Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Global Politics and Socio-Humanities
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.33923

The Impact of Four Social Media Content Strategies on Consumer Purchase Intention: Evidence from a Travel Agency Case (UTour)

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Abstract. In the context where social media continues to impact the traditional travel agency industry, how to effectively enhance consumers' purchase intention through social media marketing has become an urgent issue to be addressed. Current research pays insufficient attention to traditional travel agencies and lacks a systematic exploration that integrates social media content strategies with purchase intention within a unified framework. Hence, the core theme of this study is to examine the effect of travel agencies' social media marketing strategies on consumers' purchase intention. In terms of research methods, questionnaire surveys are first administered to collect consumers' perceived evaluations of promotional content and their purchase intention toward the typical travel agency, Utour. Subsequently, descriptive analysis and regression analysis are applied to the empirical data. The results of this study indicate that consumers' overall evaluation of the social media promotions by travel agencies is at a moderately high level. Among them, social interactive promotions and value identification-oriented promotions have more prominent effects, while experiential and functional promotions have relatively lower scores. In terms of purchase intention, 53.2% of the respondents expressed their willingness to purchase the products, but there is still room for improvement in the willingness to recommend and future selection intentions. The study suggests that travel agencies should strengthen interaction and value resonance, and at the same time enhance immersive content and information supply to facilitate the transformation of purchase intentions into actual behaviors.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Consumer purchase intention, Questionnaire method, Regression analysis

1. Introduction

In recent years, as younger generations of consumers have increasingly favored independent travel, the traditional travel agency industry has been facing a survival crisis that has lasted for over a decade. The value of intermediaries has been continuously eroded, and customer loss and profit compression have become common problems. Meanwhile, traditional cultural tourism marketing, which often relies on TV advertisement, newspaper promotion, and travel agency collaboration, is

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.33923

characterized by one-way, large-scale dissemination methods; the high costs and limited interactivity of these methods are increasingly unable to meet the personalized and experiential demands of consumers in the new era [1]. The rise of new social media platforms has brought a glimmer of hope to the travel agency industry. Social media platforms now offer innovative ways for tourism organizations to connect with their target audiences by sharing engaging content that highlights their services and offerings. People began to have the opportunity to express themselves through online platforms, thus creating generation after generation of "Internet celebrities" [2]. The emergence of Net Red is usually able to attract huge traffic. When the business needs this traffic to promote their products, the net red has a way to monetize the traffic, and the net red economy will be generated [3]. This also provides a new idea for the travel agencies' social media promotion. Against this backdrop, an urgent question to be answered is: How should travel agencies utilize social media for promotion in order to effectively enhance their purchase intentions?

This study takes travel agencies that are currently experiencing the impact of independent travel as the case for investigation, exploring the possibility for these agencies to re-establish consumer relationships through social media. This extends the theoretical frontiers of digital transformation and emotional marketing within traditional service sectors to some degree.

This study directly addresses the long-standing survival crisis in the travel agency industry and attempts to provide scientific evidence for enterprises to optimize their content marketing strategies under limited resources. During the information evaluation stage for potential consumers, the social media reputation of a tourist destination can effectively enhance consumers' perceived value and their willingness to consume [4]. The increasing consumer willingness and purchasing behavior will lead to the gradual formation of consumer loyalty. Stickiness measures the likelihood that consumers will not switch to alternative products [5]. Establishing a certain level of consumer stickiness will encourage users to continue purchasing the products of this travel agency, thereby stabilizing their purchasing intentions. Therefore, for travel agencies, it is extremely important to explore how the four categories of promotions influence consumers' willingness to purchase.

2. Literature review

Social media not only offers a low-cost and highly accessible channel for information dissemination, but more importantly, it can establish deep emotional connections with consumers through diverse content forms, thereby stimulating their purchasing intentions. The social media marketing of travel agencies places greater emphasis on "experience" and "relationships". Product-centric marketing has given way to a new model centered on consumers' exclusive travel experiences and their ensuing sharing behavior.

2.1. Social media marketing

Social media marketing is a marketing approach that utilizes social networking platforms (such as WeChat, Douyin, Weibo, etc.) for product promotion, brand building, and customer relationship management [1]. Unlike traditional promotional marketing methods, social media marketing demonstrates its interactive nature and precision. It overturns the conventional one-way communication pattern of traditional media. Enterprises and users can communicate with each other, and users can also communicate with each other. Meanwhile, relying on user profiles, interest tags, and behavioral data, social platforms are capable of accurate advertising distribution. Precise targeting can reach consumers' minds at a deeper level. This is achieved through user-generated

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.33923

content, influencer partnerships, and immersive storytelling techniques, which enhance engagement and authenticity [6].

2.2. Influencer marketing

Given the internet's scalability and speed of diffusion, some contributors attract a mass audience, build a fan base, and become a source of advice for their followers, thus developing into social media influencers [7]. People are not just passive recipients of marketing communications anymore. Instead, social media allows them to act as both consumer and promoter for a brand [8]. In the Web 3.0 era, the widespread adoption of mobile devices and applications has given rise to numerous social platforms. Ordinary users could also become opinion leaders and gain a large number of followers. Transformations in consumer behavior have likewise given impetus to influencer marketing. Consumers express growing skepticism toward brands' direct marketing and are less inclined to trust traditional advertising [9]. In turn, for firms that find it more difficult to nudge consumers, online influencers who talk about brands and products on social media represent a viable alternative. Influencers weave brand endorsements into their personal narratives, which makes the OIM content appear more authentic and reflective of the influencers' own styles [10].

2.3. Consumer purchase intention

As indicated by social psychological studies, intention can effectively predict individuals' behavioral choices. Consumer purchase intention refers to the subjective probability judgment of consumers on purchasing a specific product or service, reflecting their psychological tendency to be willing to take purchase actions.

The TPB has strong explanatory power for individual intention and behavior. The TPB was proposed by Ajzen to explain the process of individual behavior during decision making [11]. From the perspective of this theory, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control serve as the three primary determinants of behavioral intention. Meanwhile, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model is also frequently used to study the impact of social media on consumers' purchase intentions.

2.4. Research gap

Most current research on social media marketing focuses on hotels, destinations, or online travel platforms, while there is a significant lack of attention to traditional travel agencies as a specific entity. Particularly, there is a deficiency in conducting a systematic exploration that integrates social media content strategies with consumers' purchase intentions within a unified framework.

2.5. Four types of social media promotion

The types of promotional activities carried out by travel agencies on social media can be classified into four categories. Functional promotion is aimed at providing users with more travel information. Tourists equipped with information on tourism destinations, hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and other tourism services are more likely to visit rural destinations [12]. Social media platforms have shaped travel choices through visually captivating and user-generated content. Today's consumer depends more on influencers, online reviews, and social media posts than on traditional travel guides. This evolution has given rise to "Instagrammable" locations, encouraging tourism boards and businesses to prioritize digital marketing and partnerships with content creators

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[6]. This leads to experiential marketing that enables users to feel immersed in the content through audio-visual means, as well as social interactive marketing that sparks discussions and encourages participation. Brand building is another important strategy for the branding of tourist destinations. By conveying specific values and lifestyles, it can enhance consumers' sense of identification and trust in travel agencies.

3. Research model and hypotheses

Refer to Figure 1. The theoretical model presumes that the four marketing strategies generate direct positive effects on consumer purchase intention.

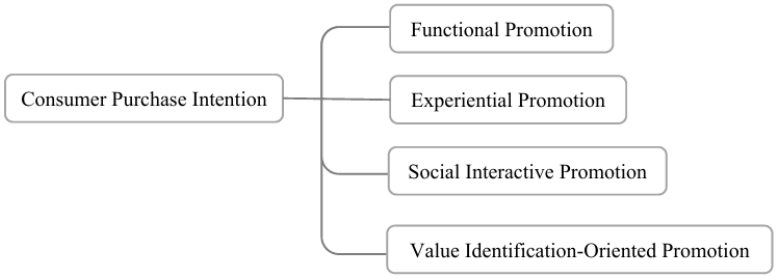


Figure 1. Four types of promotion

The four types of promotion have varying degrees of influence on consumers' purchase intentions. On this basis, the following research hypothesis is put forward:

H1: Functional promotion positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

H2: Experiential promotion positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

H3: Social interactive promotion positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

H4: Value identification-oriented promotion positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Questionnaire design

This study designed a questionnaire based on the case of UTour. Utour represents a typical form of traditional travel. Its business scope includes outbound tours, domestic tours, and high-end customized tours, which can reflect the common survival situation of the traditional travel agency sector. In recent years, UTour has been actively establishing a presence on social media and attempting brand promotion. This transformation from traditional offline marketing to social media marketing is a typical path that many traditional travel agencies are currently undergoing. Studying the effectiveness of their strategies holds direct reference value for other similar enterprises. Meanwhile, the 2025 Big Data Report of UTour shows that the total number of service recipients of the group exceeded 1.68 million throughout the year. The annual number of travelers sent for the star product independently developed by its subsidiary, You Naide Travel, exceeds 100,000 people.

The specific process involves using the Wenjuanxing platform to complete the formulation, distribution, collection, and preliminary data export of the questionnaire. The reason for this is that travel agency social media marketing is a dynamic and complex process involving multiple factors, such as content strategy and user interaction. This study obtained sample data through questionnaire surveys for quantitative testing.

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To examine the impact of the four types of publicity on consumers' purchase intention, this study designed a structured questionnaire for quantitative data collection. The first part inquired about the basic information of the surveyed users.

The second part of this study categorizes the social media promotions of UTour into four types: functional promotion, experiential promotion, social interactive promotion, and value identification-oriented promotion. Each type has 3 measurement items, totaling 12 items. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement items for four types of publicity

Variate	Number	Measurement item
Functional promotion	F1	This travel agency's account frequently posts detailed itinerary information and details.
	F2	This travel agency account offers a clear channel for product reservations and purchase instructions.
	F3	The promotional information about the travel agency's account that I saw was appealing to me.
Experiential promotion	E1	The videos or pictures posted by this travel agency's account gave me a feeling as if I were there in person.
	E2	The content of this travel agency's account can arouse my desire for the tourist destinations.
social interactive promotion	S1	This travel agency's account will actively respond to users' comments or private messages.
	S2	This travel agency's account frequently initiates topic discussions or interactive activities.
	S3	This travel agency account will forward the users' genuine travel experiences.
value identification-oriented promotion	V1	The travel philosophy conveyed by this travel agency aligns with my own values.
	V2	The lifestyle advocated by this travel agency is one that I fully agree with.
	V3	I think this travel agency is a brand with a certain attitude and cultural depth.

The measurement of purchase intention is presented in the third section, which consists of four items: "I am willing to purchase the travel products of this travel agency", "I will consider choosing this travel agency as the tourism service provider", "I am willing to recommend this travel agency to others", and "If there is a travel need in the future, I may choose this travel agency".Using the question format of a scale ensures the efficiency of answering and the ability to be quantitatively processed.

4.2. Variable measurement

The measurement items of the questionnaire were measured using the Likert 5-point scale. The Likert scale enables respondents to register their attitudes on the items according to their strength, and can fully reflect the intensity of the attitude. As shown in Table 2, this is the textual expression of the Likert 5-point scale and its corresponding scoring.

Table 2. Expression method of likert 5-point scale and corresponding scoring system

Point	1	2	3	4	5
Extreme expression	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree

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The independent variable consists of 12 specific promotional methods classified based on the four types of promotional activities of Utour on social media, including clear booking channels, immersive graphics and text, interactive activities, promotion of tourism values, and so on. The dependent variable is the consumers' purchase intention, which is composed of four items and comprehensively assesses the respondents' purchase intention from four perspectives: purchase tendency, selection intention, recommendation intention, and future consumption possibility. Monthly income and travel frequency are included as control variables in the analysis to control for the possible influence of demographic characteristics on the purchase intention.

4.3. Sampling method

This questionnaire employs the snowball sampling method within the category of non-probability sampling. The specific methods include: Firstly, an electronic questionnaire will be created on the Wenjuanxing platform and forwarded through social platforms such as WeChat and QQ. Secondly, it will be pushed to online communities where the target groups gather, such as tourism-related WeChat groups. Thirdly, a snowball sampling method will be adopted, inviting respondents to forward it to their qualified friends.

4.4. Data collection

This study utilized the "Wenjuanxing" online questionnaire platform for data collection. Wenjuanxing is one of the earlier platforms in China that focuses on professional questionnaire research and can meet the data collection requirements of scientific research projects. The questionnaire was generated as an electronic link and QR code through the Wenguanxing platform. It was mainly distributed through social media channels, and the survey period was from 5th April 2026 to 18th April 2026. After collecting the questionnaires, the sample data were screened and cleaned. Invalid questionnaires, such as those with too short response times or those with obvious patterns in answers, were eliminated. Eventually, 205 valid samples were obtained. The subsequent analysis of the questionnaire data will be conducted using statistical software such as SPSS, including validity and reliability tests as well as correlation analyses.

5. Data analysis

5.1. Reliability analysis

According to the reliability statistics presented in Table 3, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all dimensions fall between 0.804 and 0.872, while the overall scale yields an Alpha coefficient of 0.897. Specifically, the Alpha coefficients for functional promotion, experiential promotion, social interactive promotion, and value identification-oriented promotion are 0.819, 0.827, 0.804, and 0.807, respectively, while the dimension of consumer purchase intention is 0.872. All of these are higher than the recognized standard of 0.7. The above results indicate that the scale and each sub-dimension used in this study have good internal consistency reliability, and the measurement results are reliable.

Table 3. Statistical analysis of questionnaire reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Functional Promotion	0.819	3

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Table 3. (continued)

Experiential Promotion	0.827	3
Social Interactive Promotion	0.804	3
Value Identification-Oriented Promotion	0.807	3
Consumer Purchase Intention	0.872	4
Overall Scale	0.897	16

5.2. Validity analysis

Table 4. Rotated component matrix for common factor extraction

Dimension	Item	Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
Functional Promotion	This travel agency's account frequently posts detailed itinerary information and details.			0.875		
	This travel agency account offers a clear channel for product reservations and purchase instructions.			0.814		
	The promotional information about the travel agency's account that I saw was appealing to me.			0.750		
Experiential Promotion	The videos or pictures posted by this travel agency's account gave me a feeling as if I were there in person.		0.866			
	The travel vlogs or live streams posted by this travel agency's account made me feel like I was there with them.		0.751			
	The content of this travel agency's account can arouse my desire for the tourist destinations.		0.824			
Social Interactive Promotion	This travel agency's account will actively respond to users' comments or private messages.					0.820
	This travel agency's account frequently initiates topic discussions or interactive activities.					0.726
	This travel agency account will forward the users' genuine travel experiences.					0.763

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Table 4. (continued)

	The travel philosophy conveyed by this travel agency aligns with my own values.		0.879
Value Identification-Oriented Promotion	The lifestyle advocated by this travel agency is one that I fully agree with.		0.739
	I think this travel agency is a brand with a certain attitude and cultural depth.		0.758
Consumer Purchase Intention	I am willing to purchase the travel products of this travel agency	0.829	
	I will consider choosing this travel agency as the tourism service provider	0.779	
	I am willing to recommend this travel agency to others	0.698	
	If there is a travel need in the future, I may choose this travel agency	0.795	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Principal component analysis was adopted for factor extraction. Factor analysis was conducted through the variance maximization orthogonal rotation method. The extraction process yielded five factors whose eigenvalues were greater than 1. The rotated component matrix presented in Table 4 allows the classification of each item into its corresponding factor. Specifically, component 1 contained 3 items related to functional promotion, with loadings ranging from 0.750 to 0.875; Component 2 included 3 items related to experiential promotion, with loadings ranging from 0.751 to 0.866; Component 3 contained 3 items related to social interaction promotion, with loadings ranging from 0.726 to 0.820; Component 4 included 3 items related to value identification promotion, with loadings ranging from 0.739 to 0.879. The 4 items included in Component 5 all originated from the dimension of consumer purchase intention, with factor loadings ranging from 0.698 to 0.829; All measurement items have factor loadings exceeding 0.6 on their corresponding factors, and no obvious cross-loadings across different factors are detected, which confirms the scale possesses satisfactory construct validity.

5.3. Descriptive statistics

According to the descriptive statistics results in Table 5, the sample size for each dimension is 205. The average score of functional promotion is 3.32, that of experiential promotion is 3.23, that of social interactive promotion is 3.23, and that of value identification-oriented promotion is 3.25. The consumers' purchase intention is 3.25. All of them are at a medium to upper level (with a full score of 5).

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Table 5. Descriptive statistics of each dimension

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
Functional Promotion	205	1.00	5.00	3.32	1.01	-0.441	0.170	-0.757	0.338
Experiential Promotion	205	1.00	5.00	3.23	1.04	-0.299	0.170	-1.095	0.338
Social Interactive Promotion	205	1.00	5.00	3.23	0.99	-0.465	0.170	-0.747	0.338
Value Identification-Oriented Promotion	205	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.00	-0.480	0.170	-0.744	0.338
Consumer Purchase Intention	205	1.00	5.00	3.25	0.96	-0.100	0.170	-0.878	0.338

5.4. Regression analysis

As shown in Table 6, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with the four promotional types as independent variables and consumers' purchase intention as the dependent variable.

From the perspective of the influence of each variable, the standardized regression coefficient (Beta) of functional promotion is 0.140, with a t-value of 2.289 and $p = 0.023 < 0.05$, reaching a significant level; the Beta coefficient of experiential promotion is 0.211, with a t-value of 3.423 and $p = 0.001 < 0.01$; the Beta coefficient of social interactive promotion is 0.300, with a t-value of 4.583 and $p < 0.001$; the Beta coefficient of value identification-oriented promotion is 0.227, with a t-value of 3.637 and $p < 0.001$. All four independent variables have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention, among which social interaction promotion has the greatest impact, followed by value identification promotion and experiential promotion, while functional promotion has a relatively smaller impact.

For multicollinearity testing, the variance inflation factor (VIF) of all variables falls between 1.310 and 1.495, well below the threshold of 10. Meanwhile, the tolerance values range from 0.669 to 0.763, all higher than 0.1. These results demonstrate that no severe multicollinearity exists among the independent variables.

Table 6. Regression analysis results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.532	0.233		2.280	0.024		
Functional Promotion	0.134	0.058	0.140	2.289	0.023	0.763	1.310
Experiential Promotion	0.195	0.057	0.211	3.423	0.001	0.754	1.326
Social Interactive Promotion	0.291	0.063	0.300	4.583	0.000	0.669	1.495

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Table 6. (continued)

Value Identification-Oriented Promotion	0.218	0.060	0.227	3.637	0.000	0.737	1.356
R Square				0.427			
Adjusted R Square				0.416			
F				37.316			
Significance				.000b			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Purchase Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Value Identification-Oriented Promotion, Functional Promotion, Experiential Promotion, Social Interactive Promotion

6. Conclusion

Taking the traditional travel agency Utour as the research case and 205 valid questionnaire responses as the data basis, this study adopts descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to systematically explore how four social media marketing approaches—functional promotion, experiential promotion, social interactive promotion, and value identification-oriented promotion—affect consumers' purchase intention.

In this study, regression analysis reveals that all four types of promotion exert a positive influence on purchase intention, fully validating Hypotheses H1 to H4. Social interactive promotions have broken the barrier between consumers and travel agencies, and their promotional effect is the most significant. At the same time, more and more consumers believe that the alignment of values and immersive content is an important factor in choosing a travel agency. Compared with the first three promotional methods, the number of respondents choosing functional promotions has decreased. However, descriptive statistics show disparities in the mean values of the different promotion types: functional promotion records the highest mean value, while experiential promotion and social interactive promotion have relatively lower ones, reflecting the phenomenon of lower average values but greater influence. Currently, there is still considerable room for improvement in the quality and quantity of experiential and interactive content.

This study fills the empirical gap in the traditional travel agency field of integrating social media content strategies and purchase intention into a unified framework, and provides data reference for tourism enterprises to optimize their social media content strategies.

This study only employed the method of self-administered questionnaire surveys and used the snowball sampling method. The sample mainly focused on individuals aged 18 to 45, with middle to low income levels, and who travel 2 to 3 times a year. For the elderly, frequent travelers, or infrequent travelers, the sample coverage is still insufficient. Future research can adopt stratified random sampling to expand the sample coverage and enhance the external validity of the conclusions. At the same time, by introducing actual purchase behavior data and combining content analysis, the causal impact of different promotion types on consumers' purchase intentions can be further verified.

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7. Discussion

The average score for social interactive promotion is relatively low, which may indicate that the current travel agencies' social media interaction practices are still insufficient. The questionnaire covered specific actions such as "actively responding to comments", "initiating topic discussions", and "reposting user content". These operations require a significant amount of human effort and content planning skills in actual operations. Many traditional travel agencies have not yet established a systematic interaction mechanism. Therefore, it is reasonable that consumers have a low perception score for them. However, it has the greatest impact on purchase intentions, which can be explained from the perspectives of "subjective norms" and "perceived behavioral control" in social psychology. Social interaction-based promotion enhances consumers' trust and sense of belonging towards travel agencies by creating a community atmosphere and stimulating user participation, thereby reducing the uncertainty of purchase decisions. Especially in the case of influencer marketing, influencers act as a bridge between travel agencies and consumers, and their promotional efforts are more persuasive than official publicity. This "interaction among people" has a stronger driving force on behavioral intentions than the functional or experiential content of the information itself.

Functional promotion received a high score from consumers, indicating that travel agencies have done relatively well in this aspect and have sufficient information supply. However, consumers have regarded it as the expected standard service content and find it difficult to generate additional purchase motivation. In contrast, social interaction and value identification can better stimulate consumers' emotional resonance and behavioral motivation. The leading role of "behavioral attitude" and "subjective norms" in TPB theory is consistent.

The mean and influence of experiential promotion are at a medium level, indicating that it has not yet fully exerted its potential at the current stage. Possible reasons include that the existing content still has room for improvement in terms of immersion and immersion, such as insufficient application of VR or AR technology and uneven quality of Vlogs. Value identification-oriented promotion shows stable performance in mean and influence, indicating that some consumers have begun to value the alignment of brand culture with personal values. This trend is particularly evident among young groups.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, this study suggests that travel agencies should focus on strengthening social interaction-oriented promotion, establish dedicated social media operation positions, ensure timely responses to user comments and private messages, and regularly launch activities such as topic discussions, prize-based interactions, and collection of user stories. At the same time, actively share user-generated authentic travel experiences to form a positive interaction chain of "user - brand - user".

At the same time, travel agencies should clearly define their brand positioning and convey consistent values through their content, in order to attract the target audience whose values align with theirs. The importance of investing resources in creating high-quality video content cannot be ignored. At the same time, personalized content should be pushed based on user profiles. Although functional promotion has a relatively minor impact on purchase intention, it is indispensable as the fundamental information for consumers' decision-making and should remain at the current level.

This study only employed questionnaire surveys, with the data sourced from subjective perception, which may introduce biases. In the future, actual purchase behavior data, such as order records, click-through rates, and conversion rates, can be introduced, combined with content analysis methods, to further verify the causal relationship. Although this study included monthly

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.33923

income and travel frequency as control variables, it did not systematically analyze their moderating effects between advertising types and purchase intentions. In the future, more demographic variables can be introduced for multi-group analysis or to test the moderating effects.

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