

The Influence of Social Media on the Destination Visit Intentions to China of International Tourists

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ABSTRACT

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Social media has transformed conventional travel methods and is more pivotal in tourism promotion, drawing travellers from various countries and areas to China. However, studies on the utilization of social media in destination promotions in China have not been conducted. This study examines the impact of social media on the intention of foreign tourists to visit Chinese destinations, focusing on individuals aged 18 and older who are not Chinese citizens, do not reside in China, and have not travelled to China since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research employed a non-probability sampling technique to collect 306 samples and conducted partial least squares (PLS) analysis using SmartPLS software, Version 4.0, to assess the research hypotheses. The findings indicated that information quality and trustworthiness positively influence information usefulness, affecting information adoption and increasing inclinations to visit Chinese tourist destinations. This study advocates for the amalgamation of promotional techniques for Chinese tourist destinations, enhancement of content quality, and prioritization of the distribution of practical information. Simultaneously, enhancing presentation skills and social engagement within the social media landscape is essential for the promotion of tourism attractions, with an emphasis on electronic word-of-mouth communication. This study possesses specific limitations. Future research should examine the travel intentions and attitudes of tourists from various countries and regions about Chinese tourism sites.

Contribution/Originality: This paper's primary contribution is integrating destination visit intention into the Information Adoption Model (IAM) to examine social media 's influence on foreign tourists' destination visit intention in China. It

advances theoretical understanding of IAM in tourism contexts and offers practical recommendations for enhancing Chinese destinations' social media marketing strategies.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the application of social media within the tourism sector has markedly increased, as it offers a cost-effective and efficient means to promote tourism activities--such as disseminating pertinent information and encouraging engagement--alongside facilitating interactions among tourism stakeholders, including destinations and tourists (Sarkar & George, 2018). Integrating digital technologies, including social media, has transformed conventional travel methods, enriched the tourist experience, and facilitated more accessible and dependable access to pertinent information regarding travel destinations (Akhtar et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2020). Conversely, social media has promoted cross-cultural exchanges among various nations and areas. Domestic tourist destinations have been marketed to the international tourism sector via the extensive reach of social media, drawing visitors from various countries and regions (Akhtar et al., 2021).

Social media has come to be a highly effective tool for tourists seeking information regarding their destinations. Social media has significantly transformed information acquisition, communication, and decision-making processes in the digital era (Cinelli et al., 2021). Social media has become known as a significant channel for tourists seeking information about travel destinations within the tourism industry (Sun et al., 2022). Social media provides a greater volume of information and updates at a faster rate compared to other platforms, including official websites and media-sharing sites (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022). Social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram offer extensive tourism-related information, including short videos, photos, and travel sharing, and are updated more timely than traditional travel guidebooks and websites (Agyapong & Yuan, 2022). Furthermore, a significant portion of social media content is derived from user-generated content (UGC). Real travel experiences and emotions provide valuable references for foreign tourists, facilitating a deeper understanding of a destination's uniqueness from the tourist perspective. Simultaneously, social media exhibits a high level of interactivity (Dolan et al., 2019). Tourists may inquire or leave messages in the social comment area, thereby improving the accuracy and diversity of interactions, which facilitates the selection of appropriate destinations based on individual needs (Sarkar & George, 2018).

Social media's growing significance in tourism marketing has led to its impact on tourism behaviour becoming a subject of academic inquiry (Wang & Yan, 2022). Information from social media significantly influences consumer purchasing behaviour across various stages. It is crucial to examine its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. Huang et al. (2021) and Lin et al. (2021) analyse the impact of social media on the perception of tourist destinations. Chung et al. (2015) and Huang et al. (2021) focus on the effect of user-generated content on adopting travel information and destination image recognition. Anuar et al. (2021) and Leung (2019) examined the influence of diverse social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, on user's travel decisions. At that time, limited research examined the impact of social media on destination visit intention (Gaffar et al., 2022).

As one of the most popular destinations in the world, China has continued to grow in the number of foreign tourists entering the country (Yonghua & Mohd Amin, 2025). Inbound tourism refers to the arrival of international visitors to a country and serves as a significant revenue source at the national level (Kilipiri et al., 2023). In 2019, China recorded 1.453 billion inbound tourism arrivals, with tourism inbound revenue amounting to 131.3 USD billion (National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused a significant reduction in inbound tourism to China, leading to enormous financial losses for the tourism sector (Chen & Wang, 2024). The study aims to assess the influence of social media on foreign tourists' intentions to visit Chinese destinations, analyse strategies to enhance these intentions, and ultimately improve the promotion of these destinations to stimulate the growth of inbound tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1. Information adoption model (IAM)

The IAM model elucidates how individuals adopt information following the influence of data received through computer-mediated communication systems (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). The suggested IAM amalgamates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) in conjunction with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty et al., 1981). The IAM consists four elements: argument quality, source credibility, information usefulness and information adoption. The information adoption process depends on two independent sources of information, each with distinctive qualities that affect the information's usability for individuals. The quality of arguments serves as a central route. The peripheral route encompasses source credibility (Islam et al., 2022; Silaban et al., 2023). In previous studies, information quality has been equated with the argument quality, while information credibility has been associated with the source of credibility (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tapanainen et al., 2021). Perceived usefulness serves as a mediating variable in the link between influence processes and the adoption of information.

This model elucidates information regarding computer-mediated communication platforms and is highly relevant to social media research. Previous studies (Islam et al., 2022; Leong et al., 2021; Song et al., 2021a; Tapanainen et al., 2021) have applied IAM within the social media framework. Leong et al. (2021) examined the correlation between information characteristics and customer behaviour influenced by electronic word-of-mouth. Islam et al. (2022) and Tapanainen et al. (2021) indicated that the Information Adoption Model (IAM) enhances the understanding of how individuals adopt information from digital platforms. The quality and credibility of electronic word-of-mouth considerably affect the perceived usefulness of information and information adoption. Song et al. (2021b) examined young Malaysians and found that both argument quality and source credibility positively impact the perceived usefulness of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This research focuses on the influence of social media on travellers' travel intentions, making it suitable to employ the IAM framework to analyse tourists' behaviour within the social media environment.

Some researchers (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020) have shown that the original IAM possess certain constraints concerning its determinants and customer behavioural results. Wang (2016) asserts that future studies should investigate more variables across diverse contexts to enhance the original IAM. Song et al. (2021b)

consider IAM as a subject warranting additional investigation in travel and tourism research. This study extends IAM and investigates the impact of social media on customer behaviour, specifically from information adoption to destination visit intention, to comprehend the effect of tourists' information adoption from social media on their travel intentions.

2.2. Destination Visit Intention (DVI)

An intention denotes an individual's dedication to executing a behaviour (Hunter, 2006) and may serve as a crucial preliminary element in a person's conduct (Gaffar et al., 2022). In tourism research, destination visit intention refers to the desire to visit a particular destination (Şengel et al., 2023). The intention to visit a destination can be categorized into two phases of tourist behaviour. The initial stage involves the intention to visit prior to arriving at the destination. In contrast, the subsequent stage pertains to the desire to visit again following the tourist's experience at the location (Gaffar et al., 2022). This research pertains to the intention of the initial.

Research on consumer intentions through social media has markedly intensified in recent years. Daowd et al. (2021), Erkan and Evans (2016), Leong et al. (2021), and (Tapanainen et al., 2021) mainly focus on the correlation between electronic word-of-mouth in social media and consumers behaviour. Nonetheless, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) constitutes one of the content types communicated on social media platforms. Moreover, social media encompasses information dissemination, user-generated content, and comments, among other elements. Thus, this study seeks to improve the theoretical framework of social media and intention.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. Hypothesis development

a) Information Quality and Information Usefulness

Information quality denotes the efficacy of persuasive information in shaping consumers' purchasing intentions (Leong et al., 2021). Information quality encompasses the relevance, value, accuracy and completeness of information (Wang & Yan, 2022). Social media users believe high-quality content produces useful information (Jiang et al., 2021). In previous studies, scholars have recognized the importance of information quality in information adoption (Cheung et al., 2008; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Consequently, according to the Information Adoption Model (IAM), this research posits that:

H1: Information quality has a positive effect on information usefulness.

b) Information Credibility and Information Usefulness

Information credibility is characterized by the recipient's assessment of the reliability and trustworthiness of the information source. Information credibility is assessed based on social media users' perception of the information producer's expertise, reliability, and authority in the subject matter (Zha et al., 2018). Li and Suh (2015) assert that information credibility is a crucial determinant for survival in social media. Previous studies have demonstrated that information credibility positively affects perceived

information usefulness (Leong et al., 2021; Tapanainen et al., 2021). This research posits that:

H2: Information credibility positively affects information usefulness.

c) Information Usefulness and Information Adoption

Information usefulness refers to individuals' perceptions of the offered information and its application in enhancing efficiency (Arora & Lata, 2020). Information adoption refers to the process by which proposed information is considered meaningful (Elwalda et al., 2022). Sussman and Siegal (2003) posited that information usefulness is key to information acquisition. Particularly on social media, individuals confront several users who disseminate information. When individuals perceive this information as useful, their intention to adopt it will increase (Erkan & Evans, 2016). The IAM posits that information usefulness positively influences users' information adoption. Consequently, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Information usefulness positively affects information adoption.

d) Information Adoption and Destination Visit Intention

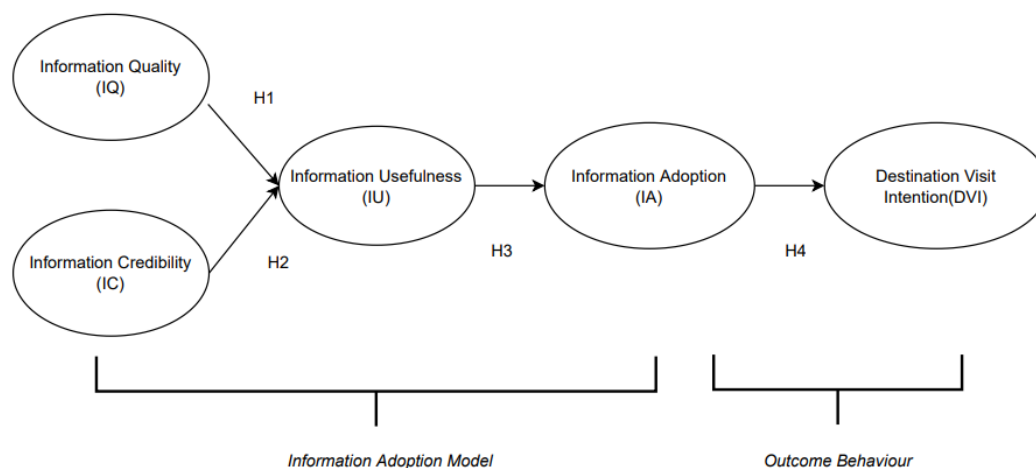
Information adoption is the initial stage in comprehending the formation of intentions (Silaban et al., 2023). Destination visit intention refers to the subjective willingness and tendency of prospective tourists to visit a destination influenced by internal and external information (Su et al., 2020). Prior research has established that social media information can assist consumers in formulating travel intentions (Silaban et al., 2023; Tapanainen et al., 2021). Information on social media aids tourists in developing a favourable perception of a destination, enhancing its appeal to tourists and promoting their intention to visit (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

H4: Information adoption positively influences destination visit intention.

2.4. Research Model

This study aims to understand the influence of social media on visitation intention. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual foundation for this research.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework is predicated on IAM and comprises two exogenous variables, information quality and credibility, and three endogenous variables: information usefulness, information adoption, and destination visit intention. Destination visit intention is a newly incorporated element in the original IAM, designed to enhance the examination of tourists' behavioural outcomes.

3. Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach. The research was conducted in Malaysia, and an online questionnaire was created with Google Forms, which was disseminated through email and a QR code link. This platform was selected for its efficient distribution, intuitive interface, and ability to collect and arrange responses effectively. The rationale for choosing Malaysia for the study is its status as a principal source country for inbound tourism to China. The study population comprised persons aged 18 and above who are neither Chinese citizens nor currently residing in China and have not travelled to China since the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this investigation, informed consent was acquired from all participants in compliance with ethical guidelines. The Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA examined and approved the research protocol. This research established the minimum sample size utilizing the G*Power application. The F-test for regression was conducted using the G*Power tool. The statistical analysis employed a linear multiple regression: fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero. This test employed an effect size $f^2=0.15$ with α value 0.05, the power ($1-\beta$ err prob) of 0.95 and the number of predictors of 2. The G*Power indicates that the minimum sample size required for this structural model is 107. This study utilized non-probability sampling to gather a sample of 306 respondents from various countries between August 2024 and January 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	57.2%
	Male	42.2%
	Prefer not to say	0.7%
Age	18-35	47.1%
	36-50	36.9%
	51-65	14.7%
	Above 65	1.3%
Education level	Doctoral degree	22.5%
	Master's degree	34.6%
	Bachelor's degree	21.6%
	Undergraduate degree	13.1%
	Others	8.2%
Nationality	Australia	11.4%
	Britain	5.2%
	Canada	3.3%
	France	4.2%
	Germany	3.9%
	India	1.3%
	Indonesia	9.8%
	Italy	2.0%
	Japan	2.9%
	Malaysia	22.2%
	Myanmar	0.3%

Occupation	Other	5.2%
	Philippines	2.0%
	Russia	1.0%
	Singapore	13.1%
	South Korea	3.9%
	Thailand	2.3%
	United States	5.9%
	Entrepreneur	14.1%
	Freelancer	9.8%
	Government employees	17.6%
	Homemaker	4.9%
	Other	2.9%
	Private sector employee	24.8%
	Retired	3.6%
Monthly income	Student	22.2%
	Above US\$1500	24.5%
	The US \$1000-1500	32.4%
	The US \$500-1000	15.0%
	Below US \$500	9.5%
	Prefer not to say	18.6%

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyse the collected data using SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM is appropriate for exploratory research and complex models with multiple constructs and indicators. It is also robust when handling small to medium sample sizes and does not require data to conform to a normal distribution. Considering that the sample consists of non-normally distributed data and is exploratory, applying PLS-SEM for data analysis is suitable (Hair et al., 2019).

4. Findings

4.1. Measurement model

The model's convergent validity was assessed by factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 2 demonstrates that all factor loadings exceed the threshold of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2017). All the constructs' composite reliability was above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the AVE ratings for all constructs above 0.50 indicate their acceptability (Hair et al., 2019). Hair et al. (2017) stated that Cronbach's alpha (α) values range from 0.70 to 0.90 are deemed satisfactory. In this model, all the Cronbach's alpha values vary from 0.783 to 0.86, satisfying the established criteria.

Table 2: Item Loadings, CR, AVE and Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Construct	Item	Loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Information Quality	IQ1	0.823	0.86	0.605	0.783
	IQ2	0.797			
	IQ3	0.728			
	IQ4	0.761			
Information Credibility	IC1	0.808	0.885	0.606	0.838
	IC2	0.799			
	IC3	0.796			
	IC4	0.735			
	IC5	0.752			

Information Usefulness	IU1	0.804	0.887	0.611	0.84
	IU2	0.743			
	IU3	0.845			
	IU4	0.748			
	IU5	0.765			
Information Adoption	IA1	0.812	0.877	0.641	0.813
	IA2	0.806			
	IA3	0.794			
	IA4	0.79			
Destination Visit Intention	DVI1	0.868	0.905	0.705	0.86
	DVI2	0.815			
	DVI3	0.851			
	DVI4	0.823			

Table 3 displays the outcomes of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio. All values fall outside the advised threshold of 0.9 (Hair et al., 2019). The findings affirm that discriminant validity has been demonstrated.

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of Correlations

	1.IQ	2. IC	3.IU	4.IA
1.IQ				
2.IC	0.819			
3.IU	0.892	0.71		
4.IA	0.84	0.722	0.842	
5.DVI	0.684	0.606	0.683	0.629

4.2. Structural Model

The assessment of the structural model encompasses examining path coefficients. The results are presented in **Table 4**. Information quality ($\beta = 0.585$, $t\text{-value} = 9.611$, $p < 0.01$) is positively correlated with information usefulness, while information credibility ($\beta = 0.214$, $t\text{-value} = 3.406$, $p < 0.005$) has a substantial positive relationship with information usefulness. Consequently, H1 and H2 receive supported. H3 information usefulness ($\beta = 0.7$, $t\text{-value} = 23.595$, $p < 0.001$) positively correlates with information adoption. H3 is endorsed. Information adoption ($\beta = 0.53$, $t\text{-value} = 11.406$, $p < 0.001$) substantially correlates with destination visit intention. Thus, H4 is supported.

Table 4: Path coefficient and hypothesis testing

No.	Relationship	Std beta	Std error	t-value	p-values	BCI LL	BCI UL	Supported
H1	IQ → IU	0.585	0.061	9.611	0	0.462	0.7	Yes
H2	IC → IU	0.214	0.063	3.406	0.001	0.092	0.336	Yes
H3	IU → IA	0.7	0.03	23.595	0	0.636	0.753	Yes
H4	IA → DVI	0.53	0.046	11.406	0	0.425	0.611	Yes

Table 5 summarizes the effect size (f^2), coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model. The researcher presents the f^2 effect size to evaluate the existence of partial or complete mediation (Hair et al., 2019). The findings demonstrate

that information quality has a large f^2 effect size on information usefulness, which exhibits a large f^2 effect size on information adoption. Meanwhile, information adoption exerts a more significant f^2 effect on destination visit intention. In contrast, information credibility moderately influences on information usefulness, with the f^2 value varying between 0.02 and 0.15.

The collinearity concerns were verified using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All the VIF readings were below 5.0. The findings demonstrated the absence of collinearity concerns (Hair et al., 2017). This study subsequently examined the R^2 value of the endogenous construct. R^2 is referred to as the predicting capability of sample content. The range is from 0 to 1, with elevated values signifying enhanced explanatory power (Hair et al., 2017). This study indicates that information usefulness accounts for 55.6% of the variance in information adoption. Information adoption explains 45.2% of the variance in destination visit intention. The Q^2 values for all predictors exceed 0, indicating their predictive relevance for the endogenous variables.

Table 5: Summary of effect size, coefficient of determination and predictive relevance

Assessments	IU	IA	DVI
Effect size (f^2)			
IQ	0.428		
IC	0.057		
IU		0.963	
IA			0.391
Variance inflation factor (VIF)			
IQ	1.803		
IC	1.803		
IU		1.000	
IA			1.000
Coefficient of determination (R^2)	0.556	0.491	0.281
Predictive relevance (Q^2)	0.542	0.452	0.248

5. Conclusions

This research demonstrates that, within the social media context, the information selection by foreign tourists' favorable influences their travel intentions to a place, aligning with other research by scholars (Leong et al., 2021; Silaban et al., 2023). This study recommends consolidating the promotional strategies for Chinese tourism attractions to enhance content quality and guarantee authenticity and authority. The content disseminated by government cultural and tourism departments must encompass precise information regarding tourist destinations and authoritative data support to enhance the authenticity and dependability of the material. The videos, images, and other disseminated material must be explicit and precise in language to guarantee efficient communication. Furthermore, it is essential to furnish the facts that international tourists "truly require". Focus on disseminating practical information, including essential knowledge for foreigners visiting China and the procedure for obtaining phone cards there. Additionally, it is categorized based on content and disseminates "travel guides" via social media to enable international travelers to access travel information swiftly according to their requirements. Chinese tourist locations must refine their presenting techniques and social engagement within the social media landscape to augment information appeal and leverage the beneficial effects of "electronic word of mouth."

This research has specific limitations. The sample is predominantly composed of respondents from Asian nations, with comparatively fewer participation from European and American nations. Future research should focus on investigating the travel intentions and attitudes of tourists from various countries and regions toward Chinese tourism destinations, thereby enhancing the breadth and depth of the findings.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA(UiTM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declared that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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