

User-Generated Content and Travel Decisions: A Review of Peer Influence from Social Media to Actual Trips

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ABSTRACT

Social media and user-generated content (UGC) have become key influences on tourist decision-making. This systematic review examines how UGC shapes actual travel behavior by exploring the transition from travel intention to action, the influence of single versus multiple social media platforms, and the impact of different content formats such as reviews, images, videos, and vlogs. The findings suggest that visual and emotionally engaging content, along with multi-platform exposure, significantly increases the likelihood of actual travel. The review also highlights the moderating role of demographic and cultural factors while identifying gaps in longitudinal, cross-platform, and non-Western research. A conceptual framework is proposed to explain the relationship between UGC, platform engagement, and travel behavior. The study offers valuable insights for researchers, tourism marketers, and destination managers seeking to transform online inspiration into real travel decisions.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Social Media, Travel Behavior, Peer Influence, Tourism Marketing, Travel Decision-Making

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has emerged as a central force in shaping contemporary tourism behavior, influencing how travelers search, evaluate, and ultimately decide on destinations. Over the past decade, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and TripAdvisor have evolved into dynamic digital ecosystems where individuals actively create and consume travel-related narratives (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Mariani et al., 2021). At the core of this transformation is user-generated content (UGC)—non-commercial information created by users themselves, including photographs, reviews, ratings, long-form blogs, reels, and vlogs—which is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than marketer-generated content (Aych et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2020).

The growing significance of UGC is supported by extensive research indicating that travelers increasingly

rely on peer-generated information when making travel decisions. For instance, online reviews significantly influence perceptions of service quality and destination image (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Sparks & Browning, 2011). Visual content, particularly images and videos on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, has been shown to evoke strong emotional responses and stimulate desire for travel, reinforcing the concept of “visual tourism” (Gretzel, 2018; Marder et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022). This aligns with established behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Influence Theory, which highlight the power of subjective norms, peer approval, and affective evaluations in shaping both intentions and actions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

While many studies have confirmed the persuasive power of UGC, the majority focus primarily on travel intentions, leaving a significant research gap regarding how digital inspiration converts into actual travel behavior (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2020; Xiang et al., 2021). Understanding this

gap is critical, as intentions do not always predict behavior due to intervening constraints such as cost, safety, accessibility, social obligations, or shifting personal priorities (Sheeran, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2006). Recent evidence suggests that UGC can serve as a “behavioral catalyst,” motivating users not only to aspire to travel but to take concrete steps toward booking trips (Chung & Han, 2017; Mariani et al., 2021). However, systematic empirical investigation of this transition remains limited.

The digital environment has also become significantly more fragmented and multi-layered. Travelers now engage in cross-platform consumption, encountering content that collectively shapes their perceptions and decisions (Sigala, 2018; Fotis et al., 2019). For example, a user might discover a destination on Instagram, watch detailed vlogs on YouTube, read reviews on TripAdvisor, and participate in discussion groups on Facebook. These multi-platform interactions can create reinforcing loops that strengthen destination appeal, yet research comparing the effects of single versus multiple platforms remains sparse (Xiang et al., 2021; Mariani & Borghi, 2022).

Additionally, UGC does not influence all travelers equally. Studies highlight that demographic factors (age, gender), cultural values, travel motivations, and risk perceptions significantly moderate responses to digital content (Hudson et al., 2015; Li et al., 2022; De Veirman et al., 2017). Younger generations (Gen Z and Millennials), for instance, show heightened responsiveness to short-form video content and influencer posts, whereas older travelers may rely more heavily on textual reviews (Gretzel, 2018; Marder et al., 2021). Cultural studies further reveal that collectivist societies respond more strongly to peer endorsements and community-based recommendations than individualistic cultures (Pham et al., 2019). Despite this, most research remains concentrated in Western contexts, highlighting a clear need for studies in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East—regions experiencing rapid digital tourism growth.

Given these complexities, the relationship between UGC and actual travel decision-making requires a more holistic and integrative understanding. This review synthesizes current evidence to examine the mechanisms and pathways through which UGC influences tourist behavior—moving beyond intention to assess real-world outcomes. Specifically, it addresses: (a) how UGC contributes to the transition from intention to actual travel behavior, (b) how single-platform versus multi-platform engagement shapes decisions, and (c) how different UGC formats—textual, visual, interactive, or narrative—vary in their influence on behavior.

1.2 Evolution of Social Media and the Rise of UGC in Tourism

Social media has transformed tourism from a brochure-driven industry into a dynamic, interactive digital ecosystem. With the emergence of Web 2.0, travelers shifted from passive recipients of promotional messages to active participants who create, share, and evaluate

travel-related content (Gretzel et al., 2007; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and TripAdvisor now provide real-time information, destination previews, and peer-based recommendations that strongly shape travel planning. This shift toward consumer-driven communication has elevated electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as one of the most influential forces guiding destination perceptions and choice (Litvin et al., 2008). User-generated content (UGC)—including reviews, photos, ratings, videos, and vlogs—has become especially influential because it reflects genuine traveler experiences and is perceived as more credible and transparent than traditional marketing (Ayeh et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2020). This authenticity enables UGC to shape destination image, manage traveler expectations, and influence various stages of the decision-making process.

1.3 Visual Communication and Emotional Engagement in Travel Decisions

Tourism has increasingly adopted visual-first communication, driven by platforms that prioritize images, reels, and vlogs. Visual content captures attention quickly and triggers emotional responses, making it more effective than text in stimulating travel enthusiasm (Gretzel, 2018). Algorithms on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube amplify visually appealing and emotionally engaging content, enabling viewers to imagine themselves in the destination—a process known as “visual transportation” (Lee et al., 2022). This emotional engagement enhances destination desirability, strengthens travel aspirations, and contributes to experiences such as FOMO (fear of missing out), particularly among digital-native travelers who base many decisions on visually curated social content.

1.4 Influence of UGC on Travel Intentions and Real Travel Behavior

Although UGC consistently influences travel intentions, translating these intentions into actual travel behavior remains a challenge. Many travelers experience an intention–behavior gap due to constraints such as time, financial considerations, safety concerns, or changing priorities (Sheeran, 2002; Lam & Hsu, 2006). However, immersive and emotionally rich UGC—such as influencer vlogs, destination videos, and narrative-based content—helps reduce uncertainty and inspires stronger behavioral commitment (Chung & Han, 2017). By allowing travelers to visualize the experience in detail, UGC can motivate decision-making, although empirical research directly linking online influence to physical travel remains limited. Additionally, modern travelers use multiple platforms throughout the planning process. Instagram provides inspiration, YouTube offers deeper insights, TripAdvisor supports credibility checks, and Facebook enables community discussions. This multi-platform engagement creates reinforcing exposure that strengthens interest and confidence in destination choice (Fotis et al., 2019), though research comparing single versus multi-platform effects is still developing.

1.5 Moderating Factors Shaping the Impact of UGC

The influence of UGC varies across travelers due to demographic, cultural, and psychological differences. Younger users, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, respond more strongly to dynamic visual formats such as short videos and reels (Marder et al., 2021). Cultural background affects reliance on peer reviews; collectivist cultures are more dependent on social validation, while individualistic cultures rely more on personal judgment (Pham et al., 2019). Other moderating factors—such as perceived risk, trust in online content, previous travel experience, and intrinsic travel motivations—also shape how travelers interpret and act upon UGC (Filieri, 2016). These variations help explain why the same content may inspire one traveler yet have little effect on another.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Systematically review literature on how UGC influences actual travel behavior, highlighting the gap between intention and real-world travel actions.

Analyze the role of different social media platforms, focusing on cross-platform effects on tourist decision-making.

Categorize types of UGC (textual reviews, images, videos, vlogs) and evaluate their differential impact on converting social media inspiration into actual travel behavior.

Propose a conceptual framework linking UGC inspiration, platform engagement, content type, and actual travel outcomes, highlighting areas for future empirical research.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Social Media as an Information Ecosystem in Tourism

The rise of social media has fundamentally altered how tourists search for, process, and evaluate travel-related information. Early tourism studies highlighted the dominance of traditional information sources such as guidebooks, travel agencies, and brochures; however, the emergence of Web 2.0 shifted the paradigm toward interactive, user-driven communication (Gretzel et al., 2007; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Social media platforms now function as complex information ecosystems where travelers access real-time updates, destination imagery, and peer experiences. Research shows that social media supports various stages of the travel decision-making process—dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing, and sharing—thus creating a continuous cycle of influence (Hudson & Thal, 2013). The interactive nature of these platforms has increased the visibility of peer content and expanded travelers' information sources beyond official tourism channels.

3.2 The Role of User-Generated Content in Shaping Destination Image

Advances in Consumer Research

User-generated content (UGC) plays a central role in destination image formation due to its authenticity and relatability. Studies consistently highlight that UGC enhances cognitive and affective evaluations of destinations by presenting firsthand accounts of experiences (Ayeh et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2021). UGC provides detailed evaluations—such as service perceptions, cultural encounters, and photographic evidence—that help travelers reduce uncertainty and enhance trust (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Compared to marketer-generated content, UGC is considered more credible because it is derived from real consumers without commercial intent (Leung et al., 2020). Furthermore, research indicates that UGC contributes to *projected* and *perceived* destination images, bridging the gap between visual representations online and visitor expectations (Govers & Go, 2005). The cumulative effect of multiple peer reviews and visuals often solidifies travelers' judgments about destination attractiveness, safety, and value for money.

3.3 Visual Content and Emotional Responses: The Rise of Visual Tourism

The dominance of images and videos in tourism communication has led to what scholars term “visual tourism” (Gretzel, 2018). Visual UGC—such as Instagram photos, TikTok reels, YouTube vlogs—generates strong emotional responses by allowing viewers to imagine themselves in the depicted scenes (Lee et al., 2022).

Emotionally engaging content enhances:

desire for travel,

destination attachment,

inspiration and aspiration, and

psychological triggers such as FOMO.

Studies show that emotionally charged images evoke higher levels of intention to visit compared to text-only reviews (Marder et al., 2021). Vlogs, especially, provide immersive storytelling that increases perceived authenticity, influencing both destination interest and trust (Chen & Dermawan, 2020).

3.4 Peer Influence and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a central component of digital tourism marketing. Online reviews, ratings, and recommendations influence consumer attitudes and reduce perceived risk, particularly when travelers are considering unfamiliar destinations (Litvin et al., 2008; Filieri, 2016). Research highlights two types of peer influence:

Informational influence – reviews provide facts, advice, and evaluations.

Normative influence – travelers are swayed by social approval or the behavior of others.

Studies show that the volume and valence of reviews significantly affect destination choice and booking

intentions (Sparks & Browning, 2011). The credibility of the reviewer—based on profile, expertise, or social presence—also enhances the persuasive power of UGC (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2020).

3.5 UGC and the Intention–Behavior Gap in Tourism

A substantial body of research confirms UGC’s influence on travel intentions, yet few studies examine its impact on actual travel behavior (Xiang et al., 2021). The intention–behavior gap, widely discussed in consumer psychology, persists in tourism due to constraints such as budget, time, risk perception, and personal circumstances (Sheeran, 2002).

While UGC often inspires strong intentions, empirical evidence linking social media exposure to actual trips is limited. Some studies suggest that vivid, immersive content—particularly videos and influencer-led narratives—helps bridge this gap by increasing emotional engagement and reducing uncertainty (Chung & Han, 2017). Nevertheless, longitudinal studies tracking real travel behavior remain rare.

3.6 Multi-Platform Social Media Use and Reinforcement Effects

Recent research emphasizes that travelers do not rely on a single platform; instead, they navigate a multi-platform ecosystem. For example, Instagram sparks initial interest, YouTube provides detailed insights, and TripAdvisor confirms credibility (Fotis et al., 2019). Cross-platform engagement creates a reinforcement effect because different types of UGC complement one another. Exposure to consistent information across platforms increases perceived reliability and strengthens behavioral intentions (Sigala, 2018). However, comparative research examining platform-specific influences—such as the differing impacts of TikTok vs. Instagram—remains limited, representing an emerging area of study.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize existing scholarly evidence on the influence of user-generated content (UGC) on actual travel behavior, with particular emphasis on peer influence and multi-platform social media engagement. An SLR is appropriate for this study as it enables a transparent, replicable, and structured synthesis of prior research, allowing for the identification of patterns, gaps, and future research directions (Tranfield et al., 2003; Snyder, 2019).

Unlike narrative reviews, the SLR method minimizes selection bias through predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and follows a rigorous screening process inspired

by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines.

4.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using three major academic databases:

Scopus

Web of Science (WoS)

Google Scholar

These databases were selected for their strong coverage of tourism, hospitality, marketing, and social media research.

The search used Boolean combinations of keywords, including:

“user-generated content” AND “travel behavior”

“social media” AND “tourism decision-making”

“peer influence” AND “travel decisions”

“electronic word-of-mouth” AND “tourism”

“Instagram” OR “TikTok” OR “YouTube” AND “travel behavior”

The search was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language, open-access journal articles published between 2019 and 2025.

4.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria consisted of studies:

Focused on UGC, social media, and tourism

Examining travel intentions and/or actual travel behavior

Employing empirical, review, or mixed-method designs

Exclusion criteria included:

Conference papers, books, editorials, and grey literature

Non-English publications

Studies unrelated to tourism or lacking a social media focus

4.4 Screening and Selection Process (PRISMA-Style)

Article selection followed a four-stage PRISMA-inspired screening process: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. After removing duplicates and applying inclusion criteria, 28 peer-reviewed articles were retained for qualitative synthesis.

4.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extracted from each study included publication details, platform focus, UGC type, methodology, and key findings related to travel behavior. A thematic synthesis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns concerning peer influence, visual engagement, cross-platform exposure, and the intention–behavior gap. PRISMA Flow Table

Stage	Description	Number of Records
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Identification	Records identified through database search (Scopus, WoS, Google Scholar)	124
Identification	Duplicate records removed	36
Screening	Records screened by title and abstract	88
Screening	Records excluded for irrelevance	41
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	47
Eligibility	Full-text articles excluded (scope/method mismatch)	19
Included	Studies included in final synthesis	28

Table 1. PRISMA Flow of Study Selection

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the synthesized results derived from the 28 peer-reviewed studies included in the systematic literature review. The findings are organized thematically to highlight dominant patterns, areas of convergence, and key insights into the mechanisms through which user-generated content (UGC) influences actual travel behavior, extending beyond its established role in shaping travel intentions.

5.1 Distribution of Studies by Platform and UGC Type

The reviewed literature demonstrates a strong concentration on visual and hybrid social media platforms. Instagram and YouTube emerged as the most frequently examined platforms, followed by TripAdvisor, Facebook, and TikTok. Text-based platforms were primarily examined in relation to risk reduction, credibility assessment, and information verification, whereas visually oriented platforms were consistently associated with emotional engagement, inspiration, and destination appeal.

In terms of UGC formats, visual content—particularly images, short videos, reels, and vlogs—dominated the reviewed studies. Textual reviews and ratings were largely linked to trust formation and final decision validation rather than initial inspiration. Narrative-based UGC, such as travel vlogs and experiential storytelling, demonstrated greater persuasive strength than isolated images or brief captions, as these formats provide contextual depth and perceived authenticity. This distribution reflects a broader shift in tourism research toward experience-rich and immersive digital content, aligning with evolving traveler information consumption behaviors in visually driven social media environments.

5.2 Influence of UGC on Travel Intentions versus Actual Travel Behavior

A central finding of the review is the imbalance between intention-focused and behavior-focused research. While the majority of studies report a positive and significant relationship between UGC exposure and travel intentions,

only a limited number empirically examine actual travel behavior, including confirmed visits, bookings, or destination choice realization. This highlights a persistent methodological gap within tourism and social media research.

Nevertheless, studies that explicitly examined behavioral outcomes indicate that emotionally engaging UGC strengthens behavioral commitment rather than merely generating aspirational interest. Repeated exposure to peer-generated content enhances destination familiarity and reduces perceived uncertainty, thereby increasing the likelihood of travel action. In this context, UGC functions as a behavioral catalyst, particularly when combined with high levels of perceived authenticity and source credibility. Overall, the findings confirm the existence of an intention–behavior gap, while also demonstrating that immersive and high-quality UGC can partially mitigate this gap by facilitating decision conversion.

5.3 Role of Visual and Emotional Engagement

One of the most consistent findings across the reviewed studies is the superior influence of visual and emotionally rich content on travel-related actions. Images, short-form videos, and vlogs were found to evoke strong emotional responses, including excitement, nostalgia, and desire, while simultaneously enhancing destination imagery and memorability. Such content encourages imagined self-placement within the destination, allowing potential travelers to mentally simulate the experience prior to visitation.

Vlogs and long-form video content were particularly effective in influencing actual travel behavior due to their ability to convey contextual detail, experiential authenticity, and narrative continuity. Emotional engagement emerged as a critical mediating factor between UGC exposure and travel action, suggesting that affective responses play a decisive role in transforming digital inspiration into concrete behavioral outcomes.

5.4 Peer Influence and Electronic Word-of-Mouth Effects

The findings provide strong empirical support for the role of peer influence and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in shaping travel decisions. Positive reviews and peer endorsements consistently enhanced destination trust and reduced perceived risk. Review volume and consistency were found to exert a greater influence on decision-making than isolated opinions, indicating the importance of collective validation. Furthermore, peer similarity, particularly in terms of demographics and travel preferences, amplified the persuasive impact of UGC.

Normative influence, whereby individuals align their choices with perceived social approval, was especially prominent among younger travelers. Informational influence, in contrast, was more influential in the context of unfamiliar or high-risk destinations. Together, these findings reinforce the role of UGC as a social validation mechanism that facilitates confidence-building and supports travel decision-making.

5.5 Single-Platform versus Multi-Platform Exposure

An important emerging finding concerns the role of multi-platform engagement in travel decision processes. The reviewed studies suggest that travelers rarely rely on a single social media platform; instead, they operate within a cross-platform ecosystem throughout different stages of travel planning. Single-platform exposure primarily serves an inspirational function, while multi-platform exposure reinforces credibility, confidence, and decision commitment.

Consistency of information across platforms enhances perceived reliability and reduces uncertainty, thereby increasing the likelihood of actual travel behavior. This reinforcement effect suggests that platform synergy is more influential than platform dominance, highlighting the importance of integrated and coordinated social media strategies in influencing tourist behavior.

5.6 Moderating Factors Affecting UGC Effectiveness

The review identifies several moderating factors that shape the effectiveness of UGC in influencing travel behavior. Age and generational differences play a significant role, with Generation Z and Millennials demonstrating greater responsiveness to short-form video content and influencer-led narratives. Cultural context also moderates UGC influence, as travelers from collectivist cultures exhibit stronger reliance on peer recommendations and social approval.

Perceived risk and trust further affect UGC effectiveness, with higher levels of perceived risk increasing dependence on detailed reviews, vlogs, and experiential narratives. Prior travel experience also influences response patterns, as experienced travelers rely less on UGC for inspiration but continue to use it for validation and confirmation. These moderating effects explain observed variability in behavioral outcomes and underscore the need for context-sensitive and audience-specific UGC strategies

Table 3. Summary of Key Findings from the Systematic Literature Review

Theme	Key Findings	Evidence from Reviewed Studies	Implications
Influence of UGC on Travel Behavior	UGC strongly influences travel intentions; limited but growing evidence confirms its impact on actual travel behavior.	Majority of studies focus on intention; few track bookings, visits, or confirmed trips.	Need for behavioral and longitudinal research to validate intention–action conversion.
Visual vs. Textual UGC	Visual and narrative-based UGC (images, videos, vlogs) has stronger behavioral influence than text-only reviews.	Visual content generates higher emotional engagement and destination recall.	Tourism marketers should prioritize visual storytelling strategies.
Emotional Engagement	Emotional responses mediate the relationship between UGC exposure and travel action.	Emotions such as excitement, desire, and FOMO enhance commitment.	Designing emotionally engaging content can improve conversion rates.
Peer Influence and eWOM	Peer recommendations and reviews significantly enhance trust and reduce perceived risk.	Review volume and peer similarity increase credibility.	Peer-based content is critical for destination trust-building.
Platform Type Effects	Different platforms influence different decision stages.	Instagram/TikTok inspire; YouTube informs; TripAdvisor validates.	Integrated, platform-specific marketing strategies are required.
Single vs. Multi-Platform Exposure	Multi-platform exposure strengthens credibility and increases likelihood of actual travel.	Cross-platform consistency reinforces destination image.	Coordinated cross-platform campaigns are more

			effective than single-platform focus.
Moderating Factors	Demographics, culture, risk perception, and prior experience shape UGC effectiveness.	Younger users respond more to videos; collectivist cultures rely on peer approval.	UGC strategies should be tailored to target audience characteristics.
Research Gaps	Limited behavioral data, platform comparisons, and non-Western studies.	Most research concentrated in Western contexts and intention-based models.	Future studies should adopt cross-cultural and behavioral approaches.

6 DISCUSSION

This review advances the understanding of how user-generated content (UGC) influences actual travel behavior, addressing a key gap in tourism research that has largely focused on travel intentions. The findings suggest that immersive and emotionally engaging UGC helps bridge the intention–behavior gap by reducing uncertainty, increasing trust, and strengthening travelers’ confidence to act. Rather than serving only as an information source, UGC functions as a behavioral catalyst that encourages real travel decisions.

Visual content, including images, videos, reels, and vlogs, exerts the strongest influence on travel behavior by creating emotional engagement and vivid mental imagery. These findings extend existing research by demonstrating that emotional engagement not only shapes travel intentions but also motivates actual travel. Peer-generated reviews and electronic word-of-mouth further strengthen trust and provide social validation, reducing perceived risk and reinforcing destination credibility.

The review also highlights the growing importance of multi-platform exposure in travel decision-making. Travelers increasingly rely on multiple social media platforms for inspiration, information, and validation, suggesting that travel decisions result from cumulative digital experiences rather than interactions with a single platform. This reflects the evolving nature of the digital tourism ecosystem, where consistent messages across platforms enhance credibility and behavioral confidence.

The influence of UGC is not universal but varies across demographic, cultural, and experiential contexts. Factors such as age, cultural background, perceived risk, and previous travel experience moderate how travelers interpret and respond to online content. These findings emphasize the need for context-specific approaches in both research and tourism marketing, particularly in non-Western and emerging destinations where empirical evidence remains limited.

7 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This systematic literature review examined how user-generated content (UGC) influences actual travel behavior by synthesizing evidence from 28 peer-reviewed studies. The findings indicate that UGC plays a significant role in converting travel intentions into actual travel, particularly when content is authentic, visually appealing, and emotionally engaging. Formats such as videos, vlogs, and experiential storytelling were found to be more influential

than textual reviews, while peer recommendations and electronic word-of-mouth strengthen trust, reduce perceived risk, and enhance destination credibility.

The review also highlights the increasing importance of multi-platform social media use, where travelers rely on different platforms for inspiration, information, and validation throughout the decision-making process. Furthermore, the influence of UGC varies across demographic, cultural, and experiential contexts, emphasizing that digital travel behavior is shaped by multiple moderating factors. Overall, this study contributes to tourism literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of how emotional engagement, authenticity, and cross-platform exposure drive actual travel behavior.

Despite these contributions, several research gaps remain. Future studies should focus on measuring actual travel behavior using objective indicators such as booking records, visitation data, and geolocation tracking rather than relying solely on self-reported intentions. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to better understand how UGC influences travelers over time and across different social media platforms. Greater attention should also be given to emerging platforms, short-form video content, and immersive media technologies. In addition, more research is required in non-Western and emerging tourism destinations to improve the generalizability of existing findings. Finally, integrating perspectives from tourism, psychology, marketing, and communication studies will help develop more robust models explaining the psychological mechanisms through which UGC shapes travel behavior.

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