Share, Like, Travel: The Influence of User-Generated Content on the Destination Image

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Abstract

Title: Share, Like, Travel: The Influence of User-Generated Content on the Destination Image

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the destination image among non-visitors, employing the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) as the theoretical framework. The objective of this dissertation is to investigate how different thematic focuses of UGC affect perception and examine the moderating role of social media use in the relationship between internal psychological processes and destination image.

To achieve this research objective, a quantitative study is conducted in the form of an online survey of 140 participants, with user-generated content about Tromsø from TikTok, serving as the foundation. The data was analyzed using SPSS software.

The results show that UGC has a positive effect on both the cognitive and affective Destination Image. These findigs could offer valuable insights for destination marketers into how UGC triggers emotional and cognitive responses, shaping the perception of destination image formation among non-visitors.

Keywords: *User-Generated Content, Destination Image, Moderating Role of Social Media Use, Non-visitors, TikTok, SOR Model*

Resumo

Título: Partilhar, Gostar, Viajar: A influência do Conteúdo Gerado pelo Utilizador na Imagem do Destino

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O objetivo deste estudo é investigar o impacto dos conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores (*User-Generated Content* - UGC) nas dimensões cognitiva e afetiva da imagem do destino entre os não-visitantes, com base na teoria *Stimulus-Organism-Response* (S-O-R). Este estudo explora como os conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores influenciam a perceção dos não-visitantes e examina o papel moderador da utilização das redes sociais na relação entre os processos psicológicos internos e a imagem do destino.

Para atingir este objetivo, foi realizado um estudo quantitativo através de um inquérito online a 140 participantes, utilizando conteúdo gerado pelos utilizadores sobre Tromsø no TikTok. Os dados foram analisados com recurso ao software SPSS. Os resultados indicam que o conteúdo gerado pelos utilizadores tem um efeito positivo na imagem do destino, tanto nas dimensões cognitivas como afetivas. Estes resultados são fundamentais para os profissionais do setor do turismo, evidenciando de que forma os conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores desencadeia respostas emocionais e cognitivas, influenciando a perceção e a construção da imagem do destino entre os não-visitantes.

Palavras-chave: Conteúdo Gerado pelo Utilizador, Imagem do Destino, Papel Moderador da Utilização das Redes Sociais, Não Visitantes, TikTok, Modelo SOR

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Glossary

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): A statistical method used to compare means among three or more groups to ascertain if at least one group exhibits a significant difference from the others (Aldrich, 2019).

Co-Creation: A collaborative process where companies and consumers jointly create value, often through active participation and shared innovation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Destination Image (DI): The overall perception or mental picture that potential visitors have of a tourism destination, influenced by personal experiences, marketing, and online information (Echtner et al., 1993).

DMO: Destination Management Organization

DV: Dependent Variable

eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth): Consumer-generated digital communication and recommendations (Martini et al., 2023).

IPP: Internal Psychological Processes

IV: Independent Variable

Moderator: A variable that influences the strength or direction of the relationship between an independent and a dependent variable in a research model (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

SEM (Structural Equation Modeling): A statistical method used to analyze complex relationships among observed and latent variables, often applied in behavioral and social sciences research (Hair et al., 2010).

SOR Model (Stimulus-Organism-Response Model): A psychological framework that explains how external stimuli (S) influence internal organismic processes (O), leading to specific responses (R), commonly used in consumer behavior research (Mehrabian & Russell, 1980).

UGC (User-Generated Content): Content created and shared by users or consumers on online platforms, such as reviews, photos, or videos, often related to products, services, or destinations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Y: Yes

N: No

AI Disclaimer

This document has been reviewed using AI tools for linguistic refinement and clarity.

1. Introduction

The landscape of tourism marketing has seen significant transformation in recent years, primarily attributable to the swift advancement of digital technologies. This transition leads to an increased focus on digital, dynamic, and user-centered platforms. With the emergence of social media, it has become a powerful tool for shaping tourist opinions and travel behavior. The transition from traditional to digital marketing has caused substantial changes in how destinations are marketed and experienced (Usui et al., 2018).

Social media sites like Instagram or TikTok are becoming more important in the travel planning process (Cox et al., 2009). These platforms offer users the opportunity to explore travel destinations in a completely new way. They can exchange infromations, share experience, and connect. This can significantly affect visitors' travel choices. Consequently, they serve a unique function in tourism as a marketing instrument (Tolossa et al., 2023).

TikTok is one of the most frequently downloaded apps, which contributes to the platform's continued popularity and growth (Kemp, 2024). According to Statista (Dixon, 2024) TikTok has 1.58 billion largely active members as of April 2024. It is the platform where users spend most of their time, with an average usage duration of 34 hours per month, followed by YouTube (Kemp, 2024). User-generated content (UGC) is the most effective type of content on TikTok (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024).

In this context, the role of UGC is also of central importance. This makes it possible to be part of the traveler's journey and experience it in real-time. In contrast to traditional marketing forms, this provides an authentic and unfiltered viewpoint on destinations for tourists (Yen & Teng, 2015). In today's world, trust and authenticity are crucial in consumer decision-making. In this regard, UGC serves as an effective instrument for conveying this (Latif et al., 2020). Numerous studies indicate that UGC disseminated on social media platforms substantially influences destination image and travel intentions, particularly among individuals who have not previously visited the place (Awaritefe, 2004; Latif et al., 2020).

Tromsø was selected as the research objective for UGC videos due to its increasing popularity. Skyscanner (2024) reports an 85% rise in search queries on the site (from January 24 to June 24) compared to the corresponding time last year (see Appendix A).

Another factor to contemplate is the potential observation of natural phenomena, such as the Northern Lights. Pinterest (2024) examined travel behaviour for the year 2024 based on search results, revealing an increasing demand for adventure and nature, alongside a rising interest in exploring pristine and tranquil locales. Tromsø offers these attributes and so aligns with current

travel trends. In recent years, Tromsø has become as a favored location, particularly due to the chance to witness the Northern Lights (Bertella, 2013).

Tromsø not only attracts visitors with the Northern Lights but also showcases the unique Sami culture. This provides tourists a remarkable opportunity to engage in activities like reindeer herding or storytelling based on Sami mythology and shamanistic traditions, so immersing themselves in Tromsø's past and acquiring a distinctive understanding of the culture (Carvalho & Tricárico, 2021).

Despite the extensive research conducted on the impact of UGC on travel behavior and destination perception, there are still gaps in research.

1. The segment of Non-visitors

   In the field of tourism research, most studies focus on the group of travellers who already hold a desire to visit the destiantion, neglecting the group of individuals who do not have the intention to travel to the destination. Furthermore, this group is frequently regarded as a homogenous entity, characterized by identical intentions and motivations for not visiting the destination. This approach fails to acknowledge the significant heterogeneity that exists within this group (Cherifi et al., 2014; Davari & Jang, 2021; Gorji et al., 2023; Sroypetch et al., 2018; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020; Zaim et al., 2024). This study aims to address the research gap by analyzing destination image from the perspective of non-visitors.

2. Differentiation of UGC content

   Research has already shown that emotional and rational content can have different effects on the image of a destination (Arif et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2022; X. Pan et al., 2021). However, this research mostly focuses on general distinctions between emotional and rational stimuli and does not take into account the diversity of UGC content. It is unclear how specific thematic content in UGC, such as images of nature, cultural events or everyday experiences, influence destination image.

   This research gap is crucial as it is assumed that UGC with different thematic focuses trigger different psychological processes and shape the impression of a destination in different ways (H. Li & See-To, 2023; P. Pan & Zhang, 2023).

3. Social media use as a moderator

   Although research indicates that social media plays a significant part in the trip-planning process (Baber & Baber, 2023a; Javed et al., 2020; X. Liu et al., 2020; Tolossa et al., 2023), the moderating function of social media use in the context of destination image development has yet to be examined. However, there are studies that have

studied the moderating effect of social media use in the context of influencer marketing and travel intentions (Han & Chen, 2022; Omeish et al., 2024) and frequency of social media use in the travel context (Rahman et al., 2023; Singh & Srivastava, 2019). Nonetheless, the potential moderating effect of social media usage on the correlation between internal psychological processes and the development of destination images has yet to be investigated in this context.

Moreover, the role of the platform TikTok in shaping these perceptions and increasing interest has yet to be sufficiently investigated (Kemp, 2024).
The aim of this study is to close the research gaps. To this end, the influence of UGC with different thematic focuses, in particular on TikTok, on the destination image of non-visitors, and the role of social media use as a moderator are analyzed.

The research question is: How does User-Generated Content (UGC) on TikTok influence the destination image of non-visitors?
Based on this, the research pursues three research objectives:

1. To explore the impact of User-Generated Content on TikTok affecting the destination image among non-visitors.
2. To analyze the influence of User-Generated Content on TikTok with different thematic focuses on the destination image among non-visitors.
3. To investigate the moderating effect of social media usage on the relationship between internal psychological processes and the perception of destination image among non-visitors.

This study is divided into six sections. Following the introduction, the ensuing chapter examines the existing literature regarding the fundamental variables and central concepts of this study, succeeded by the presentation of the theoretical framework. The practical part of this thesis encompasses the presentation of the methodology and the findings of the study. The concluding chapter focusing on the discussion and conclusion, summarises the most important findings and elucidates the practical and theoretical implications. The limitations of the study are also highlighted, perspectives for further studies are shown and the final conclusion is drawn.

2. Literature Review

This literature review examines the influence of social media on travel behavior, specifically the perception of UGC. This section describes the study's four constructs: social media in tourism, UGC, destination image, and non-visitors. Particular attention is paid to the factors that influence the destination image. Studies on non-visitors will also be investigated in greater depth to illustrate the link between non-visitors and destination images. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a foundation for the methodological part of this work. By summarising and evaluating the findings of previous studies, and identifying needs for further research.

2.1 **User Generated-Content**

Based on a detailed literature analysis, Santos (2021) develops an updated definition of UGC. This takes into account current digital and social developments and also includes social media platforms as a central point of dissemination.

Taking these factors into account, he defines UGC as a format that includes all forms of content, including text-, data- and action-based content. These are distributed on digital platforms. It should be noted that these channels are autonomous, as the content is published by the users themselves.

The term "user" is used to refer to the typical individual who uses digital platforms. This user can be represented in a number of different roles. It should be noted that the user in question is not represented in a professional context. The dimension “generated”, comprises the preparation of content as 'part of the digital creative process'. This content can be created individually or collectively, intentionally or unintentionally, and can be of particular importance for a specific target group. In addition to the pure media format, content also includes the reactions to the media formats such as likes or comments.

2.1.1 **Influence on Destination Image**

The extant literature on this topic indicates that user-generated content (UGC) is conducive to the formation of positive cognitive and affective perceptions of a destination. By conveying knowledge and arousing positive feelings (Gorji et al., 2023; Zaim et al., 2024) and facilitating the formation of an emotional bond with the destination (Cherifi et al., 2014). In addition, it serves as a supplementary information source alongside traditional ones, offering users an

authentic perspective on the destination and thus influencing users' perceptions and travel decisions (Cox et al., 2009).

Based on the assumption that non-visitors rely primarily on external sources of information to form their destination image, UGC plays an important role in this context to form an image of the destination (Gorji et al., 2023; Sroypetch et al., 2018; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020).

However, for users who have already visited the destination, UGC fulfil a more supportive and complementary function by confirming or expanding their existing image (Gorji et al., 2023; Maghrifani et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).

A further component that affects the perception of a place is the manner in which individuals engage with UGC, specifically whether it is consumed passively or accompanied by the sharing of their own experiences. The co-creation experience on the platform has a greater influence on the cognitive attributes of the location than on the affective image, implying that users consider UGC to have a more utilitarian function in trip planning (Lam et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). The studies mentioned above demonstrate that UGC impacts the destination image, particularly enhancing its affective component.

Results from the analysis by Nguyen & Tong (2023a) indicate that passive access to UGC does not have a significant direct effect on the destination image, this is explained here by the fact that UGC does not always convey concrete and comprehensive information that must be available to build an image. However, passive exposure can still have a significant effect on the shape of the travel intention. The impact of UGC on destination choice was investigated utilizing a quantitative study methodology, which included an online survey of 407 participants. Passive exposure to UGC has a considerable impact on travel behavior by instilling desire, attitude, and envy. The UGC might elicit an emotional reaction in the viewer, which influences the choice of a trip destination. The desire to visit a destination, as well as positive views established after seeing UGC, have a substantial influence on decision-making processes. Another key finding of the study is that Envy influences travel intention, adding a social and emotional element demonstrates how UGC might inspire travelers to visit a destination through emotional mediators.

2.2 **Destination Image**

Baloglu & Mccleary (1999a) define destination image as a multidimensional construct that includes affective (feelings towards the destination) and cognitive (beliefs or knowledge about the destination attributes) elements, which together shape the overall image. Every individual

has a unique mental image of the destination, even if he has never visited it before, but there is also a general stereotypical image of the destination (Echtner et al., 1993).

Phelps (1986) classifies the image of a destination into primary and secondary image. The primary image is derived from individuals' personal experiences of the destination, which may vary from one person to another. The secondary image refers to non-visitors who have not personally experienced the destination, and whose perception is shaped by indirect sources of information, such as advertising or word of mouth. Gartner (1994) adds another component to the concept of destination image, the conative image component. This is the actual behavior and external information has been processed. This means that it is dependent on the affective and cognitive components. In this study, this component of the destination image is not examined in more detail, as the focus is on the affective and cognitive components of the destination image.

Further research by Baloglu and McCleary (1999b) underlines the role of personal factors and stimulate factors influencing the destination image. The personal factors include socio-demographic variables such as age or level of education and psychological variables such as motivation to visit a particular destination or one's own values. As part of their study, they found that older people have a less positive perception, and the higher the level of education, the more critical the perception. Stimulus factors include external stimuli such as sources of information or recommendations.

The influence of the destination image on the traveler is subject to change over the course of the various phases of the travel experience. Research on destination image indicates that it transforms with time, with tourists shifting their focus from emotional, holistic, and commonplace aspects during their visit to utilitarian, attribute-oriented, and unique elements post-visit (Wang et al., 2021). A closer look at the phases before and after the trip reveals that the image of the destination evolves from a primarily cognitive and externally influenced perception to a more emotional and personalised perception that is shaped by personal experiences and encounters at the destination. This makes it clear that the destination image is not a fixed variable, but evolves with the phases of the journey (Wang et al., 2021).

2.2.1 **Cognitive and Affective Components**

The cognitive component consists of beliefs and knowledge about a destination, whereas the affective component includes feelings about the destination (Baloglu & Mccleary, 1999a; Gartner, 1994). Affective components show a stronger influence on the overall image and behavioral intentions of tourists than cognitive ones (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Baloglu &

Mccleary, 1999a). The cognitive images influence the affective reactions, which then influence the conative decision. An example of this would be the decision to visit a certain travel destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Gartner, 1994).

The variety and type of information sources used influences the cognitive evaluation of the destination; the more information sources are used, the more positive the cognitive evaluation of the destination is (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Baloglu & Mccleary, 1999a).

2.2.3 **Emotional vs. Rational Content**

This leads to a comprehensive investigation of the differences between emotional and rational content, and their respective effects.

Studies on this topic have looked at the impact of emotional and rational UGC on consumer behavior and perception. The topic was explored from various perspectives. X. Pan et al. (2021) investigated the effect of emotional and rational UGC on consumer engagement and intention to eWOM. According to the study, neither content form has a direct substantial influence on the eWOM-Intention. In terms of rational content, they demonstrate that it enhances engagement by delivering helpful and useful information that encourages users' cognitive involvement. This contributes to an intensive knowledge as well as trust in the brand or product. Emotional content, on the other hand, enhances the bond with the brand through emotional appeal, has a greater impact on emotional engagement, and fosters a deeper personal connection to the brand. Which is supported by the study of Arif et al. (2020) who also discovered that emotional content enhances the emotional tie and engagement with the brand. The customer develops a deeper affective response to the brand as a result of emotional content, which contributes to increased brand interaction. Rational content has a significant impact on information diffusion and cognitive appraisal of items and services. In this approach, it encourages consumer confidence and connection with the brand, as well as informed decision-making.

Cheung et al. (2022) studied the impact of emotional and rational UGC in the tourism context utilizing a quantitative study technique, using the SOR model, and analysis using partial least squares structural equation modeling, based on data from a structured survey of 538 respondents. The study found that rational content, which contains clear information and detailed facts, helps travellers to make better decisions. In contrast, emotional content has a greater influence on tourists' attitudes and perceptions.

2.2.3 **Internal Psychlogical Processes**

The studies presented above show that various cognitive and affective contents influence the formation of the destination image in different ways and to varying extents. However, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how this content is processed and interpreted, we need to take a closer look at internal psychological processes. Internal psychological processes are mental processes that influence the processing and perception of information and also influence the trading level. These include cognitive, motivational and emotional functions (Vallacher et al., 2015).

In the context of this study, internal psychological processes play a decisive role, as they influence the way in which the information conveyed by the UGC is processed and influence the destination image. This process is further emphasised by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Petty & Cacioppo (1986) use the ELM to describe how the processing of information takes place on two different routes, the central and the peripheral. The depth of processing differs between these two paths and is determined by motivation and ability. The central route is characterised by deep cognitive processing, the facts are carefully examined, which also means that the change in attitude is characterised by stability and resistance. Whereas in the peripheral route, information is only processed superficially due to low motivation and ability, as the information is not of personal relevance. This also leads to a less stable short-term shift in attitudes.

Abbasi et al. (2023) applied the model as part of the investigation into the influence of social media destination image on eWOM. The study shows that social media content activates both central and peripheral processing cues and thus a combination of informative and entertaining content increases the effectiveness of social media content. This also supports the results of the study by H. Li & See-To (2023) and P. Pan & Zhang (2023). In the social media context, peripheral stimuli have a stronger influence on attitudes (P. Pan & Zhang, 2023).

Content that is emotionally appealing or aesthetic activates the peripheral route of processing. Informative content that contains relevant details and requires a deeper examination activates the central route (H. Li & See-To, 2023).

Drawing on existing evidence and an analysis of the relevant literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> **H1a**: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the cognitive destination image.

H1b: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the affective destination image.

2.2.4 **Determinants of Destination Image Formation**

X. Pan et al. (2021) discovered that the influence of the destination image is also dependent on the person's prior knowledge about the destination. This is further supported by the study by Cherifi et al. (2014) who identified three major characteristics that influence the destination image of non-visitors: External sources of information, personal experience and comparison to it, and recollections from the distant past are all important variables. In addition to existing knowledge, their personal experiences with other places they have previously been and so compared have an impact on the destination's image. Beside that other sources include films, family and friend reports, and school-related content have an influence on the destination image. This is supported by Maghrifani et al. (2022) who also found personal factors as key influencing factors. They also discovered that destination image is mostly driven by numerous travel goals, including novelty seeking, certainty seeking, and interaction seeking.

Similar to the findings by Cherifi et al. (2014), Pereira et al. (2022) also identified knowledge and location as two of the most influential elements. Aside from information and places, natural beauty was identified as the most essential factor of all. Other influential elements discovered include: escape, religion, economics, self-realization, safety, and physical attractiveness. A total of 350 tourist data were gathered and evaluated using structural equation modeling (SEM). To investigate the relationship between the factors and determine the mediating role of destination image. The SEM results reveal that escape, knowledge and places, safety, and natural beauty have a favorable and significant impact on destination image.

Guided by the theoretical insights reviewed, it is hypothesize that:

H2: Experience Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

H3: Nature Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes

2.3 **Non-visitors**

Non-visitors in the tourism context, are defined as individuals who have never been to a destination (Hughes & Allen, 2008).

2.3.1 **Typological approach**

Cherifi et al. (2014) analysed the influence of various factors on the image of a destination among people who have not yet visited it. The study divides non-visitors into four categories: Potential Visitors, Pre-Visitors, Non-Visitors with no interest and Non-Visitors who cannot visit. These types differ in terms of the level of interest and motivation to actively inform themselves about the destination.

On the other hand, the findings from the study by Zaim et al. (2024) identifies five different types of non-visiotrors: neophiles, nationalists, narcissists, volunteers, and reluctant non-goers. The study aimed to create a typology of non-visitors based on travel motivation and intention to visit a destination after exposure to UGC. In the study, semi-structured personal interviews were conducted with 31 Indonesian and 30 British non-visitors. The participants viewed two videos regarding Raja Ampat in Indonesia, filmed by visitors and uploaded to the video platform YouTube. The video analysis identified five categories of non-visitors. The video analysis indicated that the incentives to visit the destination differ following the viewing of the UG video.. Zaim et al. (2024) concentrates on individual personality traits and motivations. In contrast to Cherifi et al. (2014), non-visitors are classified based on their behavior and attitude toward information, as well as their motivation to learn more about the destination. These categories differ in terms of their curiosity and motivation to actively learn about the place.

2.3.2 **Destination Image: Visitors vs. Non-Visitors**

The study by Cherifi et al. (2014) also examines the difference in the perception of destinations by non-visitors and visitors, finding that non-visitors have a rather simplistic and less accurate image of the destination. However, the study's limited geographical and cultural scope may limit its applicability. Further research is needed. Differences in perceptions of the destination are also supported by Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2020) who also found that cognitive and affective destination images are formed in various ways. Non-visitors frequently construct cognitive images based on secondary data, however affective images are weaker due to a lack of personal experience. Cherifi et al. (2014) adds to this that non-visitors enhance and enlarge their image of a site based on their own experiences and beliefs about it. As a result, a comparison is conducted with previously visited locations in order to provide a more comprehensive review. The research by Gorji et al. (2023) points out that the image of the destination held by visitors is more positive than that held by non-visitors, due to the secondary sources of information from which the latter construct their image, which are more negative. This also demonstrates

the distinction between forming one's own impression directly at the destination and when the perception of a place is also influenced by the media.

The findings from the study by Sroypetch et al. (2018) also corroborate this. Highlight the primary distinction in perception between visitors and non-visitors is visitors often rated the destination higher in terms of hospitality, natural beauty, and cultural activities. Non-visitors were less familiar with the destinations specific products and overall assessed the country less positively in terms of safety and infrastructure. The study employed an online survey to gather quantitative data on Australians' views and impressions of Thailand as a backpacking destination. The sample contained 491 valid responses. Another key finding of the study relates to the distinction between cognitive and affective destination images from visitors and non-visitors. Non-visitors frequently build cognitive representations based on information from media reports or stories about others, resulting in a primarily cognitive perception of the destination. Visitors, on the other hand, integrate additional affective and emotional dimensions, which leads to a better perception of the destination. This is also supported by the study of Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2020). Complementing the findings by Pereira et al. (2022) and Maghrifani et al. (2022) the research also points out that the security factor plays a part for non-visitors in the assessment of the destination image.

2.4 **Social Media in Tourism**

Social media plays a crucial role in the tourism industry since it serves as a platform that connects businesses to travelers as well as to travelers themselves, fostering interaction and having an impact on travelers' decisions and perceptions (Lama, 2024).

The number of publications addressing the role of social media in tourism has increased actively since 2015, which once more underlines the importance of this topic (Tolossa et al., 2023).

2.4.1 **Role in the Travel Decision-Making Process**

Social media has transformed the way we travel. It has a big impact on tourists' decision-making processes by sharing personal experiences and offering detailed information. Users can see destinations through the eyes of other visitors before going there themselves, shaping their perceptions and expectations (Tolossa et al., 2023).

Dimitriou & AbouElgheit (2019) develops a new five-stage model for decision-making process in the context of travel. The first stage is Inspiration, followed by social recognition, planning

and evaluation, booking, and the last stage is post-booking evaluation. Inspiration is the trigger, it is the inspiration stimulus that is seen on social media rather than a need or a problem that must be addressed. So, unlike in a traditional decision-making process model, inspiration serves as the starting point for the decision-making process. However, the model is restricted to cases from North America, limiting its generalizability. Additionally, the model exclusively analyzes Generation Z, further narrowing its applicability and relevance to other age groups. Additionally, X. Liu et al. (2020) have defined four roles (Need Generator, Supporter, Guider, and Approver) that social media plays in the decision-making process of travelers.

Social media works as a need generator since it increases attention to a destination and piques tourists' interest. The tourist already knows that he wants to go there, social media serves as a supporter in this stage by bringing the tourist back to mind and reinforcing the need or want to travel there. In the role of a guide, it helps tourists find the right accommodations and activities, serving as an information source. Finally, social media takes over the role of approver. Here, social media plays a role that serves as a final confirmation before the final decision, so the tourist double-checks and confirms his decision right before making it. In this regard, Javed et al. (2020) emphasize the need for other factors in translating the intentions formed via social media into actual action. Social media serves as an influential tool in the early stages of travel planning and has a significant impact on tourists' intentions and actual behavior, particularly when planning trips and selecting destinations. The direct impact of this information on actual behavior, i.e. whether tourists carry out their plans, is less pronounced. However, more research is needed here as well, as this study is limited not just to a specific age group but also geographically, which affects the transferability.

X. Liu et al. (2020) categorize these 4 roles into indirect and direct influencing factors in the travel decision-making process. Guider and Approver have an immediate, direct and visible influence on the tourist. Need Generator and Supporter play an indirect role, as they have a long-term effect. The influence of these two may have taken place long before the trip and indirectly influenced the user in their decision-making process.

Baber & Baber (2023b) investigated the impact of social media on travel behavior in further detail, taking into consideration a variety of contextual elements. They concluded that the degree to which social media influences travel behavior is significantly reliant on contextual circumstances. High social media participation, unusual venues, and difficult planning decisions all have a significant impact. Conversely, the influence of social media is limited if the visitor is familiar with the destination, has a simple trip, and engages in little social media. This is consistent with studies that have identified social media as a significant source

of information. This also supports the findings of X. Liu et al. (2020) by demonstrating how contextual factors such as high social media interaction and complex itineraries amplify the influence of social media.

2.4.2 **Tik Tok in tourism and hospitality**

Research indicates that TikTok is increasingly impacting travel planning. The app is predominantly utilized by the millennial and Generation Z cohorts for travel planning. The short-form videos on the platform represent authentic travel spots, motivating users to organize their own trips (Dramićanin et al., 2023). Tourists utilize TikTok to envision and share journeys, chronicle their travels, and save significant memories (Du et al., 2022). The level of quality of information on TikTok significantly impacts the perception of cognitive and affective destination image. This subsequently affects individuals' desire to visit a destination (Xiao et al., 2020). The study findings indicate that TikTok serves as an effective marketing instrument for organizations promoting destinations. It can be utilized to market travel experiences and interact with potential visitors.

2.4.3 **Influence on Destination Image**

As previously said, social media plays an essential role in tourism, particularly in the early decision-making processes (Javed et al., 2020; Lama, 2024; Liu et al., 2020; Tolossa et al., 2023).

A distinction is made between tour operator-generated content (TOGC) and user-generated content (UGC). Both have a strong positive influence on the formation of cognitive and affective destination images. UGC, in the one hand, has a stronger influence on the formation of cognitive, affective and overall destination image than TOGC, owing to its perceived reliablity and authenticity. Social media influences the perception of destinations through the usefulness, relevance and timeliness of the information provided (Rahman et al., 2023; Sultan et al., 2021).

It contributes both indirectly and directly to the formation of the cognitive and affective destination image. Directly by providing detailed information about the destination (cognitive dimension) and developing emotional connections through interaction opportunities (affective image). It also contributes indirectly to reinforcing the sense of belonging and authenticity, giving the information a more personal dimension and strengthening the emotional bond (affective images) (J. Liu et al., 2024).

2.4.4 **Moderating Role of Social Media Use**

The number of studies that address the role of social media use as a moderating variable in the context of destination image is limited. However, there are studies that have investigated the moderating effect of social media use in the context of influencer marketing and travel intentions. The results of these studies suggest that the use of social media enhances the effect of influencer marketing on destination image and travel intention (Omeish et al., 2024). In addition, social media plays an intermediary role by acting as a moderator between the credibility of influencers as perceived by users and their intention to visit a destination. This reinforces the impact of the influencers' content (Han & Chen, 2022).

The frequency of social media use has a moderating effect on the use of social media in the travel context, with users who use it frequently considering it as more beneficial and easier to use, as well as having greater trust in the information posted on social media (Singh & Srivastava, 2019). High social media usage also improves the association between destination image and tourist satisfaction by emphasising the cognitive and affective elements. It enables the user to create an emotional image of the destination using the visual content (Rahman et al., 2023).

The use of social media can also increase the impact of social pressure to visit a destination and the availability and visibility of information about a destination on the intention to visit a destination (Shang et al., 2021).

The studies mentioned demonstrate that social media usage (SMU) plays an essential role in the travel decision-making process and can operate as an amplifier between internal psychological processes and the destination image.

Drawing from the findings of previous studies, the following hypothesis are proposed:

> **H4a**: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the affective destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.
>
> **H4b**: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the cognitive destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

2.5 **Conceptual orientation: Stimulus-Organism Response Model**

The stimulus-organism response (SOR) model is a well-established psychological framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1980) to describe how environmental stimuli influence behavioral responses. The primary assumption behind the model is that an external stimulus (S) causes an internal state change in the organism (O), which leads to a specific reaction (R) (Donovan et al., 1994). This model has found significant application in consumer research, particularly in the context of marketing and consumer behavior. It is used to study the effects of marketing stimuli on buyer decisions (Nusairat et al., 2021).

The model has not only proven valuable in general consumer research, but it is also commonly employed in the field of tourism marketing due to the flexibility of the SOR model (Hanafiah et al., 2023). The following is a summary of chosen studies that used this model in their research. These studies demonstrate the numerous possible uses of the model and highlight its usefulness for the understanding of tourists' behaviour and decision-making processes.

In the study by Kim et al. (2020) the use of virtual reality in tourist marketing is deeper explored. Using the SOR model to analyze immersive experiences and their impact on travel intention. Baber & Baber (2023b) uses the SOR Model to illustrate the dynamic between social media marketing effort, e-Reputation (Stimulus), and the destination image (Organism), and the resulting intention to travel (Response). By applying the model, Abbasi et al. (2023) analyse in their study how social media features (credibility, entertainment and informativeness) influence internal cognitive and emotional processes (organism) as stimuli. The response to these is engagement with the content or the generation of eWOM about the destination. Using the SOR model, study by Yang et al. (2024) examined the influence of personalized tourism recommendations (stimulus) on user perception and attitudes (organism), influencing the impact on booking behavior (reaction). By applying the SOR model, Zhang & Xu (2019) investigates which characteristics of tourscapes (stimulus) evoke emotional reactions (organism), ultimately leading to liminal experiences (response).

The model is also utilized in certain studies on the topic of UGC and its impact on the travel behavior of tourists, to clarify the interactions between the individual variables and to better understand the decision-making process (Asyraff et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2022). UGC serves as the stimulus. The organism evaluates the appeal of an attraction (Cheung et al., 2022) or the destination image (Asyraff et al., 2024; Nguyen & Tong, 2023b). The final component is the reaction resulting from the processing of the UGC. This can involve the decision to visit a certain location (Asyraff et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2022).

W. Li et al. (2022) modified the SOR Model to meet the needs of the digital tourism research. This modern application of the framework for digital content focuses on the study of travel vlogs (stimuli), a type of user-generated content, and its impact on potential visitors. The storytelling aspect is viewed as a key technique of gaining attention and engagement, as well as triggering emotional and cognitive reactions. The organism component includes cognitive processes such as perceived intimacy, authenticity, and presence as well as emotional experiences. In addition to the destination image as a response, the intention to visit is also a key result. The moderator is added into the model as a new variable, in the form of personal traits. The revised model incorporates personal traits as major contributing elements in explaining response variability.

3. Theoretical framework

In this context, the stimulus-organism response (SOR) model serves as the theoretical basis for this research to investigate how different characteristics of UGC influences non-visitors' perceptions and images of destinations. This approach enables a more comprehensice assessment of internal changes in attitude and perception caused by UGC, as well as their impact on the destination image.

The SOR model is a well-established psychological framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1980) to describe how environmental stimuli influence behavioral responses. The primary assumption behind the model is that an external stimulus (S) causes an internal state change in the organism (O), which leads to a specific reaction (R) (Donovan et al., 1994). This model has found significant application in consumer research, particularly in the context of marketing and consumer behavior. It is used to study the effects of marketing stimuli on buyer decisions (Nusairat et al., 2021). The thesis employs an adapted SOR framework based on the findings of W. Li et al. (2022). This model provides a theoretical foundation for investigating the impact of UGC on the destination image of non-visitors. It consequently serves as the foundation for evaluating the the hypotheses and addressing the research questions.

The framework's core components are defined as follows:

Stimulus (S): The stimulus consists of different types of UGC, including nature-focused and experience-oriented content. These external stimuli affect the viewer's perception and emotional response.

Organism (O): Organism refers to the internal psychological processes.

Response (R): The response refers to the behavioral reaction to perceived stimuli, and is defined in this study by the affective and cognitive dimension of the destination image.

Moderator

In the model provided, moderators play critical roles in explaining the link between the components. The study by W. Li et al. (2022) demonstrates how moderator variables play an important role in the SOR model by influencing the strength or direction of a relationship, allowing differences between groups to be evaluated

In this study, the context of social media use in travel planning serves as a moderator variable. The moderator influences the interaction between internal psychological processes and the formation of the destination image, influencing how stimuli are processed and translated into perceptions and attitudes toward a destination.

The graphic (Fig.1) illustrates how the hypotheses are integrated into this framework:

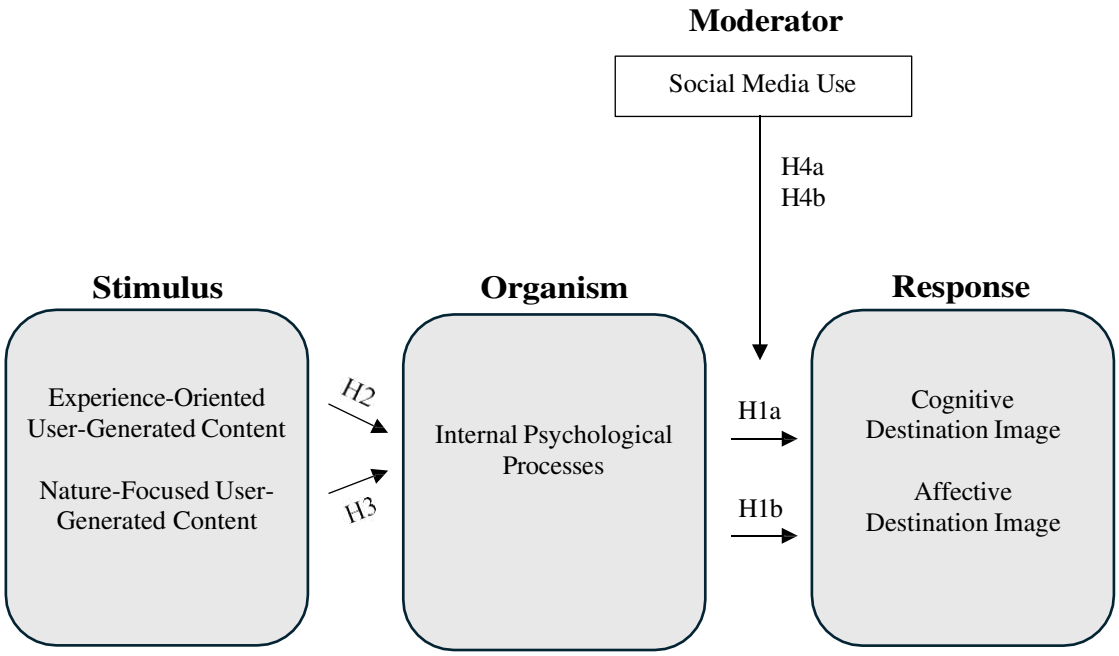

Figure 1 Conceptual model based on the SOR Model by W. Li et al. (2022). Adapted to the current study.

4. Methodology

4.1 **Research Design**

To answer the research question and achieve the stated research objectives, a methodological approach is chosen that makes it possible to analyze the effects of UGC on the destination image of non-visitors. The present study used a deductive research design to empirically examine the hypotheses resulting from the comprehensive literature review (Bryman, 2016). Based on the findings of the secondary data, an online questionnaire was constructed for use as part of a quantitative study, to gain a deeper insight into the underlying motives and barriers of non-visitors. The survey approach was used as it provides insights into the subjective perceptions and feelings of the respondents. This methodology enables structured and focused data collecting that encompasses all relevant issues and is customised to the study question (Lin et al., 2021).

Based on the theoretical framework and the literature evaluation, the following hypotheses are proposed to guide the empirical inquiry in this study:

H1a: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the cognitive destination image.

H1b: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the affective destination image.

H2: Experience Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

H3: Nature Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

H4a: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the affective destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

H4b: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the cognitive destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

The platform TikTok was chosen for this study because of its growing popularity and prominent role as a medium for user-generated content (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024;

Kemp, 2024). To provide a well-founded analysis, carefully selecting and categorizing TikTok videos is essential. As a result, the previously established criteria are briefly presented, after which videos are chosen, to ensure that the results are both legitimate and reliable. The criteria include the relevance of the content to the travel destination Tromsø. The videos should include some current content and have to been created by individual users, not travel companies or commercial providers. Furthermore, the language should be English. A video about the northern lights should be included. The decision to choose videos that highlight the natural beauty of Tromsøs, particularly the northern and general nature scenes, is based on research that shows that "natural beauty" is one of the important factors that significantly influence the destination's image (Pereira et al., 2022a).

4.1.1. **Survey Design**

The survey was designed to examine the impact of UGC on the perception of Tromsø among non-visitors. Using the SOR model as a theoretical framework. The survey was structured into six thematic groups, each addressing specific research objectives. The survey questions were primarily designed using a 5-point Likert scale to ensure consistency, ease of understanding for participants, and comparability of results (Jamieson, 2004; Taherdoost, 2019).

Introduction and screening question

The survey began with an introduction explaining the studys objectives and emphasising the voluntary and anonymous nature of participantion. A screening question was asked at the start to ensure that those who had never visited Tromsø were included in the survey. This was done to exclude people who did not belong to the target group. Participants who did not fit within the target group were guided to the end of the survey (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Stimulus (Group I & II): Experience- and Nature- oriented UGC Videos

Four UG videos were presented to analyse changes in perception: Two focussed on experiences, the other two on nature. The selection was determined by its relevance to the target group and its alignment with the research purpose. Efforts were made to guarantee that the videos were of similar length and had comparable engagement metrics (see to Appendix C). The videos were shown in randomized order to minimise bias and ensure a more objective result (Dillman et al., 2014).

Organism (Group III): Psychological Processes

After a short introduction, general knowledge and spontaneous associations with Tromsø were assessed. Among other things, the participants were asked to describe Tromsø in three words

in order to capture their spontaneous cognitive and affective associations and thus gain a deeper qualitative perspective on the perception of the city. A combination of Likert scales and open-ended questions was used to measure both cognitive and affective dimensions of perception (Echtner et al., 1993).

Social Media (Group IV): Usage and Influence

This section of the survey investigates the role of social media in travel planning. Respondets were asked, among other things, how frequently they had previously studied vacation destinations using social media, how essential social media is for their travel preparation, and what emotional impact it has on their opinion of travel destinations (Dimitriou & Abou Elgheit, 2019; Javed et al., 2020; X. Liu et al., 2020).

Response (Group V): Destination Image – Cognitive and Affective

Before and after the presentation of the videos, participants rated Tromsø in terms of cognitive (e.g. natural beauty, infrastructure) and affective dimensions (e.g. joy, uncertainty). Baloglu & Mccleary (1999a) and Dwyer & Kim (2003) provided the theoretical basis for the measurement of cognitive and affective dimensions of the destination image. The objective of this part of the survey was to measure the cognitive and affective destination image before the stimuli and to analyze changes after the videos.

Demographics (Group VI): Participants Characteristics

Data on participants' age, gender, nationality, employment, and income were collected for segmentation purposes.

To ensure clarity and consistency, all questions were pre-tested on a small sample of 10 participants before full deployment (Dillman et al., 2014).

4.1.2 **Population and Sample**

Given the study's thematic focus on non-visitors, potential respondents were selected based on their fulfillment of the following criteria: they (1) must be over 18 years old and (2) must not have visited Tromsø, Norway and (3) to ensure data quality, only respondents who completed the survey were included in the analysis. To fulfill this criteria a screening question was included to ensure that the participants had prior experience visiting Tromsø. Cases that did not fulfill the criterias were excluded from the dataset.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants via online platforms and forums, ensuring accessibility to relevant respondents (Etikan, 2016). The description pointed out that they were looking for people who had not visited Tromsø before.

Of the 235 individuals who took part in the survey, only 184 met the inclusion criteria. After data cleaning, 140 participants could be used for the analysis.

The sample size of 140 participants corresponds to established practice in tourism research using survey-based methods. Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) employed 120 participants to investigate social media and brand equity, whereas Wang et al. (2021) analysed the image of travel destinations using 186 observations. Casali et al. (2021) similarly analysed awareness and loyalty using sample groups with 100 to 200 participants. These examples verify the appropriateness of the sample size for this study. Therefore, the sample size of 140 in this study aligns with known methodologies and is enough for fulfilling the research aims.

4.1.3 **Data Collection Procedure**

The Data was gathered over two weeks. The survey was created and managed using the software Qualtrics. The survey took about 10 minutes to complete and was distributed through social media and content-sharing platforms. All data received was contained within a downloadable spreadsheet from the survey software that was then converted into SPSS for further analysis.

4.1.4 **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics (Version: 29.0.2.0), following these steps:

1. Data Cleaning and Preparation

The initial stage involved cleaning and coding the data, checking the scales, identifying and addressing missing values, filtering for the target group, and examining the data for outliers. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the dataset, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for scale variables, and frequencies for nominal and ordinal variables. Testing for normal distribution using histograms.

Outcome: No significant irregularaties were observed

2. Reliability and Validity Testing

The reliability of the scales and measurement instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure consistent measurement. The results indicate excellent reliability for the Social Media Use scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.902$) and good reliability for both the Destination Image Before Videos scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.885$) and the Destination Image After Videos scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.848$). To test the validity of the constructs, factor analysis was performed to assess whether the variables were suitable for this method. The results confirm that the data for both Destination Image Before Videos (KMO = 0.858; Bartlett's Test: $p < 0.001$) and Destination

Image After Videos (KMO = 0.859; Bartlett's Test: $p < 0.001$) are highly suitable for factor analysis, indicating robust construct validity.

3. Socio-demographic characteristics

Conducted frequency analysis to profile respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. To get an overview of the sample composition, ensure that the dataset is representative of the target population.

The current study focuses on a specific demographic, mostly young adults aged 25 to 34 (44.1%), with a significant proportion of participants aged 18 to 24 (25%). In terms of gender, women make up a clear majority of participants with 69.3%, while males represent a smaller percentage of 29.3%. Regarding origin, the majority of participants are from Germany (36.4%) and the United States (25.7%). Regarding employment status, 35.7% of participants are students, while 45% are full-time employees. As a result, the audience is young, international, and predominantly educated. Respondent's demographic profiles are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Category	Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	41	29.3%	29.3%
	Female	97	69.3%	98.6%
	Non-binary	1	0.7%	99.3%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.7%	100.0%
Age	18-24	39	25.0%	72.9%
	25-34	63.	44.1%	79.3%
	35-44	9	6.4%	85.7%
	45-54	9	6.4%	86.0%
	55+	20	14.3%	100.0%
Nationality	Germany	51	36.4%	36.4%
	United States	36	25.7%	62.1%
	United Kingdom	7	5.0%	67.1%
	Portugal	3	2.1%	69.3%
	Other	43	30.7%	100.0%
Employment Status	Student	50	35.7%	35.7%
	Employed	63	45.0%	80.7%
	Self-employed	14	10.0%	90.7%
	Unemployed	3	2.1%	92.9%
	Retired	10	7.1%	100.0%
Income	Less than €20,000	28	20.0%	20.3%
	€20,000-€40,000	16	11.4%	31.9%

	€40,001-€60,000	31	22.1%	54.3%
	€60,001-€80,000	16	11.4%	65.9%
	More than €80,000	23	16.4%	82.6%
	Prefer not to say	24	17.1%	100.0%

Note. Data from the survey, conducted by Author (2024).

4. Testing H1a and H1b

The relationship between internal psychological processes (IV) and destination image (cognitive and affective dimensions, DV) was analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression. The correlation provides an assessment of the intensity and orientation of the link. Regression analysis can determine the strength and significance of the influence of internal psychological processes on the components of destination image.

5. Testing H2 and H3

Cognitive dimension:

To analyze the cognitive component, a paired Sample t-Test was conducted to compare the mean values of the perception of Tromsø as a travel destination after the nature video and the experience video and to evaluate the influence of both videos on the cognitive dimension of the destination image.

Affective Dimension:

To examine the correlation between the videos and particular emotional responses, the Pearson Chi-Square test was computed to determine the statistical significant of the association. To provide a descriptive overview of the changes in emotional response (DV) after the UG videos (IV), cross-tabulations were employed to illustrate the distribution of responses. The dependent variable was the internal psychological process, while the dependent variable was the UGC videos.

6. Testing H4a and H4b

A moderation analysis was performed through multiple linear regression. The model incorporated the independent variable (IPP), the moderating variable (Social Media Use), and an interaction term (IPP x Social Media Use) as predictions. The dependent variable was the alteration in affective and cognitive destination imagery. The residuals were assessed for normal distribution, and the significance of the primary effects and the interaction term was investigated to see whether social media usage moderates the association between Internal Psychological Processes and destination image.

5. Results

5.1 **Sample characteristics**

The following results show the importance of social media for the travel planning of the target group analyzed and how different platforms and content are used. In addition, Tromsø's perception and the impact of the UGC videos are displayed.

57.1% of respondents use Instagram, followed by YouTube (37.9%) and TikTok (38.0%) for their travel planning. More than half of the participants (53.2%) state that they regularly (very often or often) use social media to research potential travel destinations. Content such as photos and videos from travelers are particularly influential, with 55.9% rating them as the most important factor. Ratings and reviews follow with 23.1%, while influencer recommendations (8.4%) and official content from tourism companies (12.6%) are less influential (see Table 2). Most responders (58.7%) claimed to be "not at all familiar with Tromsø." Just 18.2% of participants thought the city was "very attractive" before watching the UGC films; following the videos, that percentage increased to 44.4%. Participants with greater familiarity with Tromsø tend to rate the city as a more attractive destination before seeing the UG videos, according to a significant moderate positive correlation ($r=0.402$, $p<0.001$) (see Appendix E).

Table 2

Tromsø Familiarity and Social Media Use of Respondents

Category	Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Familiarity with Tromsø	Not at all familiar	82	58.6%	58.6%
	Slightly familiar	30	21.4%	80.0%
	Moderately familiar	19	13.6%	93.6%
	Quite familiar	8	5.7%	99.3%
	Very familiar	1	0.7%	100.0%
Attractiveness of Tromsø (before the video)	Not at all attractive	17	12.1%	12.1%
	Slightly attractive	17	12.1%	24.3%
	Moderately attractive	41	29.3%	53.6%
	Quite attractive	40	28.6%	82.1%
	Very attractive	25	17.9%	100.0%
Social Media Platform Usage for	Instagram	80	57.1%	95.0%
	YouTube	53	37.9%	37.9%
	TikTok	54	38.0%	100.0%

Travel Planning [a]	Facebook	34	23.9%	76.8%
	Pinterest	29	21.3%	98.3%
	Others (e.g. Travel Blogs)	28	20.0	20.3
Influence of Social Media Platform on travel decisions	Perceived as Most Influential:			
	Photos and videos shared by travelers	78	55.7%	55.7%
	Reviews and ratings	32	22.9%	22.9%
	Influencer recommendations	12	8.5%	8.5%
	Official content from tourism companies	18	12.9%	12.9%
Research Destinations on social media	Very often	33	23.6%	23.6%
	Frequently	40	28.6%	52.1%
	Occasionally	38	27.1%	79.3%
	Rarely	17	12.1%	91.4%
	Never	12	8.6%	100.0%
Social Media enhance excitement for visiting new destinations	Strongly disagree	13	9.3%	9.3%
	Disagree	16	11.4%	20.7%
	Neutral	18	12.9%	33.6%
	Agree	49	35.0%	68.6%
	Strongly agree	44	31.4%	100.0%
Influence of social media on perception of travel destinations	Not at all	13	9.3%	9.3%
	Slightly	13	9.3%	18.6%
	Moderately	34	24.3%	42.9%
	Quite a bit	47	33.6%	76.4%
	Very much	33	23.6%	100.0%

[a] Total percentage exceeds 100% as participants could choose multiple options.

Note. Data from the survey, conducted by Author (2024).

After being exposed to the UGC videos, the percentage of respondents who prefer Tromsø as a travel destination rises, according to the data analysis. Just 8.4% of respondents said that they are not very likely to consider Tromsø as a travel destination, compared to 51.8% who said that they were “likely” or “very likely” to consider Tromsø as a potential travel destination.

The ANOVA indicates that groups categorised by varying social media usage (low, medium, high) exhibit statistically significant differences in the destination image of Tromsø alterations post-video viewing (F=6.337, p=0.003). The scale for measuring the change in destination image ranges from 1 = Very much worsened to 5 = Very much improved. Individuals with elevated social media use had a more favourable shift in their assessment of Tromsø following the video viewing. Individuals with low social media usage (Group 1) exhibited a somewhat favourable shift in perception (M=3.92) accompanied by a moderate variability in responses (Std. Deviation= 0.862). Medium social media users (Group 2) exhibit a marginally higher favourable shift in perception compared to the low usage group (M = 4.00, Std. deviation = 0.894). Participants who regularly utilise social media for travel planning (Group 3) exhibited the most favourable change in perception (M = 4.67) with the least variability among groups (Std. deviation = 0.555).

The effect size (Eta-squared = 0.193) indicates that 19.3% of the total variance in the change in destination image may be attributed to group differences in social media use, suggesting a moderate influence of social media use on the change in destination image (see Appendix F).

5.2 **Results of Hypothesis Testing**

H1a: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the cognitive destination image.

H1b: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the affective destination image.

The results from the correlation indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between Internal psychological processes and both dimensions of the destination image. However, the affective dimension (r=0.963) shows a significantly stronger correlation than the cognitive dimension (r=0.605). These findings are highly significant (p<0.001) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Correlation test between IPP and Cognitive DI and Affective DI

	Value Cognitive DI	Value Affective DI
Pearson Correlation IPP	0.605 ***	0.963***

****p<0.001*

The regression analysis reveals that internal psychological processes explain 36.6% of the variance in the cognitive dimension of the destiantion image (R^2: 0.366), indicating a moderate to significant effect. The F-value is significantly elevated, and the p-value is substantially below 0.05. This indicates that the model is statistically significant in its entirety. The independent variable accounts for a substantial amount of the variance in the dependent variable. The standardised coefficient (β=0.605) demonstrates a significant beneficial influence of internal psychological processes on the cognitive component of destination image.

The effect is statistically significant and explains a substantial proportion of the variance in the cognitive dimension.

The findings indicate that the affective dimension of destination image is strongly positively impacted by internal psychological processes. According to the regression analysis, the internal psychological processes can account for 92.7% of the variance in the affective dimension (R^2= 0.927), which is regarded as a very high value. Overall, the model shows a high level of significance, indicating that the independent variable (internal psychological processes) has a statistically relevant influence on the affective dimension of the destiantion image ($F=1765.337$, $p<0.001$). The effect is substantial, with a one standard deviation rise in internal psychological processes resulting in an increase of 0.963 standard deviations in the affective component ($\beta=0.963$, $p<0.001$) (see Appendix G).

The Results show that internal psychological processes have a positive and significant effect on both dimensions of destination image (cognitive and affective), with a significant influence on the destination's affective image and a moderate influence on the cognitive destination image. Based on this H1a and H1b can be confirmed.

H2: Experience Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

H3: Nature Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

Affective dimension

The results of the descriptive statistics, which were determined using cross tabulations, provide an overview of the distribution of the observed values. Demonstrates that both thematic UG videos elicited a modification in the emotional response to Tromsø. The Nature videos specifically fosters enthusiasm and diminishes uncertainty, whilst the Experience videos primarily increases joy and also creates an activating effect.

To examine the correlation between the videos and particular emotional responses, the Pearson Chi-Square test was computed to determine the statistical significant of the association. While the Phi coefficient (Φ) quantifies the strength of the association between the variables.

The nature-orientated videos had stronger impacts on relaxation ($p = 0.007$, $\Phi = 0.227$) and uncertainty ($p = 0.028$, $\Phi = 0.184$). It considerably decreased insecurity while increasing "Relaxation" (see Table 4). In contrast, the experience-orientated videso had very strong and significant impact on "Excitement" ($p < 0.001$, $\Phi = 0.307$). The positive change in "Joy" was not of statistical significance, which indicates that the emotional change in this case cannot be clearly attributed to the experience-orientated videos.

Overall, the nature-orientated videos is more effecting in promotiong feelings of relaxation and reducing uncertainty, having a calming effect. Whilst the experience-orientated videos is more energizing, predominantly by stimulating the feeling of excitement.

Table 4

Chi-Square test (Q13, Q15)

UGC Video theme	Feelings	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Phi
Nature	Relaxation	7.365*	1	0.227
	Excitement	2.118****	1	0.122
	Uncertainty	4.840*	1	0.184
	Joy	0.076****	1	-0.023
Experience	Relaxation	6.433****	1	0.211
	Excitment	13.651***	1	0.307
	Uncertainty	1.741****	1	0.110
	Joy	3.275****	1	0.150

**p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; ****p>0.05*

Cognitive dimension

The evaluation of Tromsø as a travel destination was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, varied from 1 = very negative to 5 = very positive, facilitating an evaluation of the overall perception following the video viewing.There is no significant difference in the perception of Tromsø after the nature video (M=4.16) and the experience video (M=4.05).

The Cohen's d = 0.832 indicates a large effect size according to conevntional benchmarks, but the mean difference (M=-0.112, p=0.110) is not statistically significant. Whereas the nature video has a marginally higher mean value, this difference is not statistically discernible.
The ratings of the two videos are moderately positively correlated (r = 0.604, p < 0.001) (see Appendix J).
Both videos were perceived similarly positively. The nature video achieved a slightly higher mean score, but the difference is not statistically significant .
The frequency analysis of the respective aspects of the perception of Tromsø as a travel destination showed a strong increase in the mean for the aspect “Natural Beauty” (increase in the mean by 0.47) and “Adventure and Outdoor Opportunities” (increase in the mean by 0.52) (see Appendix H). The participants categorized these aspects as relevant in their evaluations. The distribution of the mean values and scatter for these dimensions shows a certain variance, which makes it interesting to analyze their changes after watching the videos.
The results of the paired Sampless t-Test shows that both videos show highly significant improvements in the cognitive perception of Tromsø. The Nature video significantly improves the perception of Tromsø as a natural beauty with a significant effect (Cohen's d = 0.871). The experience video on the other hand has an even stronger significant effect on the perception of Tromsø as an adventure and outdoor destination with a very strong effect size (Cohen's d = 1.020). Both videos have a positive and significant effect on cognitive perception, with the experience video being slightly more effective (see Appendix I)
H2 and H3 can therefore be confirmed.

H4a: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the affective destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

H4b: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the cognitive destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

Affective dimension

The model accounts for 34.5% of the variance (R^2 = 0.345) in the dependent variable concerning the affective dimension of the destination image, indicating modest explanatory power. The model is statistically significant (p < 0.001). The interaction term has a positive but non-significant effect on the Affective dimension of the Destination Image (B = 0.354,p=0.585) and is notably weak (t = 0.547).

Cognitive dimension

The model accounts for roughly 9.3% of the variation (R^2 = 0.093). Despite the model's significance (p = 0.004), the variance is minimal, suggesting that additional factors exert a more substantial influence on the connection than social media usage. The regression analysis further indicates that the interaction term (Internal psychological processes x Social Media Use) is not significant (p = 0.328), thus providing no evidence that social media use moderates the relationship between psychological processes and the cognitive destination image. The non-significant influence of the interaction term on the dependent variable is further underscored (B = 0.567). The interaction term's effect is neither statistically significant (p = 0.328) nor sufficiently robust (t = 0.982).

Table 5

Regression Analysis Results with Social Media Use as Moderator

DV	IV	R^2	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-Value
Affective DI Change	Interaction Term Social Media x IPP	0.345	0.354****	0.547
Cognitive DI Change	Interaction Term Social Media x IPP	0.093	0.747****	0.982

**p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; ****p>0.05*

The findings indicate that the degree of social media use does not directly affect the correlation between internal psychological processes and destination image. Basend on this findings the analysis does not support the hypothesis that social media us moderates the relationship betwenn internal psychological processes and destiantion image.

H4a and H4b are rejected.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 **Discussion**

The final section of this study presents a summary of the most significant findings, categorized within the framework of previous research outcomes. The objective is to reevaluate the theories

and examine their practical implementations. To accurately categorize the research findings, the limits of this study are outlined, and suggestions for future research are provided. Ultimately, the relevant findings are consolidated, and the research question is addressed accordingly.

Objective 1:

To explore the impact of User-Generated Content on TikTok affecting the destination image among non-visitors.

Hypotheses:

H1a: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the cognitive destination image.

H1b: The internal psychological process is positively associated with the affective destination image.

The results indicate that UGC impacts both components, with a more pronounced effect on the affective component. This may also pertain to the content elements of the UGC and the video format. Nonetheless, the findings are corroborated by the research conducted by X. Pan et al. (2021), which revealed that emotional UGC exerts a more significant impact. However, the study analyzed this within the framework of brand marketing, which should be considered. Moreover, Cheung et al. (2022) affirm that emotional content significantly influences tourist attitudes and perception.

This can also be supported by the theoretical ELM model. P. Pan & Zhang (2023) discovered that in the context of social media, stimuli that engage the peripheral route exert a more significant impact on attitudes. This is corroborated by the study conducted by H. Li & See-To (2023), which discovered that content that is emotionally and aesthetically appealing is processed through the peripheral channel. The study's findings corroborate the hypothesis that emotional processes significantly impact the overall perception of a location, particularly with the affective dimension of its image.

What also generally emerges from the data is that participants who are more familiar with Tromsø tend to rate the city as a more attractive destination. This emphasises the importance of familiarity for the perception of destinations, also shown in the study by Cherifi et al. (2014), Pereira et al. (2022) and X. Pan et al. (2021).

The findings indicate that UGC can enhance the affective component of the destination image among non-visitors, which is typically less robust, as demonstrated by Gorji et al. (2023), Sroypetch et al. (2018) and Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2020) in their research. This indicates that UGC

significantly influences the overall destination image, with the affective component exerting a bigger impact than the cognitive (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Baloglu & Mccleary, 1999a).

Objective 2:

To analyze the influence of User-Generated Content on TikTok with different thematic focuses on the destination image among non-visitors.

Hypothesen:

H2: Experience Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes.

H3: Nature Oriented User-generated content is positively associated with internal psychological processes

The analysis shows that both videos have a positive influence on internal psychological processes but on different dimensions.

Affective dimension: The nature videos has a calming effect and the experince videos has a stimulating effect.

Cognitive dimension: The nature videos strengthens the perception of natural beauty. While the experience videos strengthens the perception of adventure and outdoor opportunities.

Nevertheless, these results should be seen in light of the fact that only these two themes were compared, and the choice of videos may have also impacted the ratings. Another thing to consider is the demographics of the target group, which can also impact the results.

Objective 3:

To investigate the moderating effect of social media usage on the relationship between internal psychological processes and the perception of destination image among non-visitors.

Hypothese

H4a: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the affective destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

H4b: Social media use for travel planning moderates the relationship between internal psychological processes and the cognitive destination image, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of social media use.

The results of the investigation into whether social media use acts as a moderator between internal psychological processes and the destination image could not be substantiated.

In contrast, the ANOVA analysis divides the data into 3 groups based on the intensy of social media use for travel planning and compares the mean values across the groups. The results show a significant difference, suggesting that social media usage directly influence the destination image rather than acting as a moderator. However, it should be noted that due to the relatively small group sizes, the results may be biased, which may lead to an over- or underestimation of the effect. A key distinction also exists in the subjects of measurement. The regression study investigates how the extent of social media usage influences the link between internal psychological processes and destination image. The ANOVA research investigates the direct impact of varying levels of social media usage on the destination image. Furthermore, the very modest effect size must also be considered, which subsequently impacts the outcome. Considering these factors, the results do not inherently conflict, but illuminate distinct aspects. This contradicts previous research findings. Rahman et al. (2023) found that social media use acts as a moderator and leads to a better formation of the affective component of the destination image. Omeish et al. (2024) also identified social media as a moderator, but in a different context, investigated the relationship by including the variables of influencer marketing.
Nonetheless, the research indicating that increased social media utilisation for trip planning positively influences destination image corroborates the findings of Singh & Srivastava (2019), who discovered that frequent social media users exhibit stronger trust in online information. This trust may play a significantly impact in this context, as users regard UGC as more credible and are thus more influenced by it, thereby exerting a stronger influence on the development of the destination image.

An Overview of all the results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	T Statistics	P Values	R-Square	Supported
H1a	Internal psychological process ➞ Cognitive DI	3.361	< 0.001	0.373	Y
H1b	Internal psychological process ➞ Affective DI	1.817	< 0.001	0.928	Y
H2	Experience-oriented UGC ➞ Internal psychological process	Φ = 0.307 (Excitement)	< 0.001	-	Y

H3	Nature-oriented UGC ➞ Internal psychological process	Φ = 0.227 (Relaxation)	0.007	-	Y
H3	Nature-oriented UGC ➞ Internal psychological process	Φ = 0.184 (Uncertainty)	0.028	-	Y
H4a	Social media use x Internal psychological process ➞ Affective DI	0.547	< 0.001	0.345	N
H4b	Social media use x Internal psychological process ➞ Cognitive DI	0.982	0.004	0.093	N

Note: Results are based on data from the survey conducted by Author (2024). Analysis performed using SPSS.

6.2 **Limitations and further research**

To enhance the categorization and comprehension of the research findings within the framework, the constraints of this study are presented in the following part.

The chosen approach leads to some limitations. Various factors such as the uncontrolled environment, inattention of respondents which can lead to fleeting responses, and superficial data collection affect the quality of responses.

By using a combination of different measurement instruments, the methodological limitations mentioned above could be minimized. A different approach would be to pair this with interviews, enabling the capturing of non-verbal signs and offering a more profound, contextually nuanced understanding of participants' motivations and perspectives. Furthermore, employing eye-tracking technology may provide profound insights into the efficacy of various forms of UGC. This approach allows for a more precise and complete measurement of cognitive and emotional responses.

Owing to the temporal limitations of this study, only a restricted sample size could be examined, thus constraining the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. The sample size, its internal homogeneity, and the underrepresentation of specific demographic categories constrain the analysis. This study exclusively concentrated on first-time visitors.

It would also be valuable to examine the impact of geographical proximity to the analyzed destination.
Concerning the intensity of social media utilization in travel planning, it would be interesting to further examine its impact on destination image. The limited sample size renders the findings of this study unrepresentative.

The choice of particular UGC videos may impose limitations on quality, video format (length, style), or platform-specific features (background music, captions, engagement metrics), which might indirectly affect content ratings. Future research may examine elements such as the impact interaction metrics or background music, on the destination image This study concentrated exclusively on two distinct topic content forms. It would be intriguing to analyze other thematically distinct UGC videos to ascertain their impact on the destination image.
This study's exclusive emphasis on Tromsø restricts its applicability to other locations. Moreover, the emphasis on the TikTok platform restricts comparability. Future research may explore the impact of various platforms to identify platform-specific variations in the effects of UGC on the destination image.

6.3 **Practical and Academic Implications**

The study offers important insights for DMOs, particularly with regard to the different functions of the cognitive and affective dimensions of the destination image. The results also provide insights into the effective use of UGC in destination marketing as a marketing tool. Images and videos shared by travelers were found to have the greatest influence on travel decisions, highlighting the importance of integrating and further exploring UGC in destination marketing.

Furthermore, the study shows that it makes sense to consider the cognitive and affective components of destination images separately, as they influence different aspects of perception and decision-making. This finding supports the theoretical models for the formation of the destination image, such as that of Baloglu & Mccleary (1999a). The study makes it clear that internal psychological processes (e.g. relaxation, joy, excitement) have a greater influence on the emotional dimension of the destination image than on the cognitive dimension. It is advisable to consider the two dimensions separately, as shown in the model. Especially with regard to the effectiveness of marketing measures, the distinction between the two dimensions

is crucial. In order to improve destination marketing by specifically addressing emotional and cognitive perception.

In addition, the research provides empirical support for the applicability of the SOR model in tourism research. This has already been confirmed in other studies and the importance and applicability have been demonstrated (Abbasi et al., 2023; Asyraff et al., 2024; Baber & Baber, 2023a; Cheung et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; W. Li et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024; Zhang & Xu, 2019). The use of SOR models shows how external stimuli (UGC) influence both the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image through psychological processes. In addition, the model is extended by the addition of a moderator.

The study's findings about the influence of UGC with varying thematic emphases indicate that selecting diverse material in tourism marketing is effective based on the target audience and travel destination. Content depicting nature can attract audiences seeking tranquility and relaxation. Experience-oriented content may attract the younger, more daring target group.

6.4 **Conclusion**

The analysis demonstrates that internal psychological processes have a significant impact on both dimensions of the destination image. A very high explanation value for the affective dimension is found, indicating a strong positive effect.

Both types of UGC positively influence internal psychological processes, with nature-oriented content being calming and experience-oriented content being stimulating.

Social media use has no direct moderating effect on the relationship between the internal psychological processes and the cognitive or affective destination image. A greater utilisation of social media for travel planning does not influence the strength of the relationship between the two variables.

Participants with greater familiarity with Tromsø evaluated the city as more appealing prior to viewing the UGC than those with less familiarity. The UGC significantly influenced perceptions of Tromsø, since many participants indicated that their impression of Tromsø improved after watching the UGC videos.

Previous studies in this area have also shown this positive influence from UGC on the destiantion image (Gorji et al., 2023; Maghrifani et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).

Based on these observations, the research question: “How does User-Generated Content (UGC) on TikTok affect the destination image of non-visitors?” may be addressed.

The study's results unequivocally demonstrate that UGC has a positive effect on the destination image of non-visitors. The research demonstrates that UGC significantly influences the perception of destinations.

The importance of psychological processes in this context, especially in relation to the emotional perception of the destination, should not be underestimated. The targeted promotion of positive psychological processes through thematically appropriate content can significantly strengthen the perception of a destination. This applies in particular to emotional content that targets the affective level.

Studies on non-visitors indicate that they frequently possess a weakened affective destination image, owing to their lack of personal experience (Gorji et al., 2023; Sroypetch et al., 2018; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020). UGC can significantly enhance this component of the destination image, as demonstrated by the findings of this study, due to its inherently authentic nature, which satisfies personal elements crucial for developing the affective dimension of the destination image (Baber & Baber, 2023a; Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020).

This form of content should be increasingly regarded in the marketing of destinations. Particularly considering the findings that indicate photographs and videos of fellow travelers significantly impact travel selections within the realm of social media content. Different target audiences can be engaged through diverse themed UGC videos that evoke distinct feelings, aligning with the destination to foster an emotional connection.

The results of this study must be interpreted within the constraints imposed by the emphasis on a particular destination and the restricted examination of demographic and platform-specific variations, which hinder generalizability. Future studies could enhance these elements and elucidate the relationship between UGC and destination image.

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Appendix

Appendix A 2025 Trending Destinations

Source: Skyscanner, 2024

Appendix B Survey

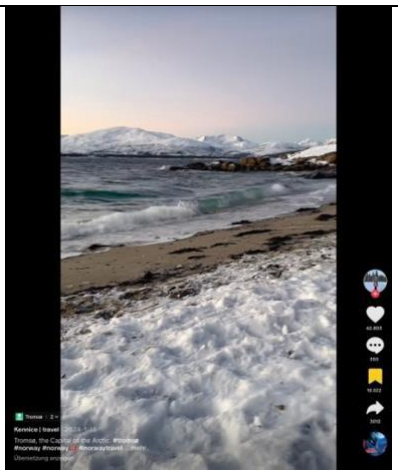
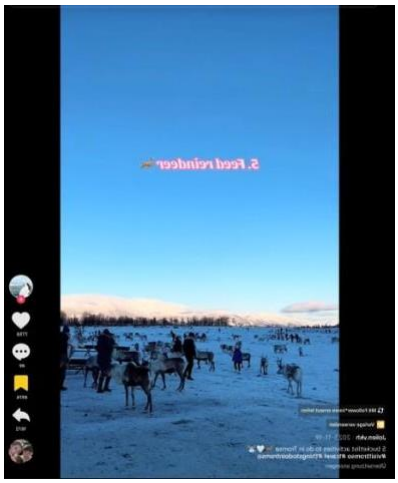
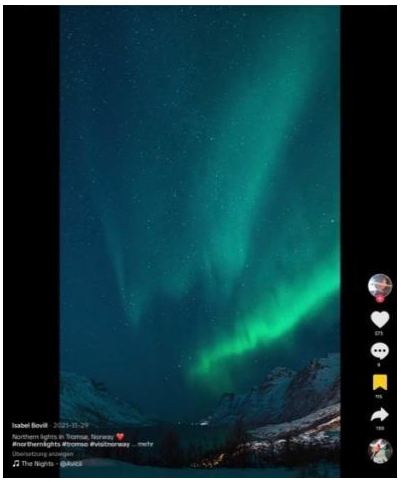
Group	Question nr.	Question	Scale	Author
Screening question	1	Have you visited Tromsø (Norway) before?	Yes/No	N/A
3. Psychological Processes	9	How familiar are you with the city of Tromsø in Norway?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not at all familiar, 5 = Very familiar	Echtner et al. (1993)
	10	If you had to describe Tromsø in three words, what would they be?	Open question	Echtner et al. (1993)
	11	On a scale of 1 to 5, how attractive does Tromsø seem to you as a potential travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not at all attractive, 5 = Very attractive	N/A
4. Social Media Usage and Influence	2	Which social media platforms do you use most frequently for travel planning?	Multiple choice: YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest, Other (specify)	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)

	3	How often do you research potential destinations on social media before planning a trip?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Never, 5 = Very often	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)
	4	Please rank the following types of social media content based on how much they influence your travel decisions.	Ranking: 1 = Most influential, 4 = Least influential	Xiang & Gretzel (2010)
	5	Have you ever visited an activity, attraction or destination based on information from social media?	Multiple choice: Planned trip, Activity/Attraction only, Never	N/A
	6	How important is social media for your travel planning decisions?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not important at all, 5 = Very important	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)
	7	Social media enhances my excitement about visiting new destinations.	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)
	8	To what extent do you think social media influences your perception of a travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)
5. Destination Image – Cognitive and Affective	12	How would you rate the following aspects of Tromsø as a travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very negative, 5 = Very positive	Baloglu & McCleary (1999); Dwyer & Kim (2003)
	13	What feelings do you spontaneously associate with Tromsø?	Multiple choice: Joy, Uncertainty, Excitement, Relaxation	Russell (1980); Echtner et al. (1993); Baloglu & McCleary (1999); Kim & Fesenmaier (2015)
	14	How likely are you to consider Tromsø as a potential travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very unlikely, 5 = Very likely	N/A
	15	What feeling did the video trigger in you in relation to Tromsø?	Multiple choice: Joy, Uncertainty, Excitement, Relaxation	Kim & Fesenmaier (2015)
	16	How did the video influence your overall perception of Tromsø as a travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very negative, 5 = Very positive	Jalilvand & Samiei (2012)
	17	What feeling did the video trigger in you in relation to Tromsø?	Multiple choice: Joy, Uncertainty, Excitement, Relaxation	Kim & Fesenmaier (2015)
	18	How did the video influence your overall perception of Tromsø as a travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very negative, 5 = Very positive	Jalilvand & Samiei (2012)
	19	After watching the videos, please rank the following aspects based on how strongly you associate them with Tromsø.	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very negative, 5 = Very positive	Echtner et al. (1993); Baloglu & McCleary (1999); Dwyer & Kim (2003)

		• Natural beauty • Cultural uniqueness • Attractivness as a vacation destination • Adventure and outdoor opportunities • Infrastructure and accessibility • Price level • Safety and security		
	20	After watching the videos, how attractive do you find Tromsø as a travel destination?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not at all attractive, 5 = Very attractive	N/A
	21	After watching the videos, please rank the following aspects based on how strongly you associate them with Tromsø. • Nothern Lights • Cold weather • Snowy landscape • Outdoor activities • Culture and history • Science and research • Nordic design and architecture • Arctic wildlife • Reote location	Ranking: 1 = Most strongly associated, 9 = Least strongly associated	Echtner et al. (1993)
	22	To what extent did the videos provide new information about Tromsø that you did not know before?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much	Kim & Fesenmaier (2015)
	23	Compared to your perception before the video: How has your image of Tromsø changed after the video?	5-point Likert scale: 1 = Very much worsened, 5 = Very much improved	N/A
	24	Is there anything else you would like to share about your thoughts on Tromsø or the UGC videos?	Open question	N/A
6. Demographics	25	Age		
	26	Gender		
	27	Nationality		
	28	Employment Status		
	29	Household income		

Appendix C TikTok UGC Videos

Content	Experience UGC Videos	Nature UGC Videos
Link	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNewTDH1x/	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNewTBKtP/
Video 1		

	 Engagement Metrics: 627.322 views, 69.768 likes, 252 comments, 8482 saves (at the 03.01.2025) Video length: 26 seconds Published: 11.11.2024	 Engagement Metrics: 708.140 views, 62.803 likes, 350 comments, 10.522 saves (at the 03.01.2025) Video length: 30 seconds Published: 15.01.2024
Link	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNewTkY5F/	https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNewTfdPD/
Video 2	 Engagement Metrics: 181.511 views, 7.738 likes, 49 comments, 1872 saves (at the 03.01.2025) Video length: 18 seconds Published: 19.11.2023	 Engagement Metrics: 627.322 views, 573 likes, 9 comments, 115 saves (at the 03.01.2025) Video length: 15 seconds Published: 29.11.2021

Appendix D Parameter estimates of reflectively measured constructs

Constructs	Items	Definition
DI_Before_Cognitive	Q12	Evaluation of the cognitive image of the destination before the video view.
DI_Before_Affective	Q13, Q14	Evaluation of the affective perception of the destination before viewing the video.

DI_After_Cognitive	Q19, Q23	Cognitive perception of the destination after viewing the video.
DI_After_Cognitive_Nature	Q19_1	Perception of the natural beauty of the destination after viewing the video.
DI_After_Cognitive_Experience	Q19_4	Perception of adventure and outdoor opportunities in the destination after viewing the video.
DI_After_Affective_All	Q20	Affective overall evaluation of the destination after viewing the video.
DI_After_Affective_Nature	Q17, Q18	Affective evaluation of natural aspects of the destination after viewing the video.
DI_After_Affective_Experience	Q15, Q16	Affective evaluation of experiences and adventures in the destination after viewing the video.
Internal_Psychological_Processes	Q13_dummy, Q15_dummy, Q17_dummy, Q16, Q18, Q22; Q23, Q20	Emotion, Perception, Attitude and Motivation.
DI_Change_Affective	DI_After_Affective_All - DI_Before_Affective	Change in the affective image of the destination after viewing the videos.
DI_Change_Cognitive	DI_After_Cognitive - DI_Before_Cognitive	Change in cognitive image of the destination after viewing the videos.
Total_Internal_Psy_Processes	Mean (Avg_Change_Joy + Avg_Change_Relaxation +Avg_Change_Excitement + Avg_Change_Uncertainty)	Change of emotions before and after the videos
Social_Media_Use_groups	Recode variable: For low social media use (values: 1 to 2); for medium social media use (value: 3); for high social media use (values: 4 to 5)	Groups Social media use, based on the variable Social_media_use_for_travel_planning_mean
Social_media_use_for_travel_planning_mean	Mean (Q6, Q9,Q10,Q11)	Average use of social media for travel planning.
Interaction_Termin_SocialMedia_IPP	Internal_Psychological_Processes* Social_media_use_for_travel_planning_mean	Interaction beween the two variables

Appendix E Correlation Familarity(Q9) Attractiveness (Q1111)

	Value	Significance
Pearson Correlation	0.402	<0.001

Appendix F ANOVA Group affect of social media use on Destiantion Image

Social Media Usage Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	F value	Effect Size (Eta-squared)
Low (1)	3.92	0.862	-	-
Medium (2)	4.0	0.894	-	-

High (3)	4.67	0.555	-	-
Between Groups			6.337*	0.193

**p<0.05*

Appendix G Regression, ANOVA

DV	Pre-dictor	R	R^2	F value	Unstan-dardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t value	95% Confidence Interval for B	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Cognitive DI	IPP	0.605	0.366	79.760 ***	3.310	0.605	8.931	2.577	4.043
Affective DI	IPP	0.963	0.927	1765.337 ***	1.818	0.963	42.016	1.733	1.904

**** p<0.001*

Appendix H Frequency analysis evaluation destination aspects before and after UGC

Aspect	Mean (Pre)	Std. Deviation (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Std. Deviation (Post)	Mean Difference
Natural Beauty	3.92	0.973	4.39	0.839	0.47
Cultural Uniqueness	3.57	0.939	3.9	0.909	0.33
Attractiveness	3.48	1.077	4.2	0.936	0.72
Adventure and Outdoor Opportunities	3.79	0.977	4.31	0.851	0.52
Infrastructure	3.33	1.051	3.53	1.093	0.19
Price Level	3.06	1.177	3.34	1.151	0.28
Safety and Security	4.02	1.151	4.08	0.96	0.06

Appendix I Paired Sample t-Test cognitive DI after UG video

UGC Thematic focus	Aspect	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Interval of Difference		t	df	Significance		effect size Cohend´s d
					Lower	Upper			One sided	Two sided	
Nature	Natural Beauty	-0.483	0.871	0.073	-0.626	-0.339	-6.625	140	<0.001	<0.001	0.871
	Adventure & Outdoor	-0.531	1.020	0.085	-0.700	-0.363	-6.234	140	<0.001	<0.001	-
Experience	Natural Beauty	-0.112	0.832	0.070	-0.249	0.026	-1.609	140	0.055	0.110	-
	Adventure & Outdoor	-0.135	0.932	0.079	-0.291	0.021	-1.709	140	0.045	0.090	1.020

Appendix J Paired Sample t-Test, Correlation (Q16, Q18)

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of Difference		t	df	Significance		Correlation	Effect size Cohend´s d
			Lower	Upper			One sided	Two sided		
-0.112	0.832	0.070	-0.249	0.026	-1.609	140	0.055	0.110	0.604**	0.832

**p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001; ****p>0.05*