

# Comparative Impacts of Xiaohongshu and Douyin on Domestic Travel Intentions: An Integration of AISAS and the Theory of Planned Behavior

Siyuan Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Chaiyot Sumritsakun<sup>2</sup>

Montri Singhavara<sup>3</sup>, and Napat Ruangnapakul<sup>4\*</sup>

Digital Economics and Management Innovation International College, Maejo University, Thailand<sup>1</sup>

Faculty of Business Administration, Maejo University, Thailand<sup>2</sup>

Faculty of Economics, Maejo University, Thailand<sup>3</sup>

Faculty of Information and Communication, Maejo University, Thailand<sup>4\*</sup>

*\*Corresponding author. E-mail: napat\_r@mju.ac.th<sup>4\*</sup>*

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## Abstract

This study investigates the comparative influence of Xiaohongshu and Douyin on domestic tourists' travel intentions and explores the dual psychological mechanisms underlying rational and emotional decision-making. A total of 842 valid responses were collected from Chinese domestic tourists aged 18–54 through convenience and purposive sampling. The data collection instrument was a structured, bilingual questionnaire adapted from established measurement scales. Specifically, the questionnaire measured seven constructs—perceived usefulness, perceived credibility, perceived interactivity, perceived pleasure, behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral intention—drawing from validated sources such as Davis (1989), Ajzen (1991), Cheung et al. (2009), and Childers et al. (2001). Data was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with SPSS and AMOS, following reliability and validity testing procedures.

Results show that Xiaohongshu has a more substantial effect on perceived credibility ( $\beta = 0.740$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and usefulness ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby leading to rational, well-planned travel decisions. In contrast, Douyin exerts greater influence through perceived interactivity ( $\beta = 0.794$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and pleasure ( $\beta = 0.615$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby stimulating spontaneous, emotion-driven travel intentions. The model achieved a good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 2.13$ , CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.042), confirming the validity of the dual-mechanism framework.

The findings enrich the theoretical integration of AISAS and TPB, demonstrating how different platform affordances activate distinct decision-making pathways. Practically, the study offers actionable insights for tourism marketers to design platform-specific content strategies tailored to rational planning (Xiaohongshu) and emotional stimulation (Douyin).

**Keywords:** Xiaohongshu; Douyin; social media; behavioral intent; domestic tourism; AISAS; TPB

## Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid advancement of digital and artificial intelligence technologies, social media has become a central medium for individuals to access information, express opinions, and make consumption decisions in daily life. Particularly within the tourism sector, social media functions not only as a channel for showcasing destination imagery but also as a primary source of travel information and planning tools for tourists.

China's domestic tourism market has recovered rapidly post-pandemic, especially among younger travellers who rely extensively on social media for inspiration, itinerary planning, and consumption decisions. This growing dependence on digital content has underscored the critical role of platform-specific affordances in shaping travel decision-making.

Among various platforms, Xiaohongshu and Douyin have emerged as China's two most influential social media for travel-related content. Despite their prominence, they differ substantially in content formats, user demographics, and dissemination mechanisms. Xiaohongshu focuses on user-generated content (UGC) in the form of illustrated notes that emphasize authenticity and community interaction. Users often browse destination guides and experience-sharing posts, enhancing their perceived credibility and usefulness. In contrast, Douyin primarily features immersive short videos, leveraging music, filters, and algorithmic recommendations to evoke emotional resonance and stimulate impulsive travel inspiration.

However, previous studies have tended to treat social media as a homogeneous construction, lacking comparative analysis between different platform types. This limits our understanding of how distinct affordances shape users' psychological processes and behavioral intentions. In the Chinese context, Xiaohongshu and Douyin represent two paradigms — the former a community-based sharing platform and the latter an algorithm-driven short-video platform — offering a valuable lens for cross-platform comparison.

To address this gap, the present study constructs an integrative framework grounded in the AISAS model (Attention–Interest–Search–Action–Share) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The AISAS model captures the dynamic stages of consumer interaction with digital media, while TPB highlights rational determinants of behavioral intention, including attitude and subjective norms. By integrating the two, this study seeks to explain how platform–specific characteristics activate either sensible (cognitive) or emotional (affective) mechanisms that drive domestic tourists’ behavioral intentions.

Based on 842 valid responses from domestic tourists in China, this research applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to compare differential influence pathways across Xiaohongshu and Douyin.

The study contributes to theory by extending AISAS and TPB integration to social–media–based tourism and offers empirical insights for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to design differentiated strategies.

## Research Objectives

1. To compare the differential effects of Xiaohongshu and Douyin on users’ perceptions and behavioral intentions.
2. To examine how perceived credibility, usefulness, interactivity, and pleasure shape behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions.
3. To provide theoretical and practical implications for applying the AISAS and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of social media–driven tourism.

## Scope of Research

**Content of the study:** This study focuses on the comparative impact of Xiaohongshu (UGC–based travel notes) Moreover, Douyin (short video platform) on domestic tourists’ travel intentions in China, based on the AISAS model and the Theory of Planned Behavior.

**Population and Sample:** The target population is domestic tourists in China, aged 18–54, who actively use Xiaohongshu and Douyin for travel information. The sample comprised 842 valid responses collected via an online questionnaire platform.

**Area:** The research was conducted within China, focusing on major domestic tourist groups, particularly in urban areas with high social media usage.

**Time:** This study was initiated in October 2024, and the data were collected in August 2025. The timing of data collection was determined based on the following considerations: first, August fell during the peak season for domestic tourism in China, which facilitated the capture of tourists' decision-making behaviors during high-traffic periods; second, the data collection timeframe was aligned with the research publication cycle to ensure sample freshness and timeliness.

## Literature Review

### 1. Social Media and Travel Decision-Making

Social media is now a primary channel for tourists to access information and make travel decisions. In China, it has supplanted traditional media as a trusted source for travel inspiration and planning. Its influence is dual-faceted: it attracts attention through destination promotion and shapes attitudes and behavioral intentions via user-generated content (UGC) and interactivity (Gretzel et al., 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Recent evidence indicates that young Chinese tourists, particularly those belonging to Generation Z, increasingly rely on TikTok short videos when making destination choices. In this context, perceived trust and hedonic motivation have been identified as the most significant determinants shaping their decision-making process (Zhou et al., 2023).

### 2. Differentiated Features of Xiaohongshu and Douyin

Xiaohongshu and Douyin, while both influential, impact travel behavior differently. Xiaohongshu is recognized for its “authentic sharing” and community atmosphere, with detailed UGC notes that enhance perceived credibility and destination trust. In contrast, Douyin relies on short, visually driven videos and algorithmic feeds, prioritizing entertainment and emotional resonance to stimulate spontaneous travel inspiration and create “viral” destination trends. Empirical findings further reveal that short-video attributes, such as perceived usefulness, interactivity, and informativeness, significantly influence the behavioral intentions of Generation Z and Millennials toward tourism, with flow experience serving as a crucial mediating factor in this relationship (Liu et al., 2024).

### 3. Relevant Theoretical Models

This study is grounded in two key models. The AISAS model (Attention-Interest-Search-Action-Share) effectively describes the modern tourist journey on social media, highlighting critical stages like “Search” and “Share”. Research suggests Xiaohongshu excels in the “Search” stage, while Douyin powerfully drives “Attention” and “Share”. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

(Ajzen, 1991) posits that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intention. In social media contexts, online word-of-mouth forms subjective norms, and platform content shapes behavioral attitudes (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

Based on the reviewed theories and prior empirical findings, this study proposes a research framework that integrates the AISAS model and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain how social media platform features influence domestic tourists' travel intentions.

In the model, perceived credibility and perceived usefulness (cognitive factors) represent the rational pathway, while perceived interactivity and perceived pleasure (affective factors) represent the emotional pathway. These perceptual variables influence behavioral attitudes and subjective norms, which, in turn, shape behavioral intention. The framework, therefore, captures the dual mechanisms—rational cognition and emotional stimulation—through which Xiaohongshu and Douyin influence users' decision-making processes.

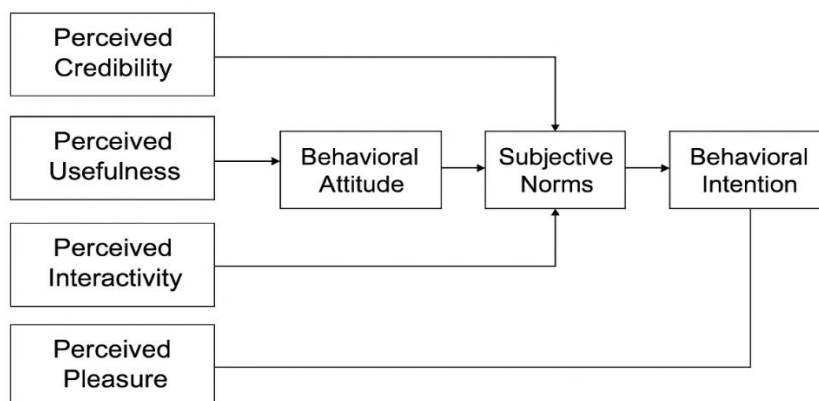


Figure 1 Research Framework of the Study

#### 4. Key Perceived Factors

Research identifies key perceptions influencing travel intention: perceived usefulness for planning (Davis, 1989), perceived interactivity for engagement (Muntinga et al., 2011), perceived credibility for trust (Cheung et al., 2009), and perceived pleasure for emotional response (Childers et al., 2001).

#### 5. Research Gap

Despite rich prior research, most studies treat social media as a single construct, overlooking platform heterogeneity. Moreover, empirical work integrating AISAS's behavioral stages with TPB's psychological determinants remains limited.

This study addresses this gap by comparing two distinct platform mechanisms—rational planning (credibility and usefulness on Xiaohongshu) and emotional stimulation (interactivity and pleasure on Douyin).

It thus proposes a dual-mechanism framework that merges behavioral sequence (AISAS) with attitudinal process (TPB).

## Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach, focusing on theoretical validation, and combines a questionnaire survey with structural equation modeling for empirical analysis. The research framework is grounded in the AISAS model and the Theory of Planned Behavior, incorporating key variables such as perceived usefulness, interactivity, credibility, and enjoyment. It aims to explore the differential pathways through which distinct social media platforms influence domestic travel intentions.

**Research Subjects and Data Collection:** The target population for this study consisted of Chinese domestic travelers aged 18 to 54. This age range was selected based on definitions from the China Statistical Yearbook and standard academic classifications of the Generation Z cohort, ensuring alignment with the core user base of contemporary social media platforms. All respondents reported using social media regularly to obtain travel information before trips. Data was collected via online survey platforms and distributed through travel-related social media groups, travel enthusiast communities, and platform-specific user forums to ensure sample representativeness. A total of 854 questionnaires were collected. After excluding incomplete and clearly invalid responses, 842 valid questionnaires were retained, yielding a response rate of 98.6%. This sample size meets the fundamental requirements for structural equation modeling, thereby ensuring robust statistical analysis.

The questionnaire for this study was developed from established measurement scales in prior research and carefully adapted to the context of domestic tourism and social media use in China.

A bilingual (Chinese English) questionnaire was employed to ensure linguistic accuracy and conceptual equivalence across items. The instrument underwent a rigorous translation and back-translation procedure: two bilingual researchers independently translated the original English items into Chinese, after which the research team synthesized the versions into a consensus draft. A native

English speaker, unfamiliar with the original scales, then performed a back-translation into English. The research team compared the back-translated version with the original to confirm that the meanings of all items were preserved.

The final questionnaire consisted of four main sections:

Demographic information (6 items: gender, age, education, occupation, income, and frequency of social media use);

Social media usage patterns (5 items covering platform preference, usage duration, and engagement type);

Perceptual constructs (28 items measuring perceived usefulness, interactivity, credibility, and pleasure, adapted from Davis, 1989; Cheung et al., 2009; Childers et al., 2001);

Behavioral constructs (15 items assessing behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral intention, based on Ajzen, 1991).

All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

This structured format ensured content validity and an explicit mapping between theoretical variables and questionnaire sections, thereby enhancing the robustness of the measurement instrument.

Regarding data analysis methodology, this study employs SPSS and AMOS as primary tools. The analytical process encompasses reliability and validity testing, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, and structural equation modelling (SEM) validation. First, SPSS was used to compute Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for each construct to assess the scales' internal consistency. Results indicated Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values exceeding 0.93 for all variables, confirming high reliability. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS, along with calculations of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Both measures exceeded conventional thresholds (CR > 0.90, AVE > 0.60), indicating the scales possess sound convergent and discriminant validity. Secondly, with reliability and validity established, the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients for each variable were calculated to characterize the sample and reveal fundamental relationships between variables. Finally, structural equation modelling was conducted in AMOS to examine further the causal pathways from perceived usefulness, interactivity, credibility, and enjoyment to behavioral attitudes and behavioral intentions. Subjective norms were incorporated to comprehensively examine the influence of social media

mechanisms on domestic tourism intentions. To investigate platform-specific differences, multiple comparative analyses were conducted between Xiaohongshu and Douyin samples to identify significant variations in influence pathways and psychological mechanisms.

Reliability and validity were confirmed, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Reliability and Validity Test Results

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
Perceived Credibility	0.954	0.92	0.68
Perceived Usefulness	0.946	0.91	0.65
Perceived Interactivity	0.951	0.93	0.67
Perceived Pleasure	0.940	0.90	0.64
Behavioral Attitude	0.935	0.91	0.66
Subjective Norms	0.932	0.90	0.63
Behavioral Intention	0.947	0.92	0.69

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Maejo University prior to data collection.

All procedures involving human participants were carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and complied with the Declaration of Helsinki (revised 2013).

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and all respondents were fully informed of the study's purpose, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated anonymously and used solely for academic and research purposes.

The survey link included an introductory consent statement, and only participants who agreed to the terms could proceed with the questionnaire. This ensured that informed consent was obtained from every respondent prior to participation.



## Research Results

To evaluate the hypothesized model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using AMOS. The analysis yielded satisfactory fit indices:  $\chi^2/df = 2.13$ , CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.951, and RMSEA = 0.042, all of which met recommended thresholds (Hair et al., 2010). These results confirm that the proposed model demonstrates a good overall fit to the data.

**Objective 1.** The results showed that, for Xiaohongshu users, perceived credibility and perceived usefulness were the most influential factors shaping behavioral intention within the platform's model. Specifically, credibility was a significant predictor of behavioral intention ( $\beta = 0.740$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and usefulness also exerted a strong effect ( $\beta = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Users perceived Xiaohongshu's UGC-based travel notes and detailed reviews as trustworthy (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.954$ ) and practically helpful (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.946$ ) for trip planning.

This rational pathway guided tourists toward more structured, confident travel decisions, supported by positive correlations among credibility, usefulness, and behavioral intention ( $r > 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

A total of 842 valid responses were analyzed. Among them, 53.9% were female and 46.1% male; the majority were aged 18–34 years (67.8%), followed by 35–44 years (21.6%), and 45–54 years (10.6%). Most respondents were urban residents (84.3%), with bachelor's degrees or above (71.2%), and reported frequent use of social media platforms, particularly Xiaohongshu and Douyin, for travel information and inspiration.

**Objective 2.** The results showed that Douyin had a greater influence on perceived interactivity and pleasure. Interactivity emerged as the strongest predictor of behavioral intention ( $\beta = 0.794$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while pleasure also contributed significantly through its effect on attitude ( $\beta = 0.615$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The platform's immersive short videos and interactive functions, such as comments, likes, and sharing, effectively stimulated emotional responses. Reliability testing confirmed the robustness of interactivity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.951$ ) and pleasure (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.940$ ). Correlation analysis further showed that interactivity was strongly associated with behavioral intention among all constructs ( $r = 0.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This affective pathway highlighted Douyin's strength in shaping immediate and experience-driven behavioral intentions.

Before testing the structural model, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among the seven key constructs: perceived credibility, perceived

usefulness, perceived interactivity, perceived pleasure, behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral intention. As shown in Table 3, all correlations were positive and statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating theoretical consistency and convergent validity.

Notably, perceived interactivity exhibited the strongest correlation with behavioral intention ( $r = 0.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming its pivotal role in shaping affective responses and immediate travel intentions among Douyin users.

**Table 2** Pearson Correlation Matrix of Key Constructs (N = 842)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived Credibility	1						
2. Perceived Usefulness	0.68***	1					
3. Perceived Interactivity	0.42***	0.46***	1				
4. Perceived Pleasure	0.39***	0.43***	0.71***	1			
5. Behavioral Attitude	0.59***	0.63***	0.68***	0.65***	1		
6. Subjective Norms	0.54***	0.56***	0.66***	0.62***	0.64***	1	
7. Behavioral Intention	0.68***	0.70***	0.79*	0.73***	0.74***	0.69***	1

**Objective 3.** The results showed that both Xiaohongshu and Douyin significantly shaped behavioral intentions, but through distinct psychological mechanisms. Xiaohongshu influenced behavioral intentions primarily through credibility and usefulness, reflecting a rational and planned decision-making process. In contrast, Douyin's effect was mediated by interactivity and pleasure, reflecting an emotional and impulsive pathway. Structural equation modeling indicated good model fit ( $\chi^2/df = 2.13$ , CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.042), confirming the validity of the hypothesized dual mechanisms. These findings emphasize the complementary roles of rational planning and emotional stimulation in shaping domestic tourists' travel intentions. The detailed SEM results are presented in Table 3

**Table 3** SEM Path Analysis Results

Path (Hypothesis)	Standardized $\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
Credibility → Behavioral Intention (Xiaohongshu)	0.740	11.62	<0.001	Supported
Usefulness → Behavioral Intention (Xiaohongshu)	0.723	10.95	<0.001	Supported
Interactivity → Behavioral Intention (Douyin)	0.794	12.41	<0.001	Supported
Pleasure → Attitude (Douyin)	0.615	9.34	<0.001	Supported
Attitude → Behavioral Intention	0.628	10.27	<0.001	Supported
Subjective Norms → Behavioral Intention	0.644	9.02	<0.001	Supported

These empirical results confirm that the dual-mechanism model—rational cognition on Xiaohongshu and emotional stimulation on Douyin—effectively explains how different platform affordances shape domestic travel intentions.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Xiaohongshu and Douyin, China’s two leading social media platforms, differ markedly in the psychological mechanisms through which they influence domestic tourists’ travel intentions. Xiaohongshu exerts a greater influence through perceived credibility and usefulness, highlighting its strength in rational, planned decision-making. This aligns with the “Search” and “Action” stages of the AISAS model, where users actively seek reliable information and organize travel plans based on community-generated experiences.

Users on Xiaohongshu frequently rely on travel notes and peer-shared guides as trustworthy sources, reducing uncertainty and perceived risk during destination evaluation. This mechanism resonates with the attitude component of TPB, where cognitive appraisal of credible information leads to more deliberate behavioral intentions.

In contrast, Douyin’s influence pathway is predominantly affective and experiential. The results show that interactivity ( $\beta = 0.794$ ) and pleasure ( $\beta = 0.615$ ) are key predictors of attitude and behavioral intention. These effects stem from Douyin’s immersive short-video environment, which stimulates sensory engagement, social participation, and emotional contagion.

This pattern reflects the “Attention-Share” stages of AISAS, where algorithmic amplification and social diffusion rapidly trigger impulsive or spontaneous travel desires.

Notably, the study also found that subjective norms exerted a greater influence among Douyin users than among Xiaohongshu users. This can be explained by peer diffusion, social imitation, and algorithm-driven virality, which amplify collective behavioral cues within short-video ecosystems.

Douyin's high interactivity promotes rapid formation of social approval signals—likes, comments, shares—that reinforce conformity and perceived social expectations, key elements in the TPB model.

These findings extend the integration of AISAS and TPB by demonstrating that cognitive (rational) and affective (emotional) mechanisms coexist and operate through platform-specific affordances.

While Xiaohongshu supports analytical engagement and planned tourism behavior, Douyin activates emotional resonance and experiential impulses.

This dual mechanism provides a theoretical contribution by bridging behavioral sequence theory (AISAS) and attitude–intention theory (TPB), revealing how emotional engagement can strengthen normative and attitudinal drivers of travel intention.

However, these mechanisms also highlight potential risks. Overreliance on Douyin may foster impulsive, unsustainable travel behaviors, as users are driven by visually stimulating, algorithm-curated content. This may create viral “check-in” trends that prioritize aesthetic consumption over meaningful travel experiences, leading to homogenized, unsustainable tourism patterns.

Similarly, Xiaohongshu's emphasis on credibility and usefulness may lead to overstructured or homogenized itineraries, reducing spontaneity and authenticity in travel experiences. Moreover, increased commercialization and influencer marketing blur the boundary between genuine recommendations and paid promotions, potentially eroding trust—a key antecedent of rational travel planning.

Overall, these findings suggest that while both platforms significantly contribute to tourism decision-making, they also introduce distinct managerial and ethical challenges.

A balanced strategy should therefore combine Xiaohongshu's informational credibility with Douyin's emotional engagement to promote sustainable and diversified travel experiences.

## Conclusion

Grounded in the AISAS model and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study examined the differentiated pathways through which Xiaohongshu and Douyin influence domestic tourists' travel intentions.

Using data from 842 valid respondents and structural equation modeling (SEM), the study revealed that both platforms significantly shape travel intention but through distinct psychological mechanisms—rational versus emotional.

### 1. Theoretical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions.

First, it integrates AISAS and TPB into a unified explanatory framework, demonstrating how consumer behavioral sequences (attention–interest–search–action–share) correspond with attitudinal and normative determinants of intention.

Second, it introduces a dual-mechanism perspective that distinguishes between rational planning (credibility and usefulness → attitude → intention) and emotional stimulation (interactivity and pleasure → attitude / subjective norms → intention).

Third, it enriches social media and tourism behavior research by showing that emotional engagement can strengthen social influence and normative conformity—an extension of TPB's traditional focus on cognition.

Finally, this framework offers a testable theoretical model for future cross-platform or cross-cultural investigations.

### 2. Managerial Implications

From a practical perspective, the findings provide actionable insights into destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and tourism enterprises:

Platform-specific strategy:

On Xiaohongshu, marketers should collaborate with KOLs / KOCs to produce trustworthy, information-rich travel content (e.g., itineraries, reviews, and guides) that enhances credibility and usefulness.

On Douyin, practitioners should create visually engaging, emotionally resonant short videos that use music, trending topics, and interactive challenges to encourage sharing and viral spread.

Integrated marketing approach: Combining Xiaohongshu’s trust-based planning with Douyin’s emotional immediacy can achieve a complete conversion process from “attention” to “action.”

Platform governance: Platform operators should enhance content authenticity (for Xiaohongshu) and algorithm transparency (for Douyin) to strengthen long-term user trust and engagement.

### 3. Limitations and Future Research

Despite robust design and analysis, this study has several limitations.

First, the use of convenience and purposive sampling may limit generalizability beyond urban, active social-media users. Future studies could adopt probability or longitudinal designs to validate temporal causality.

Second, the study’s cross-sectional, self-reported data may be subject to social-desirability bias; future work could employ mixed or experimental methods.

Third, since this research focuses on China’s platform ecology, comparative analyses across different cultural or technological contexts (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram) would further test the framework’s universality.

In summary, this study provides an empirically grounded and theoretically integrated account of how Xiaohongshu and Douyin influence domestic travel intentions.

By distinguishing between rational and emotional mechanisms, it not only advances theoretical understanding but also delivers concrete implications for platform-based tourism marketing and sustainable travel development.

### Suggestions

Based on the research findings, this study proposes the following practical implications:

First, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) should adopt platform-specific strategies. On Xiaohongshu, collaborating with key opinion leaders (KOLs) or key opinion consumers (KOCs) can help provide high-quality destination guides, detailed itineraries, and recommendations for accommodation and dining, thereby enhancing content credibility and usefulness. On Douyin, greater emphasis should be placed on creating visually engaging, emotionally appealing short videos that incorporate music, trending topics, and interactive challenges to encourage users to share and stimulate immediate action.

Second, tourism enterprises should integrate the advantages of both platforms. Xiaohongshu is better suited for in-depth marketing and brand-building, helping tourists gain sufficient knowledge and trust before making decisions. In contrast, Douyin is better suited to short-term promotion and traffic generation, rapidly attracting the attention of potential tourists through viral videos. The complementary use of both platforms can help achieve a complete conversion process from “attention” to “action.”

Third, platform operators should strengthen the health of their content ecosystems. Xiaohongshu needs to enhance its content review mechanisms further to ensure the authenticity and professionalism of travel notes. At the same time, Douyin could improve the transparency of its recommendation algorithms to avoid diluting the authenticity of information caused by overly entertainment-driven content. These measures would enhance user trust and foster long-term engagement.

## New Knowledge

This study provides new theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning how social media platforms influence tourists’ behavioral intentions in the context of China’s domestic tourism.

By integrating the AISAS model and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the research establishes a dual-mechanism framework that differentiates between rational cognitive processing (driven by perceived credibility and usefulness on Xiaohongshu) and emotional-affective processing (driven by perceived interactivity and pleasure on Douyin).

This framework provides a testable, replicable structure for future studies examining cross-platform social media influence. It allows for comparative analysis across different cultural contexts and digital ecosystems (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, YouTube), enabling the validation and refinement of its generalizability beyond the Chinese tourism market.

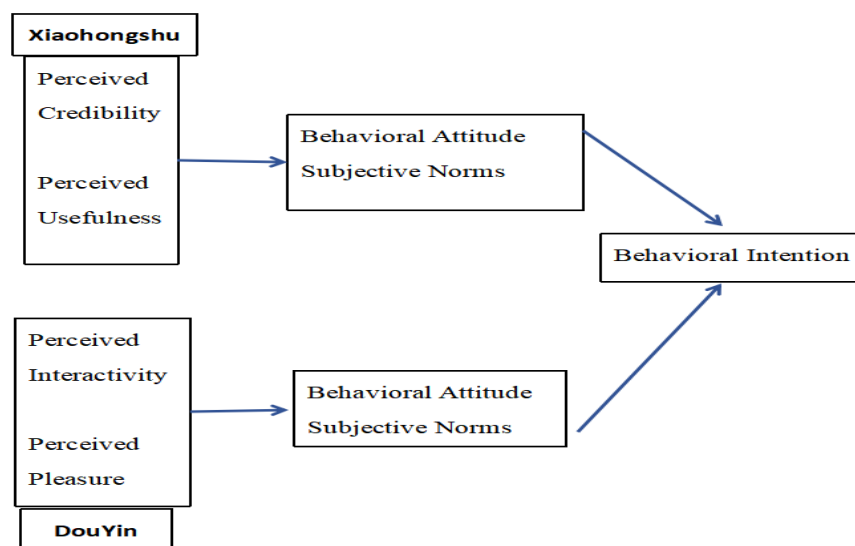
From a theoretical standpoint, the study expands the boundary of AISAS by linking its behavioral sequence (Attention-Interest-Search-Action-Share) with TPB’s attitudinal and normative predictors (Attitude-Subjective Norm-Intention). This integrated perspective advances social media research by explaining how platform affordances shape users’ perception, interaction, and decision-making.

In practice, the research highlights that platform-specific characteristics trigger distinct psychological processes, which can guide tourism marketers in designing targeted content strategies.

Xiaohongshu is more effective for rational persuasion and information-based planning, while Douyin stimulates emotional resonance and spontaneous engagement, thus influencing travelers through different motivational pathways.

Finally, this study contributes to the understanding of sustainable digital tourism behavior by illustrating how social media dynamics shape not only individual decisions but also collective travel trends.

Recognizing these mechanisms will help policymakers and platform managers balance content authenticity, user engagement, and sustainability in digital tourism promotion.



**Figure 2** The Dual-Mechanism Conceptual Framework of Xiaohongshu and Douyin: Rational Planning vs. Emotional Engagement.

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