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TRAVEL MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT: GENRE EVOLUTION AND CONSUMER PRACTICES OF KAZAKHSTANI AUDIENCES

The transforming media environment is significantly altering the creation, distribution, and consumption of journalistic content. These processes are evident in travel media, one of the most rapidly developing segments of digital journalism.

The aim is to identify the characteristics of the genre evolution of travel media in the digital environment and determine the relationships between content characteristics and consumption practices among Kazakhstani audiences (aged 18–35). Attention is paid to the analysis of formats, genres, personal experience levels, motivations, trust, and audience behavioral responses.

The scientific and practical significance of this study lies in the development of an approach to studying travel media through content and audience analysis. The results can be used in developing media strategies in tourism marketing and digital communications.

The methodological basis of the study is a mixed approach, including content analysis of publications on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube on the first stage of the study (September 2025 to February 2026). A quantitative online survey (N = 115) of travel content users using a Likert scale constituted the second stage of the study. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were also used.

The main results show that short, visually engaging, and personalized formats dominate contemporary travel content. High motivation to read and view travel content is associated with inspiration and travel planning. Trust in content and motivation are significantly associated with audience behavioral decisions, with the strongest relationship observed between trust and influence ($r = 0.648$).

The study's value lies in identifying the relationship between the genre transformation of travel media and media consumption practices. This fact expands theoretical understanding of digital journalism and the active role of audiences.

The practical significance of the study lies in the potential application of the obtained results to improve the effectiveness of content strategies in digital media. This also includes improving audience communication and developing content strategies related to users' travel behavior.

Keywords: travel media, digital journalism, travel content, media consumption, audience of Kazakhstan, social media.

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Цифрлық ортадағы саяхат медиасы: жанр эволюциясы және қазақстандық аудиторияның тұтынушылық тәжірибесі

БАҚ ортасының өзгеруі журналистік контентті жасауды, таратуды және тұтынуды айтарлықтай өзгертуде. Бұл процестер цифрлық журналистиканың ең жылдам дамып келе жатқан сегменттерінің бірі болып табылатын саяхат медиасында айқын көрінеді. Пайдаланушылар жасаған контенттің өсуімен қатар жанрлық модификация да байқалады.

Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – цифрлық ортадағы саяхат медиасының жанрлық эволюциясының сипаттамаларын анықтау және қазақстандық аудитория (18-35 жас аралығындағы) арасындағы контент сипаттамалары мен тұтыну тәжірибелері арасындағы байланысты анықтау. Пішімдерді, жанрларды, жеке тәжірибе деңгейлерін, мотивацияларды, сенімдерді және аудиторияның мінез-құлықтық реакцияларын талдауға назар аударылады.

Бұл зерттеудің ғылыми және практикалық маңыздылығы контент пен аудиторияны талдау арқылы саяхат медиасын зерттеуге тәсілді әзірлеуде жатыр. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелерін туризм маркетингі мен цифрлық коммуникациялардағы медиа стратегияларын әзірлеуде пайдалануға болады.

Зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізі – аралас тәсіл, оның ішінде Instagram, TikTok және YouTube-тегі жарияланымдардың контенттік талдауы. Зерттеудің бірінші кезеңі 2025 жылдың қыркүйегінен 2026 жылдың ақпанына дейін жүргізілді. Зерттеудің екінші кезеңін Ликерт шкаласын қолдана отырып, саяхат мазмұнын пайдаланушылардың сандық онлайн сауалнамасы ($N = 115$) құрады. Сипаттамалық статистика, сенімділік талдауы және корреляциялық талдау да қолданылды.

Негізгі нәтижелер қысқа, визуалды түрде тартымды және жекелендірілген форматтар қазіргі заманғы саяхат мазмұнына басымдық беретінін көрсетеді. Гибридті жанрлар басым. Саяхат мазмұнын оқуға және көруге жоғары мотивация шабыт пен саяхат жоспарлаумен байланысты. Мазмұнға деген сенім мен мотивация аудиторияның мінез-құлықтық реакцияларымен статистикалық тұрғыдан байланысты, ал ең күшті байланыс сенім мен ықпал арасында анықталды ($r = 0,648$).

Зерттеудің құндылығы саяхат медиасының жанрлық трансформациясы мен БАҚ тұтыну тәжірибесі арасындағы байланысты анықтауда жатыр. Бұл факт цифрлық журналистика мен аудиторияның белсенді рөлі туралы теориялық түсінікті кеңейтеді.

Зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы алынған нәтижелерді цифрлық БАҚ-тағы контент стратегияларының тиімділігін арттыру үшін қолдану мүмкіндігінде жатыр. Бұған аудиториямен коммуникацияны жетілдіру және пайдаланушылардың саяхат мінез-құлқымен байланысты контент стратегияларын әзірлеу де кіреді.

Түйін сөздер: саяхат медиасы, цифрлық журналистика, саяхат контенті, медиа тұтыну, Қазақстан аудиториясы, әлеуметтік медиа.

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Трэвел-медиа в цифровой среде: жанровая эволюция и потребительские практики казахстанской аудитории

Трансформирующаяся медиасреда существенно меняет процессы создания, распространения и потребления журналистского контента, что наиболее отчетливо проявляется в сегменте трэвел-медиа – одном из самых динамичных направлений цифровой журналистики. Вследствие масштабного увеличения объема пользовательского контента (UGC) наблюдается активная жанровая модификация данного сегмента.

Цель исследования – выявить особенности жанровой эволюции трэвел-медиа в цифровой среде и определить взаимосвязь между характеристиками контента и практиками его потребления аудиторией Казахстана в возрасте 18–35 лет. Особое внимание уделено анализу форматов, жанров, степени трансляции личного опыта автора, а также мотивации, уровню доверия и поведенческим реакциям аудитории.

Методологическая база исследования опирается на смешанный подход (mixed methods). На первом этапе (сентябрь 2025 г. – февраль 2026 г.) проведен контент-анализ публикаций на платформах Instagram, TikTok и YouTube. Второй этап включал количественный онлайн-опрос пользователей трэвел-контента ($N = 115$) с применением шкалы Лайкерта. Для обработки данных использовались методы описательной статистики, анализ надежности и корреляционный анализ.

Результаты исследования демонстрируют доминирование коротких, визуально насыщенных и персонализированных форматов, а также преобладание гибридных жанровых форм. Установлено, что ключевыми мотивами потребления трэвел-контента выступают поиск вдохновения и планирование путешествий. Доверие к контенту и мотивация аудитории статистически значимо коррелируют с ее поведенческими реакциями, при этом наиболее сильная взаимосвязь выявлена между доверием и уровнем влияния контента ($r = 0.648$).

Научная ценность и теоретическая значимость работы заключаются в комплексном осмыслении связи между жанровой трансформацией трэвел-медиа и медиаповеденческими практиками, что расширяет представления о цифровой журналистике и концепции субъектности аудитории. Практическая значимость состоит в возможности использования полученных данных при формировании медиастратегий, оптимизации цифровых коммуникаций и разработке эффективного контента в сфере туристического маркетинга.

Ключевые слова: трэвел-медиа, цифровая журналистика, трэвел-контент, медиапотребление, аудитория Казахстана, социальные сети.

Introduction

The digital transformation of the media environment is changing the way texts are written, material is collected, and its interpretation. The way videos, essays, vlogs, guides, and so on are distributed and presented to audiences is also changing over time. According to O. Westlund and M. Ekström (2021), K. Hess and L. Waller (2020), M. Saldaña and M. Mourão (2020), and E. C. Tandoc Jr. (2019), modern digital journalism is being transformed by its multimedia nature (a combination of text, video, audio, and graphics), its dependence on broadcast platforms, and audience engagement. Thus, new hybrid genres are emerging (Westlund and Ekström, 2021).

Digital travel media enable audiences to explore destinations remotely before making travel decisions, providing access to visual information, personal experiences, and practical recommendations through online platforms. Travel media are rapidly developing in the digital environment. This segment lies at the intersection of journalism, tourism, and digital media consumption practices. However, despite the growing volume of travel content, limited attention has been paid to its genre evolution and consumption practices within specific national media contexts, including Kazakhstan.

International studies consider media convergence (the unification of different types of communication into one) as a key process in transforming the media environment (H. Jenkins, 2006). J. van Dijck (2013) analyzes platformization (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok) as a factor in structuring digital interactions. Previously, media outlets decided what to show viewers and in what format. Now, platforms are configured to select relevant content based on consumer demand (influencing algorithms).

Z. Papacharissi (2015) focuses on online publicity. The more likes, comments, and reposts an account receives, the more prominent it becomes in the system's estimation. The public itself creates content (Bruns, 2018). Based on this, M. Deuze (2012) and T. Flew (2014) view digital journalism as a hybrid system. The boundaries between journalism as a profession and blogging are blurring. Content is now created not simply in editorial offices, but on platforms by the authors themselves. What is present in the media is also presented on social media. Travel media is a good example of this hybridity.

Digital platforms influence tourism. R. A. Pop and Z. Săplăcan (2021) showed that trust in influencers significantly influences the choice of tour-

ist destinations. F. Li and Z. Zhou (2020) discuss content characteristics (humor, personalization) that increase audience engagement and their travel intentions.

In Kazakhstan, the media environment is also undergoing a transformation. G. S. Amangeldiev and M. B. Toktagazin (2019) emphasize the importance of visual journalism, where text takes a backseat. Sh. Zh. Kanasheva and S. M. Duysengazy (2020) note the strengthening of creative practices in this area. Editing, visuals, presentation, content, and emotional impact all influence audience perception. Research by N. T. Ozenbayeva and A. K. Ishanova (2021) also documents the transition to digital formats. M. Negizbaeva and E. Kanapiyanova (2022) emphasize the nature of travel journalism as an interaction between the writer (journalist) and the audience. The latter's role is to like, share, ask questions, and even create their own content.

Existing research in the fields of digital journalism and tourism provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the genre evolution of travel content. The practical work conducted in this study reveals content consumption in the national context of Kazakhstan.

The scientific novelty lies in examining travel media as a media practice in conjunction with the genre transformation of content and the platform features of its distribution.

The aim of the study is to identify the features of the genre evolution of travel media in the digital environment and determine how they relate to the consumption practices and behavioral attitudes of Kazakhstani audiences aged 18–35.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the intensity of travel content consumption by Kazakhstani audiences?

RQ2. Which platforms and formats are most preferred for consuming travel content?

RQ3. What motivations underlie travel content consumption?

RQ4. What is the audience's level of trust in various sources of travel content?

RQ5. To what extent does travel content influence audience behavioral practices and genre preferences?

Methodology and materials

The study utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis and a quantitative audience survey. This allowed us to examine the phenomenon of travel media in relation to the analy-

sis of content genre characteristics and consumption practices.

The study's methodological framework is based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (McQuail, 2010). Media consumption is viewed as an active and motivated process.

The study design consisted of two stages, which, when combined, defined the characteristics of the content, its perception, and use:

The first stage focused on analyzing the characteristics of travel content in the digital environment.

The second stage explored consumer practices.

The content-analysis sample consisted of 120 travel-related publications posted on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube and collected between September 2025 and February 2026. Publications were identified sequentially using travel-related keywords and hashtags, including "travel," "travel vlog," "travel guide," #travel, #travelblogger, "Kazakhstan travel," "Almaty travel," and "Astana travel." Publications were included if they were directly related to travel and could be classified according to the predefined content-analysis categories. Both Kazakhstani and international accounts were considered to capture different forms of contemporary digital travel content. The selection process continued until the final analytical corpus of 120 relevant publications was formed.

Content was analyzed based on the following parameters: format (vlog, short video, story, guide); genre (informational, entertainment, hybrid); level of personalization; narrative features; visual characteristics; content length.

All 120 publications were coded by the first author using the coding framework presented in Table 1. The same coding categories and operational definitions were applied consistently across the entire sample. Because the coding was conducted by a single coder, inter-coder reliability statistics were not calculated.

The analysis was conducted across the categories presented in Table 1. Each category reflects a specific structural, functional, or experiential aspect of media production. This identifies key trends in the transformation of travel journalism.

The format category (vlog, story, guide) reflects the platform's definition of what format can be displayed and used. The diversity of formats allows us to analyze how digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube influence the form and logic of content creation. The dominance of short video formats reflects the acceleration of media consump-

tion. Longer formats retain their value for deeper storytelling. The genre category ((1) informational (facts, knowledge), (2) entertainment (emotions), (3) hybrid (combination)) demonstrates the purpose of travel media. The prevalence of hybrid genres reflects the desire to inform and engage the audience simultaneously.

The level of personalization is an indicator of the author's role in digital (online) media. The audience perceives content that is connected to personal experiences and the brand and evokes sympathy and a sense of support. This type of content is more trustworthy.

Narrative features (storytelling, recommendations, reviews) are ways of delivering information. Storytelling enhances emotional engagement, while recommendations and advice enhance the practical value of the content.

Analysis of visual elements demonstrates the role of aesthetics and style in digital journalism. Some people prefer one style, while others prefer something different. Some content requires live video, while others prefer a more aesthetically pleasing style. Visual appearance attracts or repels viewers/readers.

The duration category takes into account the temporal dimension of media consumption. Short video formats show fragments of something common. Long formats convey depth and consistency.

These categories form a general framework that explores the transformation of travel media as a result of the interaction of platforms, user participation, and media consumption practices.

To analyze consumer practices, an online survey ("Travel Content Consumption by Kazakhstani Audiences") was conducted on the Google Forms platform in April 2026. The questionnaire was distributed using a snowball sampling method via social media and messaging apps, including Instagram and WhatsApp.

Respondents from three cities in Kazakhstan participated in the study: Astana (43.5%), Almaty (27.8%), and Shymkent (28.7%). The total sample size was $N = 115$.

The target group was users aged 18–35 who regularly consume travel content. This age group was chosen due to its high digital activity.

The sample age distribution was as follows: 18–24 years old – 15.7%, 25–29 years old – 53%, and 30–35 years old – 31.3%. In terms of gender, women predominated (80%), while the proportion of men was 20%.

Table 1*Coding categories for content analysis*

Category	Subcategories	Description
Format	Vlog / Short-form video / Stories / Guide	Type of content presentation depending on platform and duration
Genre	Informational / Entertainment / Hybrid	Functional orientation of content (informative, entertaining, or mixed)
Personalization	Personal / Neutral	Presence of author's personal experience and subjective narration
Narrative Features	Storytelling / Recommendations / Review	Dominant narrative structure used in the content
Visual Characteristics	Dynamic / Aesthetic	Visual style (fast-paced editing vs visually polished imagery)
Duration	Short-form / Long-form	Length of content (short videos vs extended formats)

Note: Developed by the authors

The questionnaire was developed by the first author specifically for the purposes of the present study and was not adapted from an existing validated instrument. Its content was structured around the research questions and the five analytical dimensions examined in the study: consumption intensity, platform preferences, motivation for consumption, trust in sources, and influence and genre preferences. No separate expert review or pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted prior to the main survey.

The questionnaire included 25 statements grouped into five thematic blocks:

- Intensity of consumption
(e.g., “I regularly consume travel content,” “I view travel content daily,” “I purposefully search for travel content”)
- Platform preferences
(e.g., “I most often consume travel content on Instagram,” “I actively watch travel content on TikTok,” “I prefer short videos”)
- Motivation for consumption
(e.g., “I watch travel content for inspiration,” “Travel content helps me plan trips,” “I consume content for entertainment purposes”)
- Trust in sources
(e.g., “I trust travel bloggers,” “User-generated content seems more sincere to me,” “I verify information before making decisions”)
- Influence and genre preferences
(e.g., “Travel content influences my choice of destinations,” “I visited the places seen in the content,” “I prefer content with the author's personal

experience,” “I prefer short formats,” “Visual appeal influences perception.”

Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)). Each block represents a separate analytical construct. Respondent participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The following methods were used for data analysis: content analysis (frequency analysis of categories; identification of dominant formats and genres; comparative analysis of platforms).

The SPSS 27 statistical analysis program was used for survey analysis: calculation of mean values; distribution analysis; assessment of scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha); correlation analysis; and ANOVA.

Results and analysis

Content Analysis

Analysis of the selected travel content revealed key trends in the genre evolution of digital travel media (Table 2).

Format. Short-form video content (60%), presented primarily on TikTok and Instagram, dominates the sample. Long-form vlogs account for 25% and are primarily represented on YouTube, while guides account for an additional 5%. This distribution reflects platform-specific differentiation in content formats.

Genre Structure. Hybrid content (65%), combining informational and entertaining elements, predominates. Purely informational (20%) and en-

teraining formats (15%) are significantly less common. A shift toward hybrid presentation is noted.

Travel content is characterized by a high level of personal connection: 80% of publications are based on the authors' personal experiences and are presented in a subjective narrative format. The importance of authenticity and personal perspective in the digital media environment is only gaining momentum. In terms of storytelling methods, the most common are storytelling (45%) and recommendations (35%). Content

often includes personal experiences and advice, combining useful information with emotional engagement.

Visual analysis shows a predominance of dynamic content (58%) over slick and engaging visuals (42%). Short videos don't require extensive editing, while longer formats focus on cinematography and more detailed visual storytelling.

In terms of content duration, short videos predominate (65%), indicating a tendency toward quick viewing.

Table 2
Results of Content Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Platform	Examples
Format	Short-form video	72	60%	TikTok, Instagram	Travel clips (@drewbinsky)
	Vlog (long-form)	30	25%	YouTube	Travel vlog (@karaandnate)
	Stories	12	10%	Instagram	Stories (@kazakhstan.travel)
	Guide	6	5%	YouTube, Instagram	Destination guides (@visit_almaty)
Genre	Hybrid	78	65%	TikTok, Instagram	Informative + enertaining clips
	Informational	24	20%	YouTube	"Top places to visit"
	Entertainment	18	15%	TikTok	Lifestyle / fun travel videos
Personalization	Personal	96	80%	All platforms	First-person vlogs
	Neutral	24	20%	Instagram	Institutional tourism pages
Narrative Features	Storytelling	54	45%	YouTube, TikTok	Travel stories
	Recommendations	42	35%	Instagram, TikTok	Travel tips
	Review	24	20%	YouTube	Hotel/restaurant reviews
Visual Characteristics	Dynamic	70	58%	TikTok	Fast-cut videos
	Aesthetic	50	42%	Instagram	Cinematic visuals
Duration	Short-form	78	65%	TikTok, Instagram	Reels / Shorts
	Long-form	42	35%	YouTube	Full-length vlogs

Note: Developed by the authors based on the content analysis of travel media published on Instagram, TikTok and Youtube (September 2025-February 2026)

Overall, the content analysis results reveal a shift in contemporary travel content in the digital environment. It is characterized by a predominance of short, visually rich, and personalized formats. This pattern is consistent with the growing prominence of concise, visually engaging, and personalized forms of travel content across digital platforms.

In terms of duration, short-format content clearly predominated in the sample. This reflects broader

trends in digital media consumption. The predominance of short-form content in the sample is consistent with audience preferences for concise and engaging digital formats.

Following data collection, the internal consistency of the five questionnaire scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The analysis was used to evaluate the reliability of the items within each scale and was not treated as evidence of construct valid-

ity. The results show a generally acceptable level of reliability across all scales.

Good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.821$) was found for the intensity construct, while the Platform Preferences scale also demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.718$). For consumption motivation, Cronbach's alpha reached 0.768. This is a satisfactory level of internal consistency for the questionnaire items regarding the motivational aspects of travel media consumption. The source trust construct demonstrated a slightly lower reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.686$), which can be interpreted as barely acceptable. This may be due to the multidimensional nature of trust, which includes various aspects such as credibility, authenticity, and critical evaluation. Finally, the influence and genre preference scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.754$). The determined reliability coefficients ranged from 0.686 to 0.821, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency for the survey instrument and its suitability for further statistical analysis.

Intensity of content consumption. This indicator demonstrates a moderate level of audience engagement ($M \approx 3.45$). Respondents report stable interaction with tourism content, including regular consumption and targeted searches for such materials. The highest value in this block is associated with repeat consumption (Q5, $M = 3.62$). Users tend to return to previously viewed content. Travel content is relevant and useful to the audience.

Platform preferences. Audiences tend to favor visually-oriented and dynamic formats ($M \approx 3.63$). The highest values are observed for Instagram ($M = 3.87$) and short videos ($M = 3.89$). Visually-oriented and dynamic content dominates. YouTube demonstrates comparatively lower engagement ($M = 3.23$). It is consumed less frequently because the videos posted there are longer and more comprehensive. While it remains relevant, it is the platform people turn to for in-depth exploration of travel topics.

Motivation. The desire to consume travel content remains consistently high ($M \approx 3.78$). The strongest motivations are related to inspiration ($M = 3.95$) and travel planning ($M = 3.93$). Travel media satisfy both emotional and practical needs. The entertainment portion of the content ($M = 3.53$) and the acquisition of knowledge ($M = 3.87$) further demonstrate the multifunctional nature of travel content.

Trust in the content source. There is a high level of perceived credibility ($M \approx 3.75$). Respondents express a relatively balanced level of trust in bloggers ($M = 3.50$) and traditional online media ($M = 3.68$).

The highest mean value is associated with behavior related to information verification ($M = 4.09$). Users actively evaluate the credibility of information before making decisions. A negative impact of advertising on trust was noted ($M = 3.71$). Respondents may be critical of information that offers a product or service for money. In the travel content field, this could include airline ticket sales, hotel advertising, sponsored trips, and so on.

The influence of travel content and genre preferences. A strong overall impact is demonstrated ($M \approx 3.85$). Respondents report that travel content significantly influences their destination choices ($M = 3.69$) and, to a lesser extent, their actual travel behavior ($M = 3.48$). Particularly high values are observed for preferences for personalized formats, such as vlogs ($M = 4.03$). These results indicate that visually rich and experiential content is strongly associated with audience preferences and self-reported behavioral intentions. A one-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences between age groups for consumption intensity ($F = 0.268$, $p = 0.765$) and motivation ($F = 0.551$, $p = 0.578$). The audience was shown to be relatively homogeneous across these parameters.

Statistically significant differences were also found for trust levels ($F = 4.358$, $p = 0.015$) and the influence of travel content ($F = 3.949$, $p = 0.022$).

A post-hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) showed that respondents aged 30–35 expressed greater trust than respondents aged 18–24 ($p = 0.011$). Similarly, younger audiences (18–24) are less influenced by travel content compared to those aged 25–29 ($p = 0.027$) and 30–35 ($p = 0.029$).

These results show that age-group differences are primarily observed in the cognitive and behavioral aspects of media consumption (trust and influence), whereas consumption intensity and motivation remain relatively stable across age groups.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between key constructs, including consumption intensity, motivation, trust, and influence on behavior. It revealed statistically significant positive correlations between all variables ($p < 0.01$).

A strong relationship was found between trust and influence ($r = 0.648$) (Table 3). High levels of trust in tourism content are associated with a stronger influence on audience behavior. A similarly strong correlation was found between motivation and trust ($r = 0.569$). More motivated users tend to exhibit higher levels of trust when receiving information.

A significant relationship was found between consumption intensity and motivation ($r = 0.554$). Increased engagement with tourism content is closely related to users' motivational factors. The correlation between motivation and influence ($r = 0.536$) further indicates that higher motivation is associated with greater self-reported influ-

ence of tourism media on decision-making. Moderate correlations were found between consumption intensity and trust ($r = 0.455$). Between consumption intensity and influence, $r = 0.346$. Frequency of exposure is associated with trust and behavioral influence, although these relationships are comparatively weaker.

Table 3
Correlation matrix of key constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Consumption Intensity	1			
2. Motivation	.554**	1		
3. Trust	.455**	.569**	1	
4. Influence	.346**	.536**	.648**	1

Note: Developed by the authors based on survey data ($N = 115$). $p < .01$

Correlation analysis provides important insights into the consumption of digital tourism content. The strong relationship between trust and influence highlights the close association between perceived credibility and self-reported audience behavior. Respondents reporting higher trust also tended to report stronger behavioral influence of travel content.

The significant relationship between motivation and trust, as well as influence, indicates that media content consumption is not passive. It occurs on demand: for inspiration, planning, and entertainment. The results support the theoretical propositions of E. Katz and D. McQuail (1973), who emphasize the active role of the audience in selecting and interpreting media content.

The comparatively weaker correlation between consumption intensity and influence suggests that exposure frequency alone is less strongly associated with self-reported behavioral influence than trust and motivation. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of digital media, where the abundance of content requires users to selectively engage with information—specifically, with information that consumers perceive as relevant and credible. The results confirm that tourism content consumption is a complex interaction of cognitive (trust), emotional (motivation), and behavioral (influence) aspects.

Integrated Analysis

The content analysis and survey data, when integrated, provide a clearer picture of tourism media and audience consumption practices.

The content analysis shows that modern tourism media are primarily characterized by short, visually oriented, and highly personalized content (posted primarily on TikTok and Instagram). These structural features directly align with the survey results, which revealed audience preference for short formats ($M = 3.89$) and visually appealing content ($M = 4.07$). These patterns are consistent with the affordances of Instagram and TikTok, where short-form and visually engaging content plays a prominent role.

The abundance of hybrid genres revealed in the content analysis is also reflected in audience motivations. Survey results indicate that users consume travel content both for inspiration ($M = 3.95$) and for practical purposes, such as travel planning ($M = 3.93$). Modern travel media simultaneously satisfy emotional and informational needs.

Content analysis reveals that 80% of publications are based on personal experience, and the survey indicates a relatively high level of trust in user-generated content ($M = 3.77$). A preference for video blog formats is revealed ($M = 4.03$). This relationship is further supported by correlation analysis, which reveals a significant positive relationship between trust and influence on behavior ($r = 0.648$). These results suggest an association between personalized content, perceived authenticity, and the persuasive potential of travel content. Content consumption intensity shows only a relatively weak association with behavioral influence ($r = 0.346$). Taken together, these findings indicate that behavioral

influence is more strongly associated with trust and motivation than with consumption intensity alone.

The results show that travel content evolves depending on how its audience views and perceives it. Short, visual, and personal formats have become popular not only because of platforms but also because such content is more relatable to users and is shaped by their participation.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study include the non-random sampling method, which combined purposive and “snowball” sampling. While this method effectively captured active consumers of travel content, it may also limit the generalizability of the results to a wider audience. In addition, the survey sample was gender-imbalanced, with women comprising 80% of respondents and men 20%, which may further limit the generalizability of the findings across gender groups. Furthermore, the content analysis was limited to the selected digital platforms: Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Another limitation concerns the content-analysis coding procedure. All 120 publications were coded by a single coder (the first author); therefore, inter-coder reliability could not be assessed. Although a predefined coding framework was applied consistently across the sample, the absence of independent coding by a second coder may have increased the potential for subjective classification. Future studies should employ multiple independent coders and assess agreement using an appropriate inter-coder reliability statistic.

A further limitation concerns the survey instrument. The questionnaire was developed specifically for this study and was not subjected to separate expert review or pilot testing before its administration. Although the five scales demonstrated acceptable to good internal consistency in the study sample,

Cronbach’s alpha provides evidence of reliability rather than construct validity. Therefore, the validity of the proposed questionnaire structure should be examined more extensively in future studies using additional validation procedures.

Conclusion

The results and their analysis revealed characteristics of the genre’s evolution in digital travel media. Short, visually oriented (with special effects), and personalized content are prioritized. Survey results showed that audience consumption practices are closely linked to these content characteristics.

The research questions outlined in the introduction were addressed using a combination of content analysis and quantitative survey data. The results demonstrate that travel content consumption is moderate. It is associated with both emotional and practical motives as well as trust in content sources. Furthermore, travel-content consumption is significantly associated with self-reported behavioral responses, including travel decision-making.

The study demonstrates a strong relationship between content creation and audience practices. The evolution of travel media in the digital environment is shaped by both platform logic and active audience engagement.

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Author Contributions

Nazym Ozenbayeva: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing, Review & Editing.

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