From Clicks to Trips: Exploring Gen Z's Motivations behind Travel Video Sharing on Douyin

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Abstract

The Douyin platform has rapidly popularized the sharing of travel experiences through short videos. This trend has especially emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly restricted opportunities for in-person travel. Generation Z, as the platform's primary users, increasingly share travel content for attention and engagement. This study examines the psychological and social factors influencing Gen Z's video-sharing behavior on Douyin. Integrating the theory of planned behavior and social presence theory, the research explores the roles of attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction, with trust as a mediator. Using purposive sampling, 403 valid responses were collected and analyzed via PLS-SEM. Research findings indicate that all five factors positively influence video-sharing behavior, with trust mediating the effects of attitude, subjective norms, interactivity, and social interaction, but not social presence. This study contributes to the understanding of user motivations in tourism-related short video sharing and offers practical insights for digital tourism marketing.

Keywords: short travel videos, theory of planned behavior, social presence theory, Generation Z, Douyin, China

1. Introduction

1.1 Study Background

The COVID-19 outbreak has had an unprecedentedly large impact on tourism around the world, including China. China has gained nearly 145.3 million international tourists; however, tourism has declined sharply to 27.5 million in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, domestic tourists in China have decreased significantly from 1.409 billion (Quarter 4, 2019) to 295 million (Quarter 1, 2020) (Blazyte, 2024a; 2024b). Furthermore, the China Tourism Development Report has highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic imposed significant pressure and challenges towards the tourism industry in China (World Tourism Alliance, 2022) in comparison with previous years. Since November 2022, the tourism industry has undergone a significant transformation following China's successful transition with minimal new waves of infections (Global Times, 2023).

The advanced technology has undoubtedly brought about a new trend in tourism development, although it is slow but steadily emerging. This technology is characterized by shifts in consumer preferences in accessing short videos, particularly in relation to tourism content. Douyin, as one of the most influential short video mobile applications in China, has the potential to increase the number of visits to the destination and its destination brand (Zheng et al., 2022). Furthermore, the rapid development of platforms has introduced new ways to disseminate information, which changed the transmission relationship between audiences, enabling everyone to become a disseminator of information; including the tourism short video content (Du et al., 2022).

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2009 (Dolot, 2018), is the first generation to be born into a digital world where they live, engage with, and integrate themselves into technology. As this generation has had constant exposure to the Internet, social networks, and mobile systems from the very beginning (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), Generation Z has become accustomed to interacting in an "always connected" world (Turner, 2015). They are equipped with unique attributes such as being highly educated, technologically savvy, innovative, and creative (Kovary & Pearson, 2017). In addition, they have greater preferences to interact, share, and exchange with others about their personal experiences, product reviews, videos, and photos (Shi, 2024) via social media platforms including Douyin (Du et al., 2022), Instagram (Choi et al., 2023), and X (Irzawati et al., 2024). This information demonstrates their strong confidence and interest in establishing their social presence to communicate relatable experiences with the audiences effectively.

Creating and sharing content on social media has become an essential part of many people's daily lives (Du et al., 2022). Douyin, a short video platform, has visibility and is enjoyable to use. In line with the trend culture pursued by young people, user coverage is extremely high. Statista, as one of the prominent global data platforms, has indicated that Douyin has reached approximately 755 million monthly active users as of February 2024, and the daily search volume is more than 400 million (Thomala, 2024). Hence, there is no doubt that Douyin has evolved into an innovative space of traffic and information (W. Wang, 2023). However, numerous studies (Lu & Pan, 2021; Zhou et al., 2022) have conducted research related to Douyin as a short video platform in general. However, research studies that focused particularly on travel media content are scarce. A relatively unexplored area is the utilization of travel videos, which combine visual images with continuous commentary to showcase the tourism development in China.

The continued increase in the number of active users on Douyin indicates that the sharing and dissemination of short videos has become well-established, especially in recent years. This study focuses on Generation Z. Previous studies (Li et al., 2024; Na, 2023) are primarily focused on Chinese youth, with less attention on Generation Z. Surprisingly, earlier studies as conducted by Hua and Chiu (2022) claimed that Generation Z is the most important group in China, as the group's purchasing ability grows, and travelling has become one of their essential means of leisure and entertainment. In the post-epidemic era, the tourism market is rapidly adapting, driving a large influx of customers in their respective segments, such as self-driving tours, resort hotels, and unique folklore. Indeed, the "back wave" in the consumer group is unstoppable, and the post-90s and post-00s, known as Generation Z, have emerged as a powerful consumer force seeking a more personalized and high-quality travel experience.

To address the aforementioned existing research gaps in this literature, this study examines the determinants (i.e., attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction) that lead to the sharing behaviors of Douyin travel video content among Generation Z in China. This study provides insights into the motivations and factors of Generation Z for sharing short travel videos in the Douyin platform, providing profound insights into the understanding of the new generation's social media behavior. This research is, therefore, tailored to the Generation Z demographic, aligning with contemporary trends. This study serves as an illustration of the experiences and behaviors of the young Chinese Generation Z demographic. This study can provide valuable insights for the Chinese government, social media platforms, and a wider audience of media users in their professional spheres.

This study is founded on the theory of planned behavior and social presence theory. Attitude and subjective norms, derived from the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2011), elucidate the determinants that shape an individual's decision to engage in specific behaviors, exhibiting high accuracy in forecasting intentions across diverse behavioral domains. Social presence, on the other hand, involves the emotional elements of social presence, including emotional support, empathy and expression, to gain insight into how Generation Z affects and is affected by these emotional connections, which in turn affects their sharing behaviors (Ham et al., 2019). Interactivity is often understood as an attribute of online media by previous studies (Hsu et al., 2015; Ng & Omar, 2019). For instance, new media platforms such as smartphones and tablets are typically associated with high interactivity. Numerous studies have also proven that social interactions lead to sharing behaviors, particularly on social media platforms (Ham et al., 2019).

Next, this research identifies trust as the mediating effect between attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interactions toward sharing behavior via the Douyin platform. Trust can be regarded as a bridge for information processing, and by building trust on social media, individuals are more likely to accept others' information and develop positive attitudes in sharing behaviors (Hsu et al., 2007; Muliadi et al., 2024). When individuals trust specific social groups or followers, they are more likely to be influenced by those groups, which in turn affects their sharing behavior (Lu et al., 2016).

While existing studies on short video-sharing behavior have largely focused on global platforms like TikTok (Ortiz et al., 2023; Zhou, 2024) that prioritizes fast-paced, shallow interaction, aligned with its algorithm and the Western emphasis on brevity and immediacy, this study highlights Douyin's distinct positioning within the Chinese digital media landscape. Douyin encourages more reflective and immersive content consumption. For example, its algorithm rewards longer dwell time and deeper engagement, such as detailed comments and extended video interactions, which align with user behaviors unique to the platform (Huang & Ye, 2024). This study, therefore, contributes new insights by investigating how these platform-specific affordances, combined with China's media ecology, influence the video-sharing behaviors of Generation Z. By focusing on Douyin as a platform distinct from its Western counterparts, the study extends current understanding of social media use in culturally and technologically unique environments.

In all, by understanding the factors driving Generation Z's video-sharing behaviors, this study generates actionable insights for tourism marketers to design engaging campaigns, leverage user-generated content, and amplify destination visibility on social media platforms, such as Douyin.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 The Influence of Short Videos on Generation Z

Short videos have emerged as a prominent and influential medium in our everyday lives, including Generation Z. Generation Z, or individuals who were born in 1995 or later (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), are estimated to exceed one-third of the world's population (Cervi, 2021). Born and raised in the digital era, Generation Z has developed a close relationship with digital technologies via various social media platforms (Akhirin & Palupi, 2022). In fact, they can effortlessly connect and communicate with billions of people worldwide with just a single click.

As a generation that grew up with the Internet, Generation Z has become the backbone of self-media bloggers via various social media platforms. The dynamic and engaging content on Douyin provides Generation Z with greater opportunities for connection and interaction compared to other social media platforms (Ortiz et al., 2023). These opportunities are where the earlier concept of 'we media' (Bowman & Willis, 2003) and the later concept of 'self-media' (Zhou et al., 2022) shape the information by online content creators. Self-media is considered an emerging platform for individuals to express themselves and showcase their personalities as long as an individual is equipped with a computer, smartphone, or other technological device that allows them to share happening events or stories (J. Wang, 2023). For instance, content creators prefer to record, produce, and share about themselves in the form of short videos on tourism content (Du et al., 2022). Other than these behaviors, Generation Z has recognized the significance of short videos in effectively conveying the images of tourist destinations (Lin et al., 2024).

The theory of planned behavior offers a robust framework to understand the motivational factors (attitudes, norms, and perceived control) driving Douyin users' sharing behavior. Complementing this theory, the social presence theory provides a lens for analyzing the role of Douyin's unique social features, such as real-time interaction in fostering a sense of social presence, which potentially leads to sharing behaviors among the users. The integration of both theories capture both the individual motivations and the platform-mediated social interactions shaping Douyin users' behavior.

2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior is a widely used expectancy-value model of attitude-behavior interactions, commonly employed to predict a range of behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). The theory holds significant importance in consumer behavior research (Kashyap & Kumar, 2024; Shetu, 2024) that forecasts behavioral decisions even in the current dynamic market landscape. Recent studies (Kashyap & Kumar, 2024) applied the theory of planned behavior to investigate the impact of health consciousness and COVID-19 protocols on attitudes toward online shopping and their influence on purchase intention. Shetu (2024), on the other hand, developed his research by examining the concepts of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as deduced from the theory of planned behavior influences the actual behavior among consumers, particularly Generation Z. Joo et al. (2020) used the theory of reasoned action to examine the factors that consist of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control towards the intention to visit rural tourism. Another recent study by Özel and Çoban (2023) concluded that subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude positively contribute to the destination visit intention among tourists. This study, however, narrowed its research scope to investigate the determinants of short travel video-sharing behavior, particularly among Generation Z via the Douyin platform.

2.3 Social Presence Theory

Social presence theory refers to the extent to which a user perceives the presence of one or more other people via a mediated interface and yet utilizes the medium's capacity to convey social cues (Short et al., 1976). Later research conceptualized social presence as "the degree to which a person is perceived as a real person in mediated communication" (Gunawardena, 1995, p. 151). The rise and emerging virtual environment have gradually led to the application of the social presence theory to facilitate a sense of presence and connection among users via social media platforms. The focus of the study seems to be consistent with research by Kreijns et al. (2022) that focused on sociability and social space. Therefore, this study incorporates social presence theory by highlighting social presence as one of the determinants to enhance the understanding of short travel video-sharing among Generation Z. In all, the current research aims to construct a conceptual framework for social media interaction via Douyin, which is a noteworthy aspect of the study.

2.4 Sharing Behavior on Douyin

Social media platforms serve many purposes; it varies according to the needs of the users. Social media users often join the platform in search of building relationships, sharing information, and providing mutual support and a sense of belonging. For instance, individuals prefer to share content as a way to facilitate information exchange (i.e., reciprocity) and for the desire to gain knowledge from others in the future (Oh & Syn, 2015). Oliveira et al. (2020), on the other hand, examined experience-sharing behavior and discovered that reference groups positively influenced travel experience-sharing behavior. Younger cohorts are more inclined to share their travel tips and experiences via social media platforms (Mulvey et al., 2020).

2.5 Factors Contributing to Trust and Sharing Behavior in Douyin Short Travel Video-Sharing Behavior

2.5.1 Attitude

Attitude, as one of the concepts of the theory of planned behavior, can be defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). This concept demonstrates how an individual reacts to things and assesses the positive or negative attitudinal response. It is usually reflected in an individual's beliefs, feelings, or behavioral tendencies (Ho et al., 2017; Olson & Zanna, 1993). Earlier studies (Jung et al., 2014) found that attitudes contribute towards brand trust among consumers. In addition, attitude can be seen as an assessment of behavior or placing oneself between degrees of favorable and unfavorable emotions or judgments of an entity (Ajzen, 2020; Sok et al., 2021), leading to positive behavior (Zaikauskaitė et al., 2023). Hence, this logic signifies that individuals with positive attitudes towards a specific behavior are more likely to engage in performing the behavior. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

> H1(a)   : Attitude has a significant positive effect on trust.
>
> H1(b)   : Attitude has a significant positive effect on Douyin's sharing behavior.

2.5.2 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms, another key concept of the theory of planned behavior, pertains to the social pressures experienced by individuals in relation to the decision of whether to adopt one particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The latter study perceived subjective norms as an injunctive and descriptive form of normative belief (Ajzen, 2020; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). This study, however, strategically focuses on examining the subjective probability of approval or disapproval from a specific individual or group about the execution of a particular behavior. Earlier studies by Kusumawardhani et al. (2019) perceived subjective norms as the antecedent factor leading to green consumer trust. Yet, Aneela et al. (2021) noted that subjective norms positively impact the knowledge-sharing behavior of university students in Karachi, Pakistan. In the realm of travel videos, individuals perceive positive subjective norms from their significant others, indicating that those around them approve of their behavior. Hence, this behavior boosts the level of trust towards travel video-sharing content. Subsequently, it demonstrates a greater likelihood of sharing short travel videos. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

> H2(a)   : Subjective norms have a significant positive effect on trust.
>
> H2(b)   : Subjective norms have a significant positive effect on Douyin's sharing behavior.

2.5.3 Social Presence

Social presence has been extensively studied in the context of user behavior both in social and virtual environments. Social presence, also known as technological social presence (Short et al., 1976), is interpreted as the sense of "being with another" (Biocca et al., 2003, p. 456). It was then conceptualized as "the degree to which a communication medium allows group members to perceive (sense) the actual presence of the communication participants and the consequent appreciation of an interpersonal relationship" (Lowry et al., 2006, p. 633). Indeed, social presence occurs through digital channels. Prior studies examined the effect of social presence (Nadeem et al., 2020), and found that social presence has the capability to foster trust among social commerce communities in the online marketplace. Recent studies have proven the positive influence of social presence on knowledge-sharing behaviors (Catyanadika & Rajasekera, 2022) as well as users' participation behavior within the virtual environment (Peng et al., 2022). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

> H3(a)   : Social presence has a significant positive effect on trust.
>
> H3(b)   : Social presence has a significant positive effect on Douyin's sharing behavior.

2.5.4 Interactivity

Interactivity is often understood as one of the media attributes that varies across different forms of media. Interactivity can be defined as "an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmission" (Rafaeli, 1988, p. 111). In addition, interactivity is characterized as the extent to which participants may exchange roles and influence their mutual discourse Rogers (2010). Past research has demonstrated that the interactivity features, specifically real-time interaction of live-streaming commerce, have significantly impacted trust among streamers (Tian et al., 2023). In addition, Lee et al. (2021) emphasised that the interactivity features of virtual reality influence the perceived media richness, leading to information-sharing and information-seeking behavior. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H4(a)   : Interactivity has a significant positive effect on trust.

H4(b)   : Interactivity has a significant positive effect on Douyin's sharing behavior.

2.5.5 Social Interaction

Social interaction serves as a form of interactive communication. Previous studies have labelled this behavior as computer-mediated social interaction (Caplan, 2003). Soon, the introduction of social media platforms offered a multitude of opportunities to satisfy various communication and interaction needs. For instance, social interaction can involve searching, sharing, and commenting on social media content accessed through YouTube (Khan, 2017). Consequently, it is widely acknowledged that users can share videos within the platform and across other social media platforms like Facebook (Malik et al., 2016), X (Flores & Rezende, 2018), and Instagram (Kim & Kim, 2019), thereby facilitating social interaction. Social media marketers believe that social interaction leads to brand trust development (Sohail et al., 2020). On the other hand, Qiang Yang et al. (2023) emphasised that social interaction-oriented content boosts purchasing behaviors among the broadcast audiences via live-streaming commerce. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H5(a)   : Social interaction has a significant positive effect on trust.

H5(b)   : Social interaction has a significant positive effect on Douyin's sharing behavior.

2.6 The Mediating Role of Trust

Trust is one of the key aspects of all social interactions and can be treated as a key mechanism for lowering the complexity of human behavior, especially during uncertain situations (Luhmann, 1979). On the other hand, trust can be interpreted in the form of a system, such as a health system (Ozawa & Sripad, 2013), blockchain system (Suleman & Lemieux, 2023), or AI decision-support system (Qian Yang et al., 2023). Given the multidimensional nature of trust, this study delves into the conceptualization of trust via the Douyin platform in the context of tourism. In fact, past studies have considered trust as the mediating variable that helps explain information-sharing behavior in social media (Deng et al., 2017) as well as organizational citizenship behavior (Hayfron et al., 2023). Hence, there is little doubt that when individuals have trust in the social media platform and other users they engage with, they are more likely to overcome any potential negative factors, which in turn allows them to feel more courageous and confident about sharing their short travel video content.

H6(a)   : Trust mediates between attitudes and sharing behavior on Douyin.

H6(b)   : Trust mediates between subjective norms and sharing behavior on Douyin.

H6(c)   : Trust mediates between social presence and sharing behavior on Douyin.

H6(d)   : Trust mediates between interactivity and sharing behavior on Douyin.

H6(e)   : Trust mediates between social interaction and sharing behavior on Douyin.

Extant literature, as conducted by Hosen et al. (2023), acknowledged that perceived trust plays an essential role in boosting knowledge-sharing behavior, especially among academics. Similarly, van Zoonen et al. (2024) portrayed that trust significantly predicts unverified information sharing via social media platforms. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H7   : Trust has a significant positive effect on sharing behavior on Douyin.

Hence, this study establishes a conceptual framework to examine the determinants of short travel video-sharing behavior among Generation Z via the Douyin platform in China. It incorporates attitudes, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction as the determinants of short travel video-sharing behavior. All determinants are hypothesised to be mediated by trust of the Douyin platform among Generation Z.

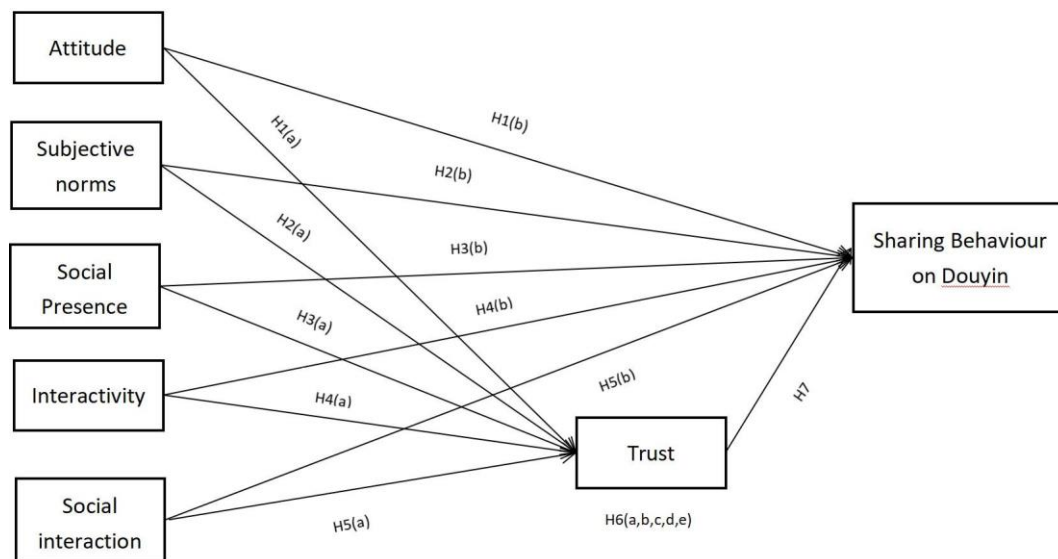Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1. Hypothesized conceptual framework

3. Materials and Methods

This research study has been implemented to examine the sharing behavior of Douyin concerning short travel videos among Generation Z in China. In other words, this research primarily serves exploratory purposes. It aims to delve into the determinants of sharing behavior mediated by trust. This study utilized an online questionnaire to ensure representativeness from large geographical areas (Babbie, 2021) from all regions in China. Next, this study utilized Wenjuanxing, an online survey tool, to develop the online questionnaire. Subsequently, the online questionnaire was then distributed via the URL link to Douyin users. All data were collected while maintaining participants' anonymity, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The gathered data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. The sample of Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) was selected using a purposive sampling technique. However, the selected respondents must be frequent users of Douyin, and they had to have shared their travel videos or distributed videos made by others on Douyin. Survey respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity to guarantee unbiased and reliable survey data. Considering the 95% confidence level and 5% acceptable error, the sample size for this study was determined to be 384 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Hence, a total of 403 samples were recruited in this study.

4. Results

Table 1 exhibits the demographic profiles of the respondents, including gender, age, and education level. A total of 410 respondents were recruited, of which 403 provided valid responses. Given a total of 403 respondents, the number of males (n = 208) outweighed the females (n = 195) with a percentage of 51.6 and 48.4 respectively. The majority of the respondents were from the 18 to 22 age group (42.9%) compared to those from the 23 to 28 age group (38.5%). About 75 respondents were 17 and below (18.6%). Subsequently, more than half of the total respondents possessed a bachelor's degree (51.6%) as their highest educational qualification, while about 87 respondents (21.6%) were in high school, and 66 respondents had their master's. The remaining respondents has their PhD (6.2%) or completed junior high school (4.2%).

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	208	51.6
	Female	195	48.4
Age	23-28 years old	155	38.5
	18-22 years old	173	42.9
	17 and below	75	18.6
Education Level	PhD	25	6.2
	Master	66	16.4
	Undergraduate	208	51.6
	Junior high school	17	4.2
	High school	87	21.6

(N=403)

Table 2 demonstrates that the factor loadings of the constructs ranged from 0.770 to 0.868, while all the composite reliability values exceeded 0.700. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.626 to 0.685. Overall, the results satisfied the convergent validity and composite reliability criteria.

Table 2. Measurement model analysis

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude	ATT1	0.803	0.882	0.883	0.630
	ATT2	0.783			
	ATT3	0.776			
	ATT4	0.796			
	ATT5	0.808			
	ATT6	0.795			
Subjective norms	SN1	0.812	0.868	0.872	0.655
	SN2	0.786			
	SN3	0.819			
	SN4	0.808			
	SN5	0.820			
Social presence	SP1	0.803	0.842	0.843	0.679
	SP2	0.820			
	SP3	0.826			
	SP4	0.846			
Interactivity	INT1	0.802	0.881	0.882	0.626
	INT2	0.774			
	INT3	0.814			
	INT4	0.791			
	INT5	0.770			
	INT6	0.796			
Social interaction	SI1	0.848	0.847	0.848	0.685
	SI2	0.801			
	SI3	0.824			
	SI4	0.837			
Trust	TR1	0.819	0.876	0.876	0.668
	TR2	0.821			
	TR3	0.808			
	TR4	0.819			
	TR5	0.819			
Sharing behavior on Douyin	SB1	0.868	0.820	0.820	0.735
	SB2	0.844			
	SB3	0.860			

(N= 403)

Next, discriminant validity was assessed in Table 3 using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios by Franke and Sarstedt (2019). If the HTMT ratios are less than 0.85 or 0.90, it indicates that the measures are discriminant. The results demonstrated in Table 3 indeed received HTMT values lesser than .85, which denotes discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity using HTMT ratio

No	Variables	1 ATT	2 INT	3 SB	4 SI	5 SP	6 SN	7 TRU
1	ATT							
2	INT	0.417						
3	SB	0.516	0.525					
4	SI	0.492	0.535	0.546				
5	SP	0.443	0.553	0.523	0.514			
6	SN	0.446	0.460	0.528	0.383	0.419		
7	TRU	0.452	0.513	0.532	0.492	0.496	0.474	

Key: ATT: Attitude, INT: Interactivity, SB: Sharing behavior on Douyin, SI: Social interaction, SP: Social presence, SN: Subjective norms, TRU: Trust

Table 4 displays the hypotheses testing for direct effects. All the hypotheses (H1–H5) are supported, indicating a positive and significant impact towards trust and sharing behavior on the Douyin platform. Furthermore, trust significantly increases sharing behavior on the Douyin platform (H7).

Table 5 exhibits hypotheses testing for indirect effects. The research outcomes indicated that all the indirect hypotheses (H6a – H6e) are supported (except H6c), implying that trust mediates the relationships between the determinant factors (attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction) and sharing behavior on the Douyin platform.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing for direct effects

	Hypotheses	Std. Beta (β)	t-value	p value	Sig. level	Bootstrapped CI BC		Decision
						2.5% LL	97.5 UL	
H1(a)	ATT→TRU	0.133	2.780	0.005	**	0.026	0.221	Supported
H1(b)	ATT→SB	0.153	3.283	0.001	***	0.044	0.234	Supported
H2(a)	SN→ TRU	0.186	3.811	0.001	***	0.113	0.299	Supported
H2(b)	SN→ SB	0.183	4.025	0.001	***	0.073	0.259	Supported
H3(a)	SP→ TRU	0.155	2.954	0.003	**	0.045	0.251	Supported
H3(b)	SP→ SB	0.124	2.372	0.018	*	0.024	0.229	Supported
H4(a)	INT→ TRU	0.183	3.585	0.001	***	0.088	0.293	Supported
H4(b)	INT→ SB	0.121	2.439	0.015	*	0.039	0.240	Supported
H5(a)	SI→ TRU	0.154	2.916	0.004	**	0.037	0.249	Supported
H5(b)	SI→ SB	0.159	3.127	0.002	**	0.050	0.254	Supported
H7	TRU→SB	0.140	2.946	0.003	**	0.056	0.253	Supported

$*p \leq 0.05$, $**p \leq 0.01$, $***p \leq 0.001$

Table 5. Hypotheses testing for indirect effects

	Hypotheses	Std. Beta (β)	t-value	p value	Sig. level	Bootstrapped CI BC		Decision
						2.5% LL	97.5% UL	
H6(a)	ATT→TRU→SB	0.019	1.973	0.048	*	0.004	0.039	Supported
H6(b)	SN→ TRU→SB	0.026	2.224	0.026	*	0.007	0.052	Supported
H6(c)	SP→ TRU→SB	0.022	1.914	0.056	*	0.004	0.047	Rejected
H6(d)	INT→ TRU→SB	0.026	2.221	0.026	*	0.007	0.051	Supported
H6(e)	SI→ TRU→SB	0.021	2.079	0.038	*	0.004	0.044	Supported

$*p \leq 0.05$, $**p \leq 0.01$, $***p \leq 0.001$

5. Discussion

The primary research purpose of this study was to examine determinants (i.e., attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction) that lead to the sharing behaviors regarding short travel video content on Douyin among Generation Z in China. The findings indicated that attitude, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction significantly impact trust in the context of sharing short travel videos via the Douyin platform. It is inevitable to say that the group of Generation Z in China are actively engaging in consuming, producing, and disseminating short travel video content. Among all the hypotheses, the subjective norms was the most significant factor of trust (H2a), consistent with the research by Kusumawardhani et al. (2019). Our study also found that subjective norms contributed to the sharing behavior on Douyin (H2b), in which aligns with the research by Aneela et al. (2021). Subjective norms refers to a person's subjective beliefs that most of his/her significant others think he/she should (or should not) act in a particular way. The perception of the majority of "significant others" heavily relies on the individual's level of trust. This discovery underscores the essential role of subjective norms in shaping trust within the Douyin platform. It is widely recognized that an individual's subjective interpretation of norms has a substantial impact on trust in social media, including the Douyin platform.

Second, these findings confirmed the fourth hypothesis, highlighting that interactivity has a positive and significant effect on trust (H4a) and the sharing behavior (H4b) on the Douyin platform. Past studies perceived that the interactive features can be in the form of live-streaming commerce, and the viewers soon gain trust from the exposure to it (Tian et al., 2023). The research outcomes of the study are also consistent with Lee et al. (2021), confirming that the interactive features of virtual reality contribute to the information-sharing behavior within the hospitality and tourism industry. The interactive features of the Douyin platform contribute to the cultivation of favorable behaviors among its users. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Douyin users appreciate the interactive elements, which serve to build trust and facilitate the sharing of content among the community.

Third, the results of the study also confirmed the fifth hypothesis, indicating that social interaction influences the trust

(H5a) and sharing behavior of Douyin (H5b). This result suggests that social interaction also plays an essential role in boosting trust and sharing behavior among Generation Z Douyin users. Social interaction indicates the use of online platforms to satisfy communication and interaction with others, thus encouraging frequent sharing of short travel video content with other users. The results are consistent with Sohail et al. (2020) who found that social interaction, as one of the elements of social media marketing, has the potential to build brand trust as social media provides a powerful platform for organizations to impress customers. Also, the results of this study are consistent with the empirical study that was conducted by Qian Yang et al. (2023), which confirmed the effect of social interactions on purchasing behaviors among broadcast audiences. Therefore, the Douyin platform has emerged as a significant social media platform, facilitating seamless interactions among users and transcending geographical barriers. The social media platform supplies an open space for users to connect, share experiences, and engage with others, contributing to its status as an emerging and vibrant platform.

Next, the research outcomes of the study found that the third hypothesis (H3a and H3b) were positive and significant. Social presence has often been applied to study user behavior in virtual environments. Previous research has recognized that social presence has a positive and significant impact on trust (Nadeem et al., 2020), indicating that social presence is crucial for effective communication between individuals using technology. It refers to the presence of social cues in mediated communication compared to face-to-face interaction. Other than that, these results also concluded that social presence contributes to the sharing behavior on the Douyin platform, and this finding is consistent with Catyanadika and Rajasekera (2022). Social presence refers to the fact that the more verbal or non-verbal signals transmitted by a medium during an individual's online communication and exchange using the medium, the higher the degree of that individual's social presence, and the stronger the perception of the presence of others, which creates a sense of realism of face-to-face communication between individuals, and that the 'sense of social presence' is likely to influence consumer psychology and herd behavior (Hou et al., 2023). The social presence as developed via Douyin motivates Generation Z to share their travel experiences.

These findings also confirmed that attitude possess a significant effect on trust (H1a) and sharing behavior on Douyin (H1b). Attitude is an individual's perception or evaluation of engaging in a particular behavior. Specifically, this concept relates to the extent to which a person holds positive or negative evaluations of problematic behaviors, or the degree of conviction they have in performing them (Ajzen, 2020). The first hypothesis of the study (H1a) is aligned with earlier studies by Jung et al. (2014), demonstrating attitude as particularly important in generating trust among online consumers towards the brand itself, while H1a holds a significant effect between attitude and sharing behavior on the Douyin platform. The finding is consistent with Zaikauskaitė et al. (2023) that describes attitude, as a moral component that predicts pro-environmental behaviors. Indeed, the impact of sharing travel videos on trust in the Douyin platform cannot be underestimated. For instance, travel influencers prefer to contribute their social media content; it can be done with engaging video content. As viewers witness genuine travel experiences and recommendations, they are more likely to trust the platform and its users, thus fostering a sense of community and reliability within the Douyin community.

Furthermore, trust is crucial to predict the sharing behavior in the Douyin platform (H7). Trust is the pillar of sharing behavior. When online users have a strong sense of trust in the Douyin platform, they tend to alleviate their concerns regarding potential risks, consequently fostering a culture of sharing and interaction within the platform's community. This finding is consistent with the past research by Hosen et al. (2023) and van Zoonen et al. (2024), who found that trust has a positive effect on sharing behavior in the Douyin platform.

Last, all the indirect hypotheses except H6(c) were accepted. The hypothesis of H6(c) was rejected according to the research outcomes, indicating that trust did not mediate the relationship between social presence and sharing behavior of short travel video content. Short video content plays a vital role in promoting tourism destinations to Douyin users. This behavior can ultimately lead to an increase in tourist traffic and revenue for tourist attractions (Liu et al., 2023). The rejected hypothesis of H6(c), in fact, is consistent with the research study by Attar et al. (2023) that trust only partially mediated the relationship between social presence and loyalty, considering loyalty towards a brand is a repeated behavioral performance. A possible reason for this finding is that trust has a weak reinforcing effect on the relationship between Gen Z's social presence on Douyin and sharing behavior within the same platform.

6. Implications and Future Directions of the Study

This research study combined two theories, i.e., the theory of planned behavior and social presence theory, to examine the short video-sharing behaviors among Generation Z in the Douyin platform, specifically emphasising their interactions with tourism-related content. By integrating these two influential theories, this study provided a deeper understanding of the complex nature of sharing behavior in the Douyin platform. Furthermore, this approach is intended to bring research closer to the authentic and intricate landscape of social media utilization in the real setting of the environment. In addition, trust in the Douyin platform was tested as a mediating variable to develop a more comprehensive model of the study. A

closer link between social presence and elements of the theory of planned behavior was established through trust, providing a new theoretical path to explain the decision-making process of sharing behavior on the online platform. Hence, this study supports the determinant factors as deduced from the theories of planned behavior and social presence to predict trust and sharing behavior of travel video content, particularly for the Douyin platform.

Second, this study delved into the key determinants that influence sharing behavior of short travel video content on Douyin among Generation Z in China and recommends leveraging user-generated content in China. With these advancements, the tourism industry can gradually evolve to promote various tourism destinations. This adjustment will gradually increase the number of tourist visits to the destination and provide new users and creators with more opportunities to utilize this platform as a channel to enhance their content exposure. The outcome of the study found the crucial determinants in attitudes, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interactions to share short travel videos among Generation Z via the Douyin platform. Also, this behavior can be used as an effective medium to gain trust towards the platform.

Finally, this study has important implications for Generation Z youths' use of Douyin to share and obtain travel information. Using Douyin will not only strengthen their attitudes, subjective norms, and social presence towards sharing short travel videos but will also promote their trust in Douyin, which in turn will promote sharing behaviors of short travel videos. In addition, this study highlights the importance of interactivity and social interaction in Douyin travel video-sharing behavior. Therefore, it is crucial to make the Generation Z population experience interactive content when sharing on Douyin, which will further influence their trust in the Douyin platform and promote their sharing behaviors for short travel videos. When it comes to trust and sharing behavior related to short travel video content, subjective norms stand out as the most influential factor among all others. This concept signifies that when Douyin users believe that sharing short travel videos is approved or encouraged by their social circle, they are more likely to engage in this behavior. In addition, when Douyin users observe others in their social network sharing short travel video content, they may feel a sense of reciprocity, prompting them to share their own videos. This reciprocity leads to mutual exchange that further strengthens trust within the Generation Z community.

This study provides insights into the sharing behavior of Douyin users in the context of tourism media content; however, there are several areas for future research that remain unexplored. First, the study is limited to Gen Z, primarily based in China. As Douyin operates within a Chinese sociocultural background that differs significantly from global platforms, Douyin's domestically-oriented algorithm and content curation practices are designed to reinforce culturally relevant content, which may not be applicable in other national or regional settings. As such, the generalizability of these findings to users of other platforms, such as TikTok in Western contexts, may be limited. Future research is encouraged to conduct cross-cultural comparative studies to explore how cultural and platform differences jointly shape social media behavior in different geographical boundaries, thus leading to cross-cultural comparisons. For instance, the comparison between Douyin/TikTok users in Malaysia and China highlights cultural differences in content creation and sharing practices and also sheds light on the underlying factors that influence how and why users engage with travel-related content on these platforms. Second, while this study focuses on trust as a mediating factor, future research could also consider other moderating factors, such as gamification, which may enhance the sharing behavior of Douyin content among users. Additionally, future studies might examine user demographics, such as gender or age, to determine whether younger or older generations respond differently to the motivations behind sharing Douyin content on online platforms. Last, this study only collected survey data via a self-reporting practice, which potentially leads to incorrect conclusions if it is not properly addressed in contemporary research. Hence, future studies may consider incorporating a qualitative method, such as a focus group, as a form of methodological triangulation. This approach would further strengthen contextual insights and validate the findings of this study as derived from self-reports.

7. Conclusions

This research study has significantly advanced knowledge by exploring the determinant factors influencing attitudes, subjective norms, social presence, interactivity, and social interaction that impact trust and sharing behavior in the Douyin platform. Moreover, the study delves into the mediating role of trust in the relationships between attitude, subjective norms, interactivity, and social interaction, particularly in the context of sharing behavior related to travel video content. Notably, while previous research has predominantly examined sharing behavior on other online platforms, this study specifically focuses on the Douyin platform, particularly among Generation Z. Furthermore, this study offers valuable insights and practical guidelines for industry practitioners and authorities in China, particularly those working in the tourism sector, aiming to leverage the Douyin platform for promoting tourist destinations.

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