

H3a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on destination image.

H3b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on destination image.

H3c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on destination image.

2.9 The Effects of Emotional Engagement and Destination Image on Travel Intention

Emotionally engaging travel content triggers affective responses such as excitement and involvement. These responses enhance receptiveness to persuasive messages and increase travel intention (Cheng et al., 2020; Li & See-To, 2024; Tan et al., 2023; Wahba et al., 2025; Wu & Ding, 2023). Within the S-O-R framework, emotional engagement is the affective pathway that influences behavioral responses. Destination image, as a cognitive evaluation, reflects individuals' perceptions and assessments of a destination, which further shape travel decisions (Han et al., 2022; Li & Jiang, 2024; Omeish et al., 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2025).

These organismic states explain how internal affective and cognitive processes translate into travel intention in short-form video contexts. Given these, this study formulates the following hypotheses.

H4a: Emotional engagement has a positive effect on travel intention.

H4b: Destination image has a positive effect on travel intention.

2.10 The Mediating Role of Emotional Engagement

Within the S-O-R framework, emotional engagement functions as an affective mechanism (Tan et al., 2023). As argued earlier, trustworthy and informative content fosters emotional connection and involvement. Then, visually appealing content enhances affective immersion through engaging and stimulating experiences (Cheng et al., 2020; Wahba et al., 2025). Prior studies suggest that emotionally engaging content more effectively translates what viewers see into behavioral responses in digital tourism contexts (Li & See-To, 2024; Wahba et al., 2025; Zahrudy et al., 2025).

H5a: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between content trustworthiness and travel intention.

H5b: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between content informativeness and travel intention.

H5c: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between visual appeal and travel intention.

2.11 The Mediating Role of Destination Image

Destination image functions as a cognitive mechanism (Wei et al., 2025). Content perceived as trustworthy enhances confidence in information accuracy, while informative content improves evaluative clarity by providing relevant details. In addition, visually appealing content strengthens favorable impressions by facilitating clearer mental representations of destinations (Li & Sun, 2024; Qiu et al., 2023). Prior studies consistently show that a positive destination image acts as a key pathway linking persuasive cues to behavioral outcomes in tourism contexts (Rodrigues et al., 2023; Tiwari & Hashmi, 2022; Wei et al., 2025).

H6a: Destination image mediates the relationship between content trustworthiness and travel intention.

H6b: Destination image mediates the relationship between content informativeness and travel intention.

H6c: Destination image mediates the relationship between visual appeal and travel intention.

2.12 The Moderating Role of Social Media Engagement on Emotional Engagement

Social media engagement influences how content credibility translates into emotional engagement in short-form travel videos. Higher levels of engagement, reflected in active interactions such as liking, commenting, and sharing, increase users' exposure to and involvement with content, making them more responsive to credibility cues (Omeish et al., 2024). Engaged users are more likely to process content cues heuristically and experience stronger affective reactions (Cha, 2024; Han & Chen, 2022; Lamia et al., 2021; Li & See-To, 2024). This view is consistent with recent engagement research suggesting that stronger interaction with individual posts signals higher attention and involvement, which can amplify responsiveness to content characteristics (Aldous et al., 2026; Sangiorgio et al., 2025).

- H7a: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content trustworthiness and emotional engagement.
- H7b: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content informativeness and emotional engagement.
- H7c: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between visual appeal and emotional engagement.

2.13 The Moderating Role of Social Media Engagement on Destination Image

Social media engagement influences how content credibility shapes destination image in short-form travel videos. Like in emotional engagement, higher social media engagement makes credibility cues more salient in cognitive evaluations of destinations (Omeish et al., 2024). Engaged users are more likely to process informational and visual cues, leading to clearer and more favorable destination perceptions (Han et al., 2022; Han & Chen, 2022; Li & Sun, 2024; Wei et al., 2025). Recent studies also suggest that engagement is closely related to how users attend to content characteristics and respond to the way content is presented on social platforms (Sangiorgio et al., 2025; Zollo et al., 2026).

- H8a: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content trustworthiness and destination image.
- H8b: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content informativeness and destination image.
- H8c: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between visual appeal and destination image.

3. Conceptual Framework

Grounded in the S-O-R framework, this study conceptualizes content credibility in short-form travel videos through three operationalized dimensions: content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal, as the stimulus providing external cues. These cues influence organismic states, such as emotional engagement (affective) and destination image (cognitive), through which viewers process the content. Subsequently, the response is reflected in travel intention. Social media engagement is incorporated as a moderating variable that conditions the relationships between content credibility and the organismic constructs. The proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H1a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on travel intention.
- H1b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on travel intention.
- H1c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on travel intention.
- H2a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on emotional engagement.
- H2b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on emotional engagement.
- H2c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on emotional engagement.
- H3a: Content trustworthiness has a positive effect on destination image.
- H3b: Content informativeness has a positive effect on destination image.
- H3c: Visual appeal has a positive effect on destination image.
- H4a: Emotional engagement has a positive effect on travel intention.
- H4b: Destination image has a positive effect on travel intention.
- H5a: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between content trustworthiness and travel intention.
- H5b: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between content informativeness and travel intention.
- H5c: Emotional engagement mediates the relationship between visual appeal and travel intention.

- H6a: Destination image mediates the relationship between content trustworthiness and travel intention.
- H6b: Destination image mediates the relationship between content informativeness and travel intention.
- H6c: Destination image mediates the relationship between visual appeal and travel intention.
- H7a: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content trustworthiness and emotional engagement.
- H7b: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content informativeness and emotional engagement.
- H7c: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between visual appeal and emotional engagement.
- H8a: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content trustworthiness and destination image.
- H8b: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between content informativeness and destination image.
- H8c: Social media engagement moderates the relationship between visual appeal and destination image.

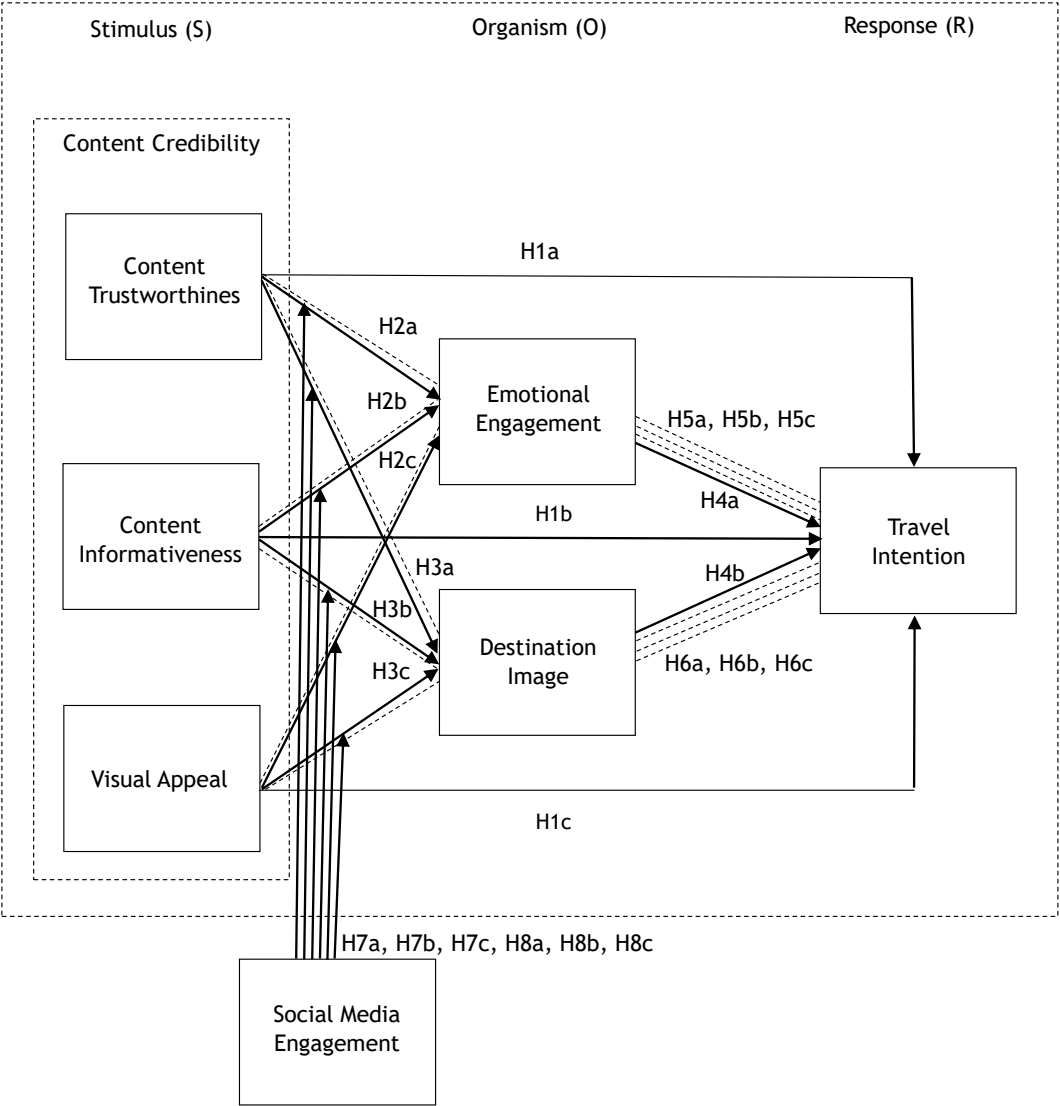


Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating the relationships among content credibility, emotional engagement, destination image, and travel intention in the context of short-form travel videos

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey to examine the effects of travel video content credibility on emotional engagement, destination image, and travel intention. The research was conducted in Indonesia, targeting social media users who actively watch short-form travel videos.

4.2 Sampling

This study targeted Indonesian Generation Y (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2007) social media users, referred to as young consumers due to their familiarity with digital media. Purposive sampling was used to recruit respondents who met the following criteria: (1) belonging to Generation Y or Z, (2) actively using social media, and (3) having prior experience viewing short-form travel video content on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts. The screening question on travel intention after viewing short-form travel videos was used only to assess respondents' familiarity with the study context, rather than to pre-select them based on intention level. In line with the approved ethical protocol, only respondents aged 18 years or older were eligible. The survey reached respondents from various regions of Indonesia, especially Jakarta, Bali, and provinces in Java of 465 responses, 421 valid questionnaires were retained and advanced to data analysis.

4.3 Measurement

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with 25 items adapted from validated scales. In particular, a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) was used to collect data because it is quicker and easier to administer large-scale data. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability. The development of the questionnaire items (indicators) was based on operationalized definitions. Content credibility was operationalized through content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal.

Emotional engagement reflected respondents' affective responses, while destination image captured cognitive evaluations of destinations. Travel intention measured the likelihood of visiting featured destinations, and social media engagement reflected users' interactive behaviors (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing). All items were adapted from prior studies and refined to fit the short-form travel video context while maintaining their original meaning. In particular, the emotional engagement items were refined to capture purely affective responses, and any indicators reflecting credibility, content quality, or behavioral intention were removed to ensure conceptual clarity. The summary of definitions and indicators of these variables is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational definition and indicators

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
Content Trustworthiness (CT) (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025; Asghar et al., 2021; Li & Sun, 2024; Carvalho, 2024)	The perceived honesty and reliability of short-form travel video content in conveying travel-related information.	1) This short travel video provides information that appears objective (CT1) 2) The content presented in this video seems honest and unbiased (CT2)

Table 1. Operational definition and indicators (Continue)

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
Content Informativeness (CI) (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025; Li & Sun, 2024)	The perceived usefulness, clarity, and relevance of information provided in short-form travel video content.	3) The travel information delivered in this video feels sincere and trustworthy (CT3) 1) This short travel video provides useful travel-related information (CI1) 2) This video presents travel information clearly and effectively (CI2) 3) The travel details in this video are relevant for planning a trip (CI3)
Visual Appeal (VA) (Gan et al., 2023; Li & Sun, 2024)	The perceived aesthetic quality and visual attractiveness of short-form travel video content.	1) This short travel video is visually appealing and well designed (VA1) 2) This video has an attractive visual style (VA2) 3) The overall presentation of this video is visually engaging (VA3) 4) The visuals and editing of this video are enjoyable to watch (VA4)
Travel Intention (TI) (Liao et al., 2020)	The likelihood and willingness of an individual to visit a destination after exposure to short-form travel video content.	1) I intend to visit destinations featured in short travel videos on social media (TI1) 2) I am likely to consider traveling to destinations shown in short travel videos (TI2) 3) I am willing to visit a destination after watching short travel videos about it (TI3)
Emotional Engagement (EE) (Chen & Peng, 2023)	Viewers' affective responses and emotional involvement when watching short-form travel video content.	1) I feel emotionally connected to short travel video content (EE1) 2) Watching short travel videos makes me feel relaxed, happy, or excited (EE2) 3) Short travel videos leave a strong impression on me (EE3) 4) I feel emotionally satisfied after watching short travel videos (EE4) 5) I feel interested and engaged when watching short travel video content (EE5)
Destination Image (DI) (Huang & Lin, 2024; Vazquez et al., 2023)	Individuals' cognitive evaluation of a destination based on information presented in short-form travel videos.	1) I have a good understanding of the destination's geography and attractions after watching short travel videos (DI1)

Table 1. Operational definition and indicators (Continue)

Variables	Operational Definition	Indicators
Social Media Engagement (SME) (Aldous et al., 2026; Choi et al., 2018)	Users' active interaction with short-form travel video content on social media through behaviors, such as liking, commenting, and sharing.	2) I feel familiar with the destination's history and culture after watching short travel videos (DI2)
		3) I perceive the destination's environment and facilities positively based on short travel videos (DI3)
		4) I believe the destination appears comfortable and accessible based on short travel videos (DI4)
		1) I frequently share my thoughts or opinions about short travel videos on social media (SME1)
		2) I often interact with short travel videos by liking, commenting, or sharing them (SME2)
		3) I actively participate in discussions or provide feedback on short travel video content (SME3)

4.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey distributed over four weeks during September and October via social media platforms and online communities. Screening questions were given to assess generational category, social media use, and prior exposure to short-form travel videos. In line with the approved ethical protocol, only respondents aged 18 years or older were eligible. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and electronic informed consent was obtained before participation.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Ringle et al., 2024). A two-step procedure was used. First, the measurement model was evaluated for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Then, the structural model was examined to test the proposed hypotheses by assessing the path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and moderation effects. Statistical significance was determined using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

5. Findings

5.1 Respondent Profile

The total number of valid responses was 421. As presented in Table 2, the sample consisted of female users (65.6%) and respondents belonging to Generation Z (69.1%), followed by millennials (30.9%); the latter segment was the main target for short video platforms. In terms of occupation, students were the largest group (43.0%), followed by private employees (22.3%), entrepreneurs (21.1%), and civil servants (11.9%).

In education, a majority of respondents reported that they had finished high school or technical school (43.5%) or had a diploma/university degree (34.7%). Then, 18.5 % have held postgraduate qualifications. Overall, the respondent profile is a digitally active and demographically representative sample for exploring travel intention in the short-video context.

Table 2. Profile of survey respondents (n = 421)

Demographic Factors	n	%
Gender		
Female	276	65.6
Male	145	34.4
Age		
Generation Z (1997 - 2007)	291	69.1
Generation Millenials/Y (1981 - 1996)	130	30.9
Occupation		
Student	181	43.0
Private Employee	94	22.3
Entrepreneur	89	21.1
Civil Servants (PNS)	50	11.9
Others	7	1.7
Education Background		
High School/Vocational (SMA/SMK)	183	43.5
D4 / S1 Diploma	146	34.7
S2/S3	78	18.5
Diploma	14	3.3
Total	421	100

5.2 Measurement Model

First, we examined the measurement model in relation to indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. All factor loadings were higher than the recommended threshold (Table 3), indicating strong reliability for all indicators. Internal reliability was also confirmed, as Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability were greater than 0.70 for all constructs (Ringle et al., 2020). Furthermore, convergent validity was established as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2022). AVEs for all constructs were above the lower limit of 0.50. These findings suggest that all items reliably and equally reflect their latent dimensions.

Table 3. Measurement model assessment

Construct	Item Code	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Rho_C	AVE
DI	DI01	0.879	0.911	0.915	0.938	0.790
	DI02	0.862				
	DI03	0.899				
	DI04	0.914				
EE	EE01	0.902	0.928	0.933	0.946	0.778
	EE02	0.909				
	EE03	0.910				
	EE04	0.866				
	EE05	0.820				

Table 3. Measurement model assessment (Continue)

Construct	Item Code	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_A	Rho_C	AVE
SME	SME01	0.928	0.892	0.893	0.933	0.822
	SME02	0.903				
	SME03	0.889				
VA	VA01	0.908	0.932	0.932	0.952	0.831
	VA02	0.926				
	VA03	0.909				
	VA04	0.903				
CI	CI01	0.832	0.823	0.824	0.895	0.739
	CI02	0.856				
	CI03	0.890				
CT	CT01	0.895	0.869	0.874	0.919	0.792
	CT02	0.867				
	CT03	0.906				
TI	TI01	0.915	0.889	0.889	0.931	0.819
	TI02	0.923				
	TI03	0.875				

Note: Destination Image (DI); Emotional Engagement (EE); Social Media Engagement (SME); Visual Appeal (VA); Content Informativeness (CI); Content Trustworthiness (CT); Travel Intention (TI).

After assessing convergent validity, discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT (Henseler et al., 2015). As presented in Table 4, all the HTMT values were less than the ideal threshold of 0.90. These values indicate that each construct was empirically distinct from the others. This result confirms that the discriminant validity between the latent variables is adequate.

Table 4. Discriminant validity: heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	DI	EE	SME	VA	CI	CT	TI	SME x CT	SME x VA	SME x CI
DI										
EE	0.681									
SME	0.623	0.662								
VA	0.663	0.781	0.591							
CI	0.701	0.800	0.662	0.748						
CT	0.671	0.737	0.607	0.756	0.778					
TI	0.762	0.816	0.624	0.834	0.797	0.799				
SME x CT										
CT	0.271	0.282	0.418	0.263	0.283	0.238	0.233			
SME x VA										
VA	0.261	0.342	0.461	0.325	0.276	0.251	0.301	0.893		
SME x CI										
CI	0.274	0.313	0.403	0.271	0.278	0.266	0.262	0.894	0.871	

Note: Destination Image (DI); Emotional Engagement (EE); Social Media Engagement (SME); Visual Appeal (VA); Content Informativeness (CI); Content Trustworthiness (CT); Travel Intention (TI).

Discriminant validity was also assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 5, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) exceeds its correlations with other constructs, indicating that each construct shares greater variance with its indicators than with other variables.

These results confirm adequate discriminant validity of the measurement model. In general, the measurement model met all criteria for reliability and validity and was therefore considered suitable for further analysis of the structural model. Furthermore, the overall model fit was satisfactory, as indicated by the low value for saturated (0.048) and estimated (0.049) SRMR below the cut-off point of 0.08.

Table 5. Discriminant validity: fornell-larcker

	DI	EE	SME	VA	CI	CT	TI
DI	0.889						
EE	0.630	0.882					
SME	0.563	0.604	0.907				
VA	0.615	0.730	0.539	0.912			
CI	0.612	0.702	0.568	0.658	0.860		
CT	0.601	0.666	0.536	0.682	0.666	0.890	
TI	0.687	0.743	0.555	0.760	0.684	0.704	0.905

Note: Destination Image (DI); Emotional Engagement (EE); Social Media Engagement (SME); Visual Appeal (VA); Content Informativeness (CI); Content Trustworthiness (CT); Travel Intention (TI).

5.3 Structural Model

Having assessed the measurement model, this study evaluated the structural model to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The results show that content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal have significant direct effects on emotional engagement, destination image, and travel intention, supporting the proposed links. Emotional engagement and destination image also significantly influence travel intention, confirming their affective and cognitive roles.

Table 6. Result of the hypothesis testing

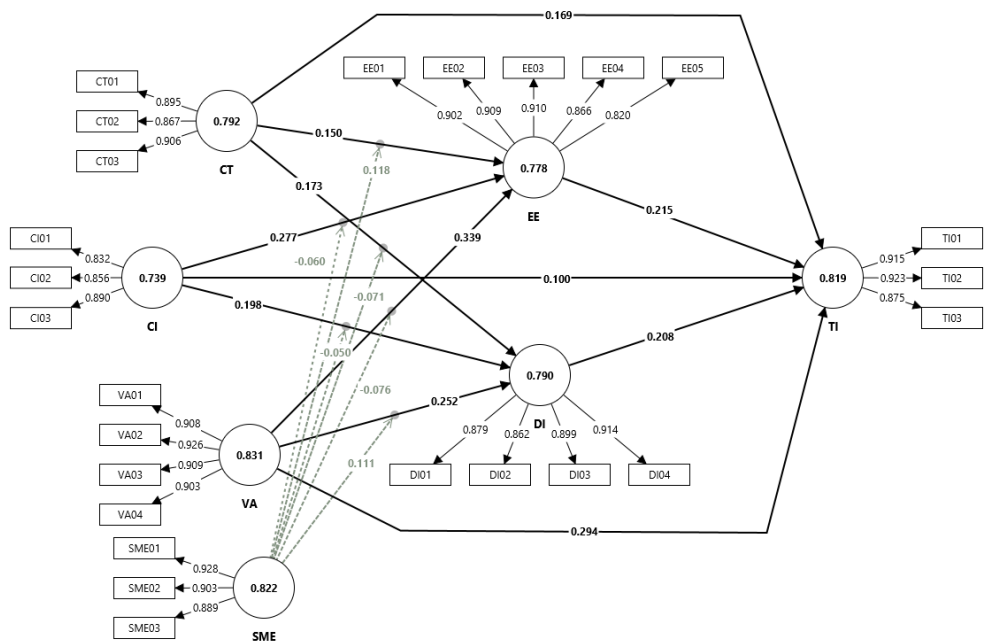
Hypothesis	Path	Std. Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1a	CT → TI	0.169	3.247	0.001	Accepted
H1b	CI → TI	0.100	2.318	0.010	Accepted
H1c	VA → TI	0.294	4.742	0.000	Accepted
H2a	CT → EE	0.150	3.043	0.001	Accepted
H2b	CI → EE	0.277	5.470	0.000	Accepted
H2c	VA → EE	0.339	5.820	0.000	Accepted
H3a	CT → DI	0.173	2.867	0.002	Accepted
H3b	CI → DI	0.198	3.875	0.000	Accepted
H3c	VA → DI	0.252	3.388	0.000	Accepted
H4a	EE → TI	0.215	4.290	0.000	Accepted
H4b	DI → TI	0.208	4.202	0.000	Accepted
H5a	CT → EE → TI	0.032	2.502	0.006	Accepted
H5b	CI → EE → TI	0.059	3.162	0.001	Accepted
H5c	VA → EE → TI	0.073	3.355	0.000	Accepted
H6a	CT → DI → TI	0.036	2.191	0.014	Accepted
H6b	CI → DI → TI	0.041	2.704	0.003	Accepted
H6c	VA → DI → TI	0.053	2.543	0.006	Accepted
H7a	SME x CT → EE	0.118	2.133	0.016	Accepted
H7b	SME x CI → EE	-0.060	0.901	0.184	Rejected
H7c	SME x VA → EE	-0.076	1.122	0.131	Rejected

Table 6. Result of the hypothesis testing (Continue)

Hypothesis	Path	Std. Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
H8a	SME x CT → DI	-0.071	1.244	0.107	Rejected
H8b	SME x CI → DI	-0.050	1.104	0.135	Rejected
H8c	SME x VA → DI	0.111	2.032	0.021	Accepted

Note: Destination Image (DI); Emotional Engagement (EE); Social Media Engagement (SME); Visual Appeal (VA); Content Informativeness (CI); Content Trustworthiness (CT); Travel Intention (TI).

Mediation analysis indicates that both constructs mediate the effects of content credibility on travel intention, while moderation analysis shows that social media engagement strengthens the relationships between content credibility and the organismic constructs. Table 6 summarizes the hypothesis testing, and Figure 2 presents the structural model. The model demonstrates strong predictive power, with R² values of 0.512 (destination image), 0.662 (emotional engagement), and 0.714 (travel intention), and Q² values above zero, indicating good predictive relevance.



Note: Values represent the standardized path coefficients. Dashed lines indicate moderating effects.

Figure 2. Structural model illustrating the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among content credibility dimensions (content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal), emotional engagement, destination image, social media engagement, and travel intention in short-form travel videos.

6. Discussion

6.1 The Effects of Content Credibility on Travel Intention

The results show that content trustworthiness (H1a), content informativeness (H1b), and visual appeal (H1c) positively influence travel intention. This confirms that content credibility functions as a persuasive stimulus in short-form travel videos. Trustworthy content reduces uncertainty, informative content supports decision-making, and visually appealing content enhances persuasive impact through positive affective responses (Han & Chen, 2022; Li & Tu, 2024; Li & Sun, 2024; van Reijmersdal et al., 2024). These findings show that users respond not only to who delivers the message but also to how the content

itself is presented. This result is consistent with prior tourism research showing that audiences are more likely to act on travel-related information when they perceive online content as credible, useful, and experience-based (Lamia et al., 2021). It also supports the argument that message-level believability can shape behavioral intention beyond source-level evaluations alone (Zhu et al., 2022).

6.2 The Effects of Content Credibility on Emotional Engagement

In addition to travel intention, Content trustworthiness (H2a), content informativeness (H2b), and visual appeal (H2c) positively affect emotional engagement. This indicates that credible content stimulates affective involvement and is not limited to information delivery. Trustworthy content, for example, fosters emotional connection. Meanwhile, informative content enhances meaningful engagement, and visual appeal strengthens immersion (Cheng et al., 2020; Wahba et al., 2025).

These results support the role of emotional engagement as the affective pathway in short-form video persuasion. Previous findings claim that credible content can lower users' doubts and encourage them to engage with online material more openly and favorably (Carvalho, 2024).

6.3 The Effects of Content Credibility on Destination Image

Similar findings were also reported in the Destination Image variable. Content trustworthiness (H3a), content informativeness (H3b), and visual appeal (H3c) were confirmed to have positive effects on destination image. This suggests that content credibility shapes viewers' cognitive evaluation of destinations. This supports the role of destination image as the cognitive pathway in short-form video contexts. The result also aligns with research suggesting that the aesthetic and informational qualities of digital content shape how audiences interpret destinations and form evaluations of place attractiveness and suitability (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025; Mir & Salo, 2024).

6.4 The Effects of Emotional Engagement and Destination Image on Travel Intention

When Emotional engagement (H4a) and destination image (H4b) were combined, they positively influenced travel intention. Scholars argue that emotional engagement enhances affective motivation (Li & See-To, 2024; Tan et al., 2023; Wahba et al., 2025; Wu & Ding, 2023), while destination image guides cognitive evaluation of destinations (Han et al., 2022; Li & Sun, 2024; Li & Jiang, 2024; Qiu et al., 2023). Together, these findings confirm that travel intention emerges from the combined influence of affective and cognitive processes, consistent with the S-O-R framework.

6.5 The Mediating Role of Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement significantly mediates the relationship between content credibility and travel intention (H5a, H5b, and H5c). This indicates that credible content influences travel intention by first stimulating affective involvement. These findings reinforce the importance of emotional processing in converting persuasive content into behavioral intention (Li & See-To, 2024; Tan et al., 2023; Wahba et al., 2025).

6.6 The Mediating Role of Destination Image

Destination image also significantly mediates the relationship between content credibility and travel intention (H6a, H6b, and H6c). This highlights its role as a cognitive mechanism for evaluating destination attributes. Together with emotional engagement,

these results demonstrate complementary affective and cognitive pathways linking content credibility to travel intention (Li & Sun, 2024; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Tiwari & Hashmi, 2022).

6.7 The Moderating Role of Social Media Engagement on Emotional Engagement

Social media engagement strengthens the relationship between content trustworthiness and emotional engagement (H7a) (Zheng et al., 2024), while effects for informativeness and visual appeal are not significant (H7b and H7c). This suggests that highly engaged users respond more strongly to authenticity cues than to informational or visual aspects. Active interaction increases sensitivity to credible content (Cha, 2024; Omeish et al., 2024). This interpretation is consistent with recent work that defines social media engagement as explicit interaction with individual posts, where higher engagement reflects stronger attention and involvement (Aldous et al., 2026).

6.8 The Moderating Role of Social Media Engagement on Destination Image

Lastly, social media engagement does not moderate the effects of content trustworthiness and informativeness on destination image (H8a and H8b) (Omeish et al., 2024), but it strengthens the effect of visual appeal (H8c). This indicates that highly engaged users rely more on visual cues when forming cognitive evaluations of destinations (Qiu et al., 2023). This pattern also supports the view that visual presentation becomes especially influential in highly interactive social media environments, where attention is often driven by content aesthetics (Mir & Salo, 2024).

6.9 Managerial Implications

These findings have practical implications for individuals involved directly in the travel industry. For instance, tourism marketers should prioritize trustworthy, informative, and visually appealing short-form travel videos, as these factors directly increase travel intention through emotional engagement and destination image. Encouraging audience interaction is also important, since higher social media engagement strengthens emotional responses to trustworthy content and enhances destination evaluations driven by visual appeal.

6.10 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the findings support the S-O-R framework by confirming that content credibility influences emotional engagement and destination image, which subsequently shape travel intention. The study also extends the framework by highlighting the importance of content-level credibility and demonstrating that social media engagement strengthens selected stimulus-organism relationships in short-form video contexts.

6.11 Limitations

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Second, the sample focuses on Indonesian Gen Y and Z. Thus, the results must be interpreted more cautiously for the older population. Third, other relevant variables, such as perceived risk and parasocial interaction, were not included. Finally, the temporal relationship between affective and cognitive processes could not be examined.

7. Conclusion

This study confirms that content credibility in short-form travel videos, as reflected in content trustworthiness, content informativeness, and visual appeal, significantly influences travel intention among Gen Y and Gen Z consumers in Indonesia. The findings further demonstrate that emotional engagement and destination image function as significant affective and cognitive mediating pathways within the S-O-R framework. In addition, social media engagement strengthens selected relationships between content credibility and the organismic variables. Overall, the study highlights the importance of credible and visually engaging content in shaping travel-related decision-making in social media environments.

8. Recommendation

Future studies are encouraged to apply longitudinal or experimental approaches to better examine causal relationships among content credibility, emotional engagement, destination image, and travel intention. Research involving broader demographic and cultural contexts is also recommended to improve generalizability. In addition, future studies may incorporate variables such as perceived risk, parasocial interaction, or platform-specific features to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital tourism persuasion. Further investigation of sequential relationships between affective and cognitive processes is also recommended.

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