Constructing the Destination Image of Finnish Lapland: Chinese Tourists' Perceptions of Xiaohongshu Short Video

Weizhi Tang

Department of Marketing

Hanken School of Economics

Vaasa

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HANKEN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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Abstract: This study examines how Chinese tourists form the destination image of Finnish Lapland through UGC short videos on the Xiaohongshu social platform. This study constructed an analytical framework covering five theoretical perspectives. The affordance theory was used to explain the content features (informativeness, entertainment, vividness and credibility). Cultural translation is applied to the analysis the recontextualization of Finnish cultural elements. Users' perception of platform recommendation is used to reflect users' subjective judgment on the presentation method of content and the algorithm distribution mechanism. The cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) model helps to examine how cognitive image and affective response influence tourists' behavioral intentions. Based on expectation confirmation theory (ECT), the study evaluates the match between viewers' pre-viewing expectations and their post-viewing experiences, and further explains how this process contributes to the formation of satisfaction.

This study collected data through online questionnaires and obtained a total of 343 valid samples. SPSS is used for data cleaning, descriptive statistics and reliability testing, while AMOS is used for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation models to test the fitting of measurement models and structural models.

The research results show that cultural translation has the most significant impact on the perception of platform recommendations, followed by entertainment and vividness. Platform recommendations can influence cognitive image and affective image, among which affective image is the strongest predictor of behavioral intention. Expectation confirmation will enhance satisfaction and thereby strengthen behavioral intention. Overall, Xiaohongshu short videos have jointly shaped tourists' destination image and influenced their behavioral responses through content features, cultural adaptation and recommendation mechanism perception.

This study deepens the understanding of how short-video platforms shape destination image and offers guidance for Nordic destinations, such as Lapland, in creating short-video content and cultural adaptation for the Chinese market.

Keywords: Affordance Theory, Cultural Translation, Perceived Platform Recommendation, CAB Model, Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), Destination Image, Short videos, Xiaohongshu, Chinese tourists, UGC (User-Generated Content)

Content

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1.INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, social media's growing reach has completely reshaped how travelers find information and form impressions of destinations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In the past, travel guidebooks and official promotions told a single, consistent story about places. But with the rise of short-video platforms, this has slowly changed (Cotter, 2019; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015). In China, Xiaohongshu has become one of the main platforms where young people look for travel ideas and inspiration (Fang, Xie, Yu, Huang, & Zhang, 2023). This platform captures attention through visual impact and emotional narrative, and it takes interaction engagement, dwell time, and other such metrics as the basis for content recommendation. In turn, this amplifies certain high-attention content (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016). Since the goal of algorithm optimization prioritizes interactivity over diversity, specific narratives are continuously reinforced and gradually solidified into a homogenized representation (Li, Chen, & Guo, 2022). When such bias is amplified in the context of cross-cultural tourism, it may lead to the reproduction of stereotypes and the oversimplification of cognitive perspectives. It is worth noting that most existing studies are rooted in the relatively open logic of Western platforms, users can access a wider and more diverse range of information because of this open logic (Cotter, 2019; Gretzel et al., 2015). The recommendation mechanism of Xiaohongshu is different from that of open social platforms. It relies more on interactive signals to determine the exposure of content. The research developed for open platforms has limited explanatory power when applied to semi-closed environments (Cotter, 2019; (Kitchens, Johnson, & Gray, 2020; Figà Talamanca & Arfini, 2022).

Lapland in Finland is a good example of this phenomenon. On Xiaohongshu, symbolic elements such as the aurora, the Arctic Circle and Christmas traditions have been repeatedly adopted and recontextualized in user posts, gradually consolidating Lapland's idealized image. In recent years, on the Xiaohongshu platform, posts themed around these iconic Lapland tourist destinations have frequently received high levels of interaction, as evidenced by their page views, comments, and user interactions. This stable symbolic narrative not only shapes users' imagination of the destination but also, to a certain extent, interacts with actual travel behavior. This is also reflected in the continuously rising tourism demand in Lapland in recent years. Back in 2019, Chinese tourists accounted for 107,900 overnight stays in Lapland, representing 6% of all international overnight stays in the region and placing China fifth among Lapland's source markets (Visit Finland; Statistics Finland). While no public data specific to Lapland for 2024 is available yet, the total number of overnight

stays by Chinese tourists in Finland ranked 8th among all source countries in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of over 60% and reaching approximately 45% of the full-year 2019 level (Visit Finland, China market report). In the first quarter of 2025, the number of overnight stays by Chinese tourists continued to rise by 8.6% year-on-year, a trend that also indicates growth has hit a ceiling given the absence of increased flight capacity, this trend also signals that growth has approached a ceiling (Visit Finland, China market report). Such a mutually reinforcing relationship between the online and offline domains further demonstrates that symbolic narratives are being continuously amplified on digital platforms (Zhang, Wang, & Zhang, 2021).

As short video platforms have risen quickly in tourism communication, academic research has been noticeably slow to respond. On one hand, existing studies have primarily focused on Western platforms such as Instagram and YouTube (Marine-Roig, 2019; Stylidis, 2020), with most of their research hypotheses built on the logic of open information flow and free user choice (Kitchens et al., 2020). However, on Chinese platforms like Xiaohongshu, the characteristics of recommendation mechanism dominance and information filtering result in users having more limited access to content, thus it undermines the applicability of conclusions drawn within Western contexts.

On the other hand, even studies involving Chinese tourists have mostly centered on ecological resources or service quality, while paying little attention to how short videos shape idealized mental images through the interplay of content's features and platform logic (Wu & Ding, 2023; Liu, Jiang, & Muhammad, 2024). Additionally, research on expectation confirmation has often relied on comparisons made by tourists after their actual experiences (Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019). However, Insufficient attention has been given to the immediate psychological confirmation that arises during the viewing stage, and this specific mechanism still awaits systematic examination within the Chinese context.

Against this background, this study sets "Xiaohongshu short videos, Chinese tourists, and Lapland" as its core research object, and places special emphasis on the two distinct functions that content attributes and platform operating mechanisms each undertake. At the content level, informativeness, entertainment value, vividness, and credibility not only shape tourists' cognitive and affective impressions but also lower the hurdle of cross-cultural understanding through cultural translation (Xu & Pratt, 2018). This study regards cultural translation as the content layer, which lowers the threshold for cross-cultural understanding through narrative methods and influences cognitive and affective expression under the distribution logic of the platform. At the

platform level, the system filters and enhances specific stories based on metrics such as interaction engagement and time spent (Cotter, 2019). While existing cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) models can explain the cognitive, affective, and behavioral basic chains, their linear assumptions fail to explain the dynamism of psychological responses in the context of short videos. CAB focuses on the process of behavioral formation, but fails to explain the immediate psychological confirmation generated during the viewing stage. Therefore, the introduction of expectation confirmation theory (ECT) is used to make up for the parts that are difficult to explain in CAB To correct this limitation, the theory of expectation confirmation (Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019) and show how psychological expectations formed in the viewing stage change into behavioral intent through confirmation and satisfaction. This integrated CAB and ECT framework takes into account the dynamic construction of the destination's image.

It should be noted that platforms typically determine the recommended frequency of content based on metrics such as interaction engagement and viewing time, which affect the spread of the destination image (Covington, Adams, Sargin, 2016). In order to maintain the clarity and functionality of the model, this study focuses on content features, cognition, affect, expectation confirmation, and behavioral intention.

1.1 Research problem

In the study field, images have long been considered an important element in understanding the motivation, decision making and satisfaction of a tourist (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Stylidis, 2020). Previous studies have highlighted that official advertising campaigns have created a unified travel story, mainly through travel guides, advertisements and official websites (Hunter, 2016). The popularity of short videos has challenged this traditional view. As users gradually realize that the platform will further amplify the already popular content, the perception and attitude of travelers have become more flexible and dynamic. Therefore, traditional linear models have found it difficult to explain these changes as effectively as they did in the past (Chen, Wu, Zhang, 2023).

According to existing research, UGC increases the reliability of travel destinations (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Nevertheless, its exact action in the CAB path has not yet been systematically studied (Stylidis, 2020). Most research focuses on marketing and user engagement and ignores the evolutionary mechanisms of psychological processes (Marine Roig, 2019). Against the backdrop of mutually reinforcing stories constantly enhanced by recommendation mechanisms, the shaping and changing perception of travelers is becoming increasingly complex, which further underlines the limitations

of the explanatory power of traditional linear path models (Kitchens et al., 2020; Figa Talamanca & Arfini, 2022; Guo, Liu, He, & Li, 2025).

On Xiaohongshu, the content that users see is largely influenced by the platform's recommendation logic, which determines the presentation method of destination stories and the degree of user acceptance. Repeated exposure to specific types of content will gradually guide users' understanding of the destination, shape their emotional responses through familiar narrative styles, and ultimately influence their travel decisions. Although this study does not directly measure the algorithm itself, it examines its impact through users' exposure and understanding of the recommended content in short videos. This study regards the algorithm as part of the subjective experience of user personalization, visibility and recommendation relevance (Cotter, 2019). In the framework of this study, users' perception of the recommendation mechanism is regarded as a key mediating factor for the influence of content features on the process of attitude formation, rather than a substitute factor for CAB. In this sense, users' awareness of how the platform recommends content will affect both the content itself and its visibility. The traditional CAB model is insufficient to explain the theoretical assumptions of short videos regarding the shaping of destination images.

Previous research has focused mainly on the practical aspects of destination imagery, such as access, infrastructure and quality of service (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999； Stylidis et al., 2017). Little attention has been paid to the symbolic and culturally rooted meanings that influence how the destination is understood (Singh et al., 2023; Huete Alcocer & Lopez Ruiz, 2019). The image of Lapland has long been built on a series of visual symbols with cultural significance, such as the aurora, polar landscapes and festival culture. For Chinese tourists who are culturally distant from Lapland, these symbols are understood and interesting when the context is reconstructed by a short video (Han et al., 2022). When users find that the platform is always emphasizing a similar story, the description of the trip gets simplified and repeated. As a result, the depth of understanding of different cultures is limited. The findings highlight the importance of cultural translation in studying how the meaning of a destination is communicated and reinterpreted through platform-based communication.

In digital platform content, the narrative and cultural interpretation of official advertising videos and user-generated content is particularly different. Official content usually presents an image of the destination in a standardized representation and a unified visual style. But Xiaohongshu's travel bloggers try to recontextify these symbols through personal experiences, emotional expressions, and daily details, thus

making them closer to the framework of understanding of Chinese viewers. Table 1 shows the differences between these two types of short videos.

Table 1. Key differences between official and user-generated videos

Dimension	Official Tourism Videos	User-Generated Videos (UGC)
Narrative	Unified storyline; scripted structure	Personal accounts; more fragmented and episodic
Visual style	Aerial shots; stable and polished footage	Handheld clips; everyday scenes; natural details
Emotional tone	Neutral and controlled expression	Self-emotional expression and response; Be more open emotionally
Cultural framing	Formal explanations; emphasis on factual accuracy	Simplified interpretation; cultural analogies; symbolic reframing
Purpose	Promote destination image on a broad level	Share practical experience, tips, or warnings

Note. The table shows a brief comparison overview, based on the preliminary survey results of researchers on representative official tourism videos and travel content created by Xiaohongshu users.

Cultural translation not only serves as the foundation of cross-cultural communication but also acts as a mechanism to promote understanding and empathy (Reisinger & Turner, 2012). Through re-contexturalized expressions, short videos transform distant natural and cultural symbols into a narrative framework familiar to Chinese viewers, lowering barriers to understanding and triggering emotional reactions (Katan & Taibi, 2021). Under the algorithmic amplification mechanism, specific cultural translation patterns will be presented preferentially, thereby exerting a stronger guiding effect on the recontextualization of destination symbols. However, when cultural translation relies on a single narrative model in the long run, the image of the destination becomes simplified or fixed (Reisinger & Turner, 2012). For this reason, cultural translation, along with the nature of the content, platform distribution and psychological expectations, is an important medium in understanding the image building of the destination.

The gap between expectations and actual experience is also a problem that cannot be ignored. ECT (Expectation Confirmation Theory) points out that if travelers cannot confirm their pre-trip expectations, it will have a significant impact on their satisfaction and subsequent reviews (Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019). However, in the case of short videos, the confirmation appears more clearly as a psychological comparison process at the viewing stage. When the content of the video matches the viewer's prior imagination, the traveler will feel that their expectations have been met, which instantly brings psychological satisfaction. If such satisfaction is an overly idealized expectations, there is an increased risk of a gap between the subsequent

experience and expectations. Although most studies have focused on comparing post-travel experiences, there has been no systematic study of psychological reinforcement in the viewing stage and its impact on satisfaction and intent (Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019; Yao, Zhang & Wang, 2025).

To sum up, this study takes Finnish Lapland as a case to systematically explore how Chinese tourists gradually form perceptions and intentions toward the destination through perceptions of the platform's recommendation mechanisms on Xiaohongshu, an algorithm-driven social platform. Different from earlier studies that examined isolated factors or linear relationships, this study combines the CAB model and the expectation confirmation theory to build a framework that explains the changing patterns of users' psychological responses in short-video contexts (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Wen et al., 2021; Qiu, Li, & Choi, 2024). The framework highlights how content perception, perceived platform recommendation, and psychological confirmation interact with and reinforce one another. It not only expands the theoretical boundaries of destination image research but also provides new empirical evidence for the practice of cross-cultural digital communication (Wu & Ding, 2023; Liu & Cong, 2022; Rather, 2019; Sun, Tang, & Liu, 2021).

1.2 Research gaps and research questions

Though destination image has been widely studied in tourism research, far less is understood about how short-video communication works in cross-cultural tourism contexts. Most of the existing literature focuses on Western social media platforms (Marine-Roig, 2019; Stylidis, 2020), however, there has been relatively little research on semi-closed algorithm-driven platforms like Xiaohongshu, which wield significant influence among Chinese tourist groups and their communication logics and psychological mechanisms have not yet been fully uncovered. This gap not only reflects a missing link in theory but also restricts the understanding of how Chinese tourists develop and maintain idealized impressions of distant destinations such as Lapland. To respond to this issue, the present study examines how short-video content, platform recommendations, and tourists' psychological responses work together in shaping destination images.

While earlier research has recognized the role of user-generated content in destination image formation, few studies have systematically explored how the characteristics of short-video content interact with users' perceptions of platform recommendation mechanisms to influence tourists' cognitive and affective evaluations (Marine-Roig, 2019; Wu & Ding, 2023; Liu, Wang, & Chang, 2023). Existing studies indicate that user-generated content can enhance the perceived

authenticity and credibility of tourism information, which then affects tourists' attitudes and travel decisions (Xu & Pratt, 2018; Liu, Zhang, & Wu, 2024). However, academic research on short-video platforms has mostly focused on single dimensions that is either content or algorithms, while the interaction between content features and users' perceptions of these mechanisms has received insufficient attention (Lubos, Felbermayer, & Tautschinig, 2023). Existing studies have shown that informativeness, entertainment, vividness and credibility are the key features that affect users' cognitive and affective responses in short video content (Guo et al., 2017; Stylidis et al., 2017; Cao et al., 2021). However, in the context of cross-cultural tourism, how these features interact with cultural translation and users' perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism remains to be further explored. Theoretically, there remains a distinct scarcity of research that integrates this process with psychological models specifically the CAB model and ECT to systematically explain the dynamic relationships between short-video content, platform mechanisms, and psychological responses (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019). In consequence, the dynamic interaction framework that links content features, platform logics, and tourists' psychological mechanisms still stands in need of further development.

It follows that there remains a critical gap at the theoretical level: the nature of interactions between short-video content features, platform distribution mechanisms, and tourists' cognitive-affective-behavioral responses within cross-cultural contexts remains unclear. To solve this limitation, this study examined the short videos on the theme of Lapland watched by Chinese tourists on Xiaohongshu. In this study, we explored the interaction mechanism among content features, users' perception of the platform's recommendation logic, and psychological processes.

Based on the gaps in the above research, this research aims to develop the following research questions to deepen the understanding of the interaction between cultural communication and psychological mechanisms in short video platforms.

RQ1: How do the content features (informativeness, entertainment, vividness, and credibility) and cultural translation of Xiaohongshu short videos, mediated by users' perceptions of the platform's recommendation mechanism, shape the cognitive and affective image of Chinese travelers about Lapland?

Existing studies mainly focus on the reliability and emotional appeal of user-generated content (UGC) (Xu & Pratt, 2018), but often overlook the amplifying role of recommendation mechanisms. On Xiaohongshu, the platform will screen and promote stories that receive high responses and interactions based on interaction

signals, and thus visitors will come into contact with Laplan-related content. Therefore, the cognition and emotion of travelers are not generated by random content, but are formed based on content characteristics, cultural translation and dissemination mechanisms (Cotter, 2019). This study aims to clarify how UGC short videos, which are jointly conveyed by content features and platform mechanisms, form the initial cognition and affective impression of travelers.

RQ2: From the platform's recommendations based on user perception, how do cognitive and affective images affect travelers' behavioral intention? Are the affective pathways more direct and influential than cognitive pathways?

This question examines what the CAB model means in the context of short video consumption. Previous studies have suggested that travelers usually form a cognition first and then develop an emotional response, which in combination affects their behavioral intent (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stylidis, 2020). However, for short videos, emotionally appealing storytelling and visually rich scenes can quickly evoke strong emotions that motivate users to visit and recommend (Liu et al., 2018). At the same time, users generally feel that the platform prioritizes it by displaying emotionally interesting content more prominently. Such recognition may enhance the dominance of emotional pathways over cognitive pathways (Kitchens et al., 2020). Rather than focusing on algorithm mechanisms themselves, this study examines how users interpret and respond to emotional bias in platform recommendations. By comparing the relative impact of cognitive and emotional processes, the study verifies whether the CAB model is still valid in a short video context, and that the CAB model is still valid in a short video context. It aims to provide theoretical and practical insight to understand the behavior of travelers and destination marketing.

RQ3: When travelers' expectations for UGC short videos increase, does that increase their satisfaction, especially as a positive action intent, such as planning a trip or recommending a destination?

In the context of short videos, expectation confirmation often occurs at the psychological level rather than through direct actual experience. Rather (2019) pointed out that when travelers feel their expectations are met psychologically, they are more likely to generate higher satisfaction and loyalty. Viewers of short videos usually watch videos with pre-existing expectations of the destination (Yao et al., 2025). When the video content aligns with or slightly exceeds these expectations, viewers will experience a sense of affirmation and satisfaction during the viewing process. Over time, this repeated psychological confirmation helps enhance the audience's overall impression of the destination and may prompt them to develop a

willingness to visit it. This dynamic process indicates that there is a dynamic connection among expectations, satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and provides a new perspective for the continuous construction of destination image in the short video environment (Oliver, 1980; Rather, 2019; Yao et al., 2025). Based on this logic, this study explores the relationship between expectation confirmation and satisfaction and travelers' attitudes and intentions in the short-video environment, while also taking into account the role played by users' perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism.

1.3 Research aim

This study explores how short videos on Xiaohongshu influence the formation of Chinese tourists' impressions of Finnish Lapland and their related travel intentions. It analyzed how content features, platform recommendation mechanisms, and user psychological responses jointly shape users' understanding of destinations in the digital environment. Against this backdrop, the research focuses on how users form their cognitive and affective attitudes towards destinations when interacting with platform recommendations, and how these evaluations are associated with behavioral intentions.

This research is carried out around three aspects. Firstly, it explores the key features of short video content, including information, entertainment, vividness and credibility, and examines how these features influence users' cognition and affective perception of destinations through the platform's recommendation logic. Secondly, it explores how the expectations formed during the viewing process are psychologically confirmed, and how this confirmation enhances satisfaction and strengthens the willingness to travel. Finally, this study integrates these elements and proposes a comprehensive framework to explain how the destination image is formed through the interaction of user perception, content features and recommendation experience in the short-video environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this study helps to advance the existing discussion on destination image shaping and digital tourism communication. Most of the existing literature focuses on open social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube (Marine-Roig, 2019; Stylidis, 2020), while this study turns its attention to Xiaohongshu, a Chinese social media platform characterized by a semi-closed interest recommendation system. By incorporating users' perception of algorithmic recommendations and the cultural translation process, this study reveals the psychological mechanism by which tourist destinations acquire cross-cultural significance in a digital media environment. The study provides a more detailed

understanding of how digital content participates in the construction and dissemination of destination meaning in different cultural contexts.

From a practical perspective, these findings provide important insights for tourism marketing practitioners in the Nordic region, especially in terms of how to design short video content to resonate with Chinese audiences. The research results also reveal how content features interact with users' interpretations of the recommendation mechanism on semi-closed system platforms. These insights can help formulate more effective cross-cultural content dissemination strategies and promote discussions on optimizing content distribution on platforms.

In addition, it also deepened people's understanding of short videos as a medium for cross-cultural communication. By linking destination brand building with platform design and user experience, this study provides insights for the broader development of destination image management and digital platforms in tourism-related fields.

1.4 Delimitation

To ensure the accuracy of the analysis, this study deliberately limited the scope of the research. By focusing on a specific set of variables, the influence of irrelevant factors is minimized, thus enabling the analysis to always be closely related to the core research objective. At the same time, this choice limits how far the findings can be applied, because conditions outside the defined scope may not follow the same patterns.

In terms of the research subjects, the study focused on Chinese tourists, especially the young tourists within this group. It is directly related to the user base of Xiaohongshu, which is the only platform used for data collection in this study. As a lifestyle sharing community, the active users of Xiaohongshu are mainly young people. They are not only the main creators and disseminators of content on the platform, but also the market segment with the greatest growth potential in the current cross-border tourism market. Focus on the research of this group and ensure that the research conforms to the actual composition of the platform's users and the actual demands of the market.

Secondly, in terms of the research platform, this study is limited to Xiaohongshu. Many social media platforms, including Chinese platforms such as Douyin and Weibo, as well as international platforms like Instagram and YouTube, are all contributing to the promotion of contemporary tourism. Xiaohongshu, with its unique content distribution method, relatively close and trust-oriented community atmosphere, and highly user interest-oriented recommendation system, has formed a distinctive

research background. These features provide a relatively stable environment for studying how short video content participates in the shaping of destination images, and also reduce the complexity of analysis caused by the differences in platform logic and interactive dynamics. In this study, "short videos" specifically refer to user-generated content on Xiaohongshu. Official promotional videos produced by tourism agencies and paid commercial advertisements are not within the scope of analysis.

Lapland is closely linked to a series of highly recognizable natural and cultural elements, including the polar aurora, the geographically significant Arctic Circle, and Christmas-related traditions. These elements often appear in tourism narratives, making Lapland an ideal place to study how cross-cultural meanings arise and are interpreted in a tourism environment. In addition, Lapland has become one of the most popular Nordic tourist destinations for Chinese tourists, which makes it a relevant and empirically significant case in this study. Through the study of this specific location, research can get into details such as the translation of cultural concepts in the tourism context, the formation mechanism of travelers' psychological expectations, and the ways they interact and provide feedback with the platform content. This level of detail provides empirical depth for the investigation of the central research question of this study.

Finally, from a theoretical point of view, this study is based mainly on the CAB model and the ECT theory, while integrating the recommendation mechanisms of the platform. The CAB model shows how attitudes take shape, and ECT explains how psychological expectations link with satisfaction. Users tend to believe that the platform’s recommendation system gives more visibility to content with high interaction, and this idea leads them to see such content as gaining wider and longer exposure. On Xiaohongshu, users generally perceive that the visibility of content on the platform depends on its recommendation system. Most users come across relevant short videos through these recommendations rather than by actively searching for them. For these reasons, the study identifies platform recommendation and cultural translation as key mediating links through which UGC influences tourists’ cognition and affect. Collectively, these three components supply a comprehensive analytical framework for investigating the dynamic "content-platform - psychology " relationships within the short video context.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study aims to outline how Chinese tourists gradually construct the destination image of Finnish Lapland through user-generated short-video content on Xiaohongshu. Existing research indicates that the influence of short videos stems from the interaction among multiple mechanisms (Guo et al., 2025). Short videos are not only a form of content rooted in user experience, but also rely on the algorithmic distribution of the platform. At the same time, it involves the recontextualization of cross-cultural meanings and finally influences behavioral intentions at the psychological level through the combined effects of cognition, emotion and satisfaction.

This chapter studies with five aspects: short video content features, cultural translation, users' perceived platform recommendation mechanism, CAB model and Confirmation Expectations Theory, explaining how users can form a cognitive and affective response to Lapland in Xiaohongshu communication environment, and construct a destination image. By integrating the above perspectives, this chapter proposes a framework of systematic analysis to provide theoretical support for subsequent research hypotheses.

2.1 UGC short-video communication in tourism

This section aims to outline the basic research context of short videos in tourism communication. Most of the existing literature discusses from the perspectives of media characteristics, user practices and platform environments how short videos change the presentation mode of tourism information and the role they play in the process of destination image construction (Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Wang, Wang & Lai, 2023; Guo et al., 2025; Wu & Ding, 2023).

2.1.1 Theoretical and research foundations of UGC communication in tourism

The earliest UGC in tourism communication was mainly composed of text and photos. With the popularity of smart phones and mobile shooting tools, more and more tourists have begun to record their journeys with short videos. Researchers usually describe them this way: they are made by ordinary users, shared publicly on social media platforms, and usually last from seconds to minutes (Liao, 2024; Yuan & Wang, 2024). Compared with text and images, short videos offer viewers a more direct perception of the scene by presenting pictures and sounds simultaneously (Liao, 2024; Yuan & Wang, 2024). Many short videos are shot on the spot, thus retaining

the real lighting, background noise and immediate reactions, all of which make the videos seem closer to the actual experience.

The emergence of short videos has also changed the way information is disseminated. In the early days, obtaining tourism information often required active search, while short videos relied more on platform recommendations. Even if users have no plans to travel, they may repeatedly come across content about certain destinations while watching videos. Research indicates that this passive contact can affect users' first impression of a destination, such as whether it is easy to reach, whether the cost is reasonable, and whether it is suitable for family travel, etc. (Wu & Ding, 2023). Meanwhile, short videos can present specific details such as route planning, local prices, queue lengths, and weather experiences, and thus are often regarded as more practical reference sources than official materials.

As the number of videos continues to grow, the way users access destination information has also changed. The past communication pattern dominated by official promotion has given way to more decentralized and personalized video sharing. Some locations or gameplay elements have become particularly prominent due to a large number of users taking photos. For instance, the repeated appearance of the shooting Angle, weather effects or travel route of the same location in a large number of videos can form a relatively stable impression. This indicates that UGC not only records personal experiences, but also influences as a whole how the public views a certain destination (Guo et al., 2025).

2.1.2 Application of UGC communication theories in tourism research

Research consistently shows that short videos have a significant influence on travel interest and decision-making. The rhythm of the video, the visuals and the emotional expression of the photographer can often attract the audience in a short time and stimulate their interest in the destination (Fang et al., 2023). Informational videos reduce uncertainty and help users assess costs, traffic or potential risks. Emotion-oriented videos enhance the sense of direction through atmosphere, music or on-site responses (Wu et al., 2023).

The recommendation mechanism further expands this influence. Many users have been exposed to a large amount of travel content due to algorithmic recommendations before planning their trips. Therefore, interest is often initially formed before searching for information (Xu et al., 2022). The genuine feeling of short videos has also been proven to affect trust judgments. The images taken by ordinary users can present the details of the scene and are thus often understood as a more valuable experiential perspective (Filieri, 2016).

The multi-sensory presentation method of short videos has also strengthened the willingness to travel. The visuals, ambient sounds and character interactions make it easier for the audience to imagine the experience of visiting in person, thereby enhancing the motivation for action (Qiu et al., 2024). These factors work together to enable users to form a preliminary impression based on a large amount of recurring content before systematically understanding the destination (Guo et al., 2025). Therefore, short videos have evolved from serving as supplementary information to becoming an important source influencing the image of destinations and tourism behaviors.

2.2 UGC short-video features through the affordance lens

This section aims to explore the features of short videos and define them through the analytical lens of affordance theory. Relevant researches explain how short-video content features are activated and give meaning through user perceptions and practices. It also reveals the specific roles of informativeness, entertainment value, vividness and credibility in tourism communication through empirical studies, and these results lay the foundation for understanding how short videos influence destination images. (Guo et al., 2025; Qiu et al., 2024; Wu & Ding, 2023; Filieri, 2016)

2.2.1 Theoretical and research foundations of affordance theory

The theory of affordances was first proposed by Gibson (1979), it explains the action possibilities that the environment offers to individuals. Researchers in communication and information systems introduced this perspective into the analysis of digital media, viewing media not as static, but as meaningful only through user perception and practice (Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Burgess, Marwick, & Poell, 2018). In other words, only when users identify, use, and integrate certain functions in real contexts do they translate into actual experiences (Guo, Barnes, & Jia, 2017).

In the context of social media, scholars have summarized a series of typical affordance dimensions, such as visibility, persistence, editability, and relatedness (Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Burgess et al., 2018). These dimensions reveal that the same media form may exhibit differentiated functions in different scenarios. With the deepening of research, this framework has gradually been applied to the field of short videos. Existing achievements indicate that the expression methods of short videos such as the way information is presented, entertaining processing, multimodal sensory elements, and the credibility of sources, all affect the cognitive processing and affective responses of audiences (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Filieri, 2016; Liu et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2024).

Based on this, short videos can be regarded as a dynamic form of media. They are not static images passively presented, but rather process products that are constantly perceived, understood and utilized by users through the specific functional dimensions of the platform (Guo et al., 2017). Accordingly, this study divides the features of short videos into four core features: informativeness, entertainment, vividness, and credibility. This classification not only echoes the summaries of content features in social media research but also provides theoretical support for subsequent discussions on how short videos influence destination images through cognitive and affective pathways.

2.2.2 Application of affordance theory in UGC short-video research

While existing studies have identified the roles of various features, most still concentrate on a single feature. Systematic empirical research into the interactions of these four features within the cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) pathway remains deficient (Guo et al., 2025; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Specifically, in the context of cross-cultural tourism, how Chinese tourists perceive Nordic natural destinations and construct imaginations of them through these features calls for in-depth exploration. This study brings informativeness, entertainment, vividness, and credibility into one analytical framework to address this gap.

Informativeness is the foundation for short videos to help viewers understand their destinations. Specific information such as route, seasonal suggestions, transportation methods and cost reminders can reduce the sense of strangeness and uncertainty of potential tourists. Existing studies have shown that audiences rely on clear and understandable information when forming an overall understanding of the destination (Liu et al., 2024; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In cross-cultural contexts, due to differences in background and experience, cognitive distance increases. Specific and contextualized information can help the audience understand unfamiliar destinations and reduce comprehension barriers.

Entertainment is an important feature of short video content.Many travel-related videos use a relaxed tone, playful editing style, and engaging visuals to create a more enjoyable viewing experience. This presentation method can enhance the interaction between the audience and the content, and help increase the audience's favorability towards the destination (Fang et al., 2023; Cao et al., 2021).

The vividness of short videos is usually conveyed through the combination of multiple sensory elements. The attractive visual images, combined with background music and environmental sound effects, jointly shape the viewing experience of the audience. This multimodal presentation method has been proven to enhance the

audience's sense of presence and emotional engagement, enabling them to form a more specific and direct impression of the destination (Steuer, 1992; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Wu et al., 2023). It is particularly evident in digital communication centered on natural landscapes.

In terms of credibility, it remains a basic requirement for the audience to form an attitude towards content or the relevant destination. Compared with official announcements, sharing personal and genuine content is more likely to win the trust of the audience. Empirical studies have confirmed that when users consider such videos to be genuine and reliable, their emotional responses are more likely to be transformed into travel intentions or recommendation behaviors (Filieri, 2016; Li & Sun, 2024).

2.3 Cultural translation and adaptation in UGC short videos

This section focuses on the intercultural communication characteristics of short videos, focusing on the role of cultural translation and cultural adaptation in the construction of the destination image. Existing studies show that cultural distance, meaning reconstruction, and emotional resonance are key parts of intercultural understanding, and they explain how these processes help tourists from different backgrounds make better sense of a destination's image through empirical findings (Bhabha, 1994; Reisinger & Turner, 2012).

2.3.1 Theoretical and research foundations of cultural translation

In cross-cultural communication research, cultural differences are widely believed to affect tourists' interpretation of destinations and the construction of destination images. Cultural distance is often used to measure the differences in values, symbols and interaction patterns among various cultures, and it can affect people's interpretation and evaluation of information about unfamiliar regions (Wang, 2023). When people perceive a large cultural distance, they may feel uncertain or have cognitive difficulties, and find it hard to understand the information related to the destination. On the contrary, the smaller the perceived cultural distance, the more likely people are to have a sense of familiarity and closeness (Liu et al., 2018).

To explain the possible misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, previous studies have introduced the concepts of cultural translation and cultural adaptation (Katan & Taibi, 2021; Kim, 2017). From this perspective, cross-cultural communication is not only about transmitting the original meaning, but rather a process of reinterpreting information in a new cultural context. In practice, users use their own cultural experience when interpreting content and giving it meaning, and

this interpretation process is affected by the relevance of new information to its existing knowledge. When narrative forms, visual symbols and emotional cues resonate with culturally familiar reference frames, the expected meaning of the content is easier to understand and accept (Reisinger & Turner, 2012). And they can also build both cognitive and affective connections, which helps reduce barriers in intercultural understanding (Katan & Taibi, 2021).

The perspective of cultural resonance has advanced this line of discussion in recent years. The researchers note that effective intercultural communication does not only depend on the public's understanding of the information itself, but also determine whether the content can resonate at both the emotional and value levels. When information takes advantage of the audience's emotional logic and aligns with their previous experiences, the communication effect tends to be deeper. (Kim, 2017)

In conclusion, cultural distance, cultural translation and adaptation, as well as cultural resonance jointly reveal the complexity of destination image construction. For short-video tourism content, the destination image is gradually formed in the process of mediating cultural differences, reconstructing meanings and stimulating emotions (Wang, 2023).

2.3.2 Application of cultural translation in tourism UGC research

Existing studies have shown that cultural translation and adaptation are important for the intercultural communication of short travel videos (Katan and Taibi, 2021). Using TikTok as an example, recent research further shows that short travel-related videos can effectively reshape the way local culture is communicated, and they achieve this through stories of daily life, specific visual images and symbolic elements (Du & Cheong, 2025; Tham, Chen, & Durbidge, 2023; Qiu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024). This helps to better match the information with the audience's experience, thereby promoting the generation of travel inspiration (Fang et al., 2023).

At the institutional level, Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) reveal that when local governments and tourism organizations use digital platforms, they often place local culture in a more international context by adjusting their language styles and visual presentations. The proactivity of such cultural adaptation makes information with inherent local characteristics more accessible and acceptable to audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.

From the perspective of users, previous empirical research highlights the role of cultural resonance in shaping responses to travel-related content. Wu et al. (2023) find that short travel videos characterized by emotional expression and perceived

authenticity can narrow perceived cultural distance, while also strengthening viewers' sense of identification and their intention to visit. As Liu et al. (2023) survey shows that when the style of UGC videos creates affective resonance, audiences not only develop stronger travel intention, but are also more willing to recommend the destination to others.

2.4 Perceived algorithmic mediation on Xiaohongshu

This section explores the role of the recommendation system from the perspective of users' daily interactions with the Xiaohongshu platform. The way users are exposed to tourism-related content is not neutral or random, but is influenced by the algorithmic selection process, which determines which information will be displayed and which narratives will stand out (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016). Meanwhile, users' behaviors such as liking, commenting and collecting constitute a continuous feedback process, through which they experience and understand the recommendation logic. In this sense, a recommendation system is not only a distribution mechanism but also a perception framework that constructs the way users understand the content of the platform (Norman, 2013; Cotter, 2019).

This study focuses on analyzing users' subjective understanding of how platforms select and prioritize content. This user-centered perspective captures the psychological aspect at which users perceive the impact of algorithms in their daily use. Therefore, this study adopts user-perceived recommendation as an operational concept, reflecting how users' own perception of the platform's recommendation logic affects the content they come into contact with.

2.4.1 Theoretical and research foundations of perceived algorithmic mediation on digital platforms

On social media platforms, information dissemination is increasingly influenced by recommendation systems. These systems rely on behavioral data generated from user interactions to organize, prioritize, and repeatedly display specific types of content (Beer, 2016; Kitsios et al., 2022). Empirical research shows that this algorithm selection process not only affects the amount of information users are exposed to, but also influences the diversity of viewpoints they can obtain. For instance, Bakshy et al. (2015) took Facebook as an example to demonstrate that algorithmic screening would affect the way users access information and their subsequent interpretation of events and problems. Similarly, Flaxman et al. (2016) argued that although personalization enhances relevance, it may also narrow the range of content that users might come into contact with.

In tourism communication, selective content display means that the image of a destination is often constructed based on partial rather than comprehensive information. During this process, tourists' understanding of the destination is not only influenced by the content they come into contact with, but also by their own assumptions about how the platform's recommendation logic organizes and presents this content. Studies show that destination image is more than a reflection of objective features. It is also shaped by communication channels and platform structures (Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier, 2000; Norman, 2013). Recent research indicates that users are increasingly aware that platform recommendation systems give priority to certain types of user-generated content. Therefore, some destination images have become more visible and easier to remember, while others that have received less attention have gradually been forgotten by the public (Guerreiro et al., 2024). In other words, platform recommendations are not merely passive tools for information distribution but directly participate in and drive the construction of destination images at the level of user perception.

Recommendation systems are also reinforced through user interactions. According to Guo et al. (2025), on tourism short-video platforms, actions such as liking, saving, commenting, sharing, and the time spent watching a clip all serve as signals that help the system decide what to show more often. Many users are aware of this process and see these signals as part of how exposure is created. In this sense, users take part in shaping what appears on their screens instead of simply accepting whatever the platform suggests. Through their interactions, they instead play a part in the cycle that both filters and amplifies content (Guo et al., 2025). When a certain content of video gains more recommendations due to frequent interactions, users' impressions of specific scenic spots or experiences are also deepened over time. The continuous exchange between what the platform recommends and how users respond turns the building of destination images into a changing and interactive process influenced by both sides (Guerreiro et al., 2024). In this study, platform recommendation perception refers to the understanding formed by users in their daily use, that is, they believe that the platform will determine which content ranks higher and which content is more likely to be seen based on certain rules. Users will also think that the reason why some posts keep reappearing is that the platform has sorted the push notifications behind the scenes. This concept emphasizes users' subjective understanding of the platform's recommendation methods rather than their technical judgment of the actual operating mechanism of the algorithm. (Kitsios et al. 2022).

2.4.2 Application of perceived algorithmic mediation in social-media and tourism research

Existing studies have gradually begun to incorporate recommendation mechanisms into tourism communication frameworks. In the research on news consumption, Kitchens et al. (2020) found that recommendation systems affect both the range of information that users encounter and the way they gradually form an understanding of broader narratives. This finding also appears in tourism communication, because tourists who turn to digital platforms for inspiration do not see an even or complete picture of destinations. They often feel that what appears on their screens has already been filtered and shaped by the platform. In the short-video setting, an experimental study by Wu et al. (2023) shows that recommendation systems tend to prefer certain ways of presenting information, and these repeated patterns slowly form the main impressions tourists hold of a place. This means that recommendation systems do more than send content to users. At the user perception level, certain storylines often stand out, thereby enhancing the symbolic meaning of the destination's image.

In the context of semi-closed social platforms, Xiaohongshu follows its unique recommendation logic. When ranking content, the platform takes into account signals such as likes, comments and collections. Posts with higher interaction often receive higher exposure. Therefore, more interactive tourism videos are more likely to repeatedly appear in the recommendation information flow, thereby influencing users' imagination of the destinations displayed in the videos. User behavior can affect the recommendation results, and an increase in exposure will prompt users to have more interactions (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016). In this context, the experience of users developing or losing interest in a certain destination is closely related to their perception of the platform's recommendation logic. When a user likes or collects a travel video, it may reflect that they have developed an interest in that destination. When they search for more information or read comments, they are usually confirming whether the content meets their expectations. If the feelings do not match expectations, interest may decline. It can be seen from this that the functions of Xiaohongshu are far more than just searching for travel information. By linking the recommendation process with user interaction, the platform also shapes the way destination meaning is formed and understood over time (Cotter, 2019; Kitsios et al., 2022; Wan et al., 2025).

2.5 CAB model of destination image formation in UGC short videos

This section introduces the cognitive-affective-behavioral (CAB) model. This model holds that when tourists are exposed to information, they first conduct cognitive

evaluations and then generate affective responses, which ultimately influence their behavioral intentions. From this perspective, the CAB model helps explain how short videos influence tourists' travel intentions through a gradual psychological process, and also provides a theoretical basis for subsequent empirical analysis.

2.5.1 Theoretical and research foundations of the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral (CAB) model

The formation of the destination image is usually regarded as a gradual psychological process. According to the CAB model, when tourists are exposed to destination information, they will first conduct cognitive evaluations of elements such as scenery, facilities and cultural features. These evaluations will subsequently generate emotional responses, such as pleasure, anticipation or surprise. Cognitive and emotional responses jointly influence behavioral tendencies, such as whether one intends to travel to the destination or recommend it to others (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007). However, recent studies have shown that this process is not strictly linear. Cognitive evaluation, emotional response and behavioral intention do not follow a fixed sequence but interact in a more flexible and overlapping manner (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Nguyen, 2025).

In this context, user-generated content on social media is particularly prominent for this type of interaction. Compared with traditional promotion channels, user-generated content brings more diverse cognitive information because affective elements have been expanded. Travel notes and short videos not only present a destination's facilities and environment but also convey its atmosphere, aesthetics, and experiential feelings. Studies show that visual and affective content can raise tourists' emotional resonance, and this makes emotional reactions play a more direct role in shaping behavioral intentions (Marine-Roig, 2019; Alamäki et al., 2023). Especially in the context of short videos, fragmented and fast-paced expression methods often cause affective responses to precede cognitive judgments or to a large extent reshape the original cognitive structure (Fang et al., 2023; Bai et al., 2023). Therefore, the CAB model should be better understood as a cyclically interactive framework in the contemporary context, which can explain how tourists gradually form attitudes and behavioral intentions after watching short videos.

2.5.2 Application of the CAB model in destination image and UGC short-video research

Extensive research has verified the applicability of the CAB model in studies on tourists' attitudes and behaviors. The empirical work by Stylidis Shani and Belhassen

(2017) shows that cognitive evaluations can significantly predict affective responses, while the affective image largely determines tourists' intentions to recommend the destination and revisit it. Similar results are also found in the study by San Martín and Rodríguez del Bosque (2008), who further confirmed the hierarchical relationship between cognition and affect through a structural model.

In research on digital platforms, the CAB model has been granted a new interpretive scope. Alamäki, Pesonen and Dirin (2022) conducted research that uncovered emotion-oriented content in travel short videos is more effective than information-oriented content when it comes to stimulating potential tourists' travel intentions. This finding indicates that affect serves as a key mediating factor within this psychological pathway. The research by Fang et al. (2023) indicates that elements such as narrative, visual presentation, and video rhythm play a significant role in stimulating travel interest in short videos, and this interest can be transformed into travel motivation. Bai et al. (2023) focused on user-generated travel videos and found that perceived authenticity and emotional expression help enhance tourists' cognition of destinations, and this cognition is associated with stronger behavioral intentions.

2.6 Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) in UGC engagement

This section uses the Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) to explore how visitor satisfaction varies with the comparison between initial expectations and actual experiences. Existing research shows that when short videos meet or exceed the expectations of viewers, they often enhance their positive attitude towards the destination (Oliver, 1980; Bhattacherjee, 2001). This positive attitude is also related to a stronger willingness to travel and a greater willingness to share views or make recommendations with others. Combining ECT with CAB model can effectively understand how short videos influence viewers at the cognitive and affective levels, and how these responses are associated with subsequent behavioral intentions.

2.6.1 Theoretical and research foundations of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT)

The expectancy confirmation theory was initially proposed by Oliver (1980), aiming to explain how people gain satisfaction by comparing their expectations with their actual experiences. When the experience meets or exceeds expectations, individuals are more likely to feel affirmed and satisfied, thereby generating more positive evaluations and subsequent behavioral intentions. On the contrary, if the experience fails to meet expectations, it often leads to dissatisfaction.

More recently, this theoretical perspective has been applied to digital and social

media environments beyond the traditional consumption environment. Studies show that users usually form psychological expectations when watching short videos or reading online reviews, and the confirmation of these expectations is associated with higher satisfaction and a stronger willingness to continue using the platform or service (Jia et al., 2023). Expectation Confirmation Theory not only explains the process of satisfaction formation but also provides a solid framework for understanding user behavior paths on digital platforms.

In tourism research, tourists usually form expectations of their destinations through pictures and comments on social media before traveling. Research shows that the authenticity and information quality of UGC will directly affect these expectations. When the actual experience is consistent with or better than expected, tourists are more likely to generate satisfaction and further promote the willingness to revisit and word-of-mouth recommendation (Chen et al., 2023; Wang, Liu, & Zhang, 2021). Therefore, it is expected that the confirmation theory has strong explanatory power in different types of tourism scenarios.

2.6.2 Application of ECT in behavioral intention research

Research has confirmed that the expectation-confirmation theory is applicable to the tourism industry and social media. In this sense, short video marketing is an effective means of communication. It obviously enhanced tourists' satisfaction and willingness to visit. Fang et al. (2023) discovered another key point that the immersive expression of short videos can inspire a journey. Once this kind of inspiration is confirmed based on basic logics such as satisfaction expectations, it accelerates the transformation of tourists' cognitive recognition of the destination into specific behavioral intentions. Based on these early observations, Bai et al. (2023) conducted further analysis. Research shows that user-generated travel short videos support audience recognition by presenting content that highlights authenticity and emotional resonance. The findings also show that such videos strengthen two behavioral tendencies, which are the intention to recommend the destination to others and the intention to visit it again in the future (Wang et al., 2021).

Bhattacherjee (2001) showed that expectation confirmation plays an important role in users' continued use of information systems. Later work applied this idea to social media and explained how users remain active on platforms when their expectations are met with positive experiences (Thong et al., 2006). Recently, Jia et al. (2023) found that when the content of short videos exceeds users' expectations, the resulting high satisfaction will increase users' willingness to continue using the platform, as well as their active sharing and interaction behaviors. Obviously, ECT provides a

powerful explanatory framework for understanding the psychological changes of tourists in the digital media environment.

Further, the logic of ECT can complement the CAB model in tourism research. Stylidis et al. (2017) demonstrated the hierarchical relationship between cognitive evaluations and affective responses, while ECT emphasizes that before cognition and affect take shape, tourists often form expectations through short videos. When these expectations are confirmed, satisfaction becomes a key driver of behavioral intentions. In other words, the CAB model reveals the cognitive-affective-behavior chain, and ECT supplements the expectation-confirmation-satisfaction cycle, and they provide a more comprehensive explanation of how short videos function in the construction of tourism destination images.

2.7 Integrating strands: conceptual research model

The preceding literature review makes clear that UGC short videos cannot be explained by a single theory. It encompasses multiple mechanisms, including contents' features, users' perceived recommendation of mediation, and the construction of cross-cultural meanings. When the influencing factors are examined independently, the interactions among variables involved in destination image formation may be overlooked (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Fang et al., 2023). In response to this limitation, this study develops an integrated conceptual framework.

At the first level, short-video content features affect the initial impressions formed by audiences toward a destination. The informativeness and credibility of the information, the vividness of the visuals, and the entertainment value of the narrative jointly shape cognitive and affective responses (Guo et al.,2017; Bai et al., 2023). The presentation method recommended by the platform will change users' perception of which content is worth paying attention to. Content that attracts strong interaction and emotional engagement tends to receive greater visibility on the platform, reinforcing some stories and making others less important (Wan et al., 2025). Therefore, the formation of the destination image is not only the result of the interaction between users and content, but also the intermediary of users' perception of the platform's recommendation logic. Cross-cultural factors add additional complexity to this dynamic. For Chinese tourists, the natural environment and cultural symbols of Nordic countries were initially quite unfamiliar. Cultural translation not only makes these symbols understandable but also readjusts their meaning structure in the minds of the audience. When audiences come into contact with these reinterpreted contents, they will re-understand the destination within their own cultural framework, thereby forming an image of Lapland with Chinese

contextual characteristics (Katan & Taibi, 2021; Wang, 2023). The public not only gained a cognitive understanding of the destination but also established an emotional connection with it, which in turn promoted the image of Lapland in cross-cultural psychology.

Psychologically, CAB provides a clear logical framework, cognitive judgments give rise to affective responses, and these affective responses, in turn, influence behavioral intentions. (Stylidis et al., 2017). In the short-video environment, the content is presented in a highly condensed manner. Its visual and narrative threads may trigger users' emotional experiences at an early stage, and this emotion will affect how users understand and evaluate the subsequent content (Fang et al., 2023). This study still bases its approach on the logical order of the traditional CAB framework and does not make any additional hypothesis about the sequential relationship between affect and cognition. The ECT builds on this idea by describing how short videos act as a form of simulated experience for potential travelers. When the presented content meets or exceeds what audiences anticipate, it generates satisfaction that, in turn, strengthens both the intention to visit and the willingness to stay engaged with the platform (Jia et al., 2023, Yao et al., 2025).

To sum up, the features of short-video content, users' perceptions of recommendation mechanisms, the cross-cultural construction of meaning, the cognitive–affective–behavioral chain of the CAB model, and the feedback cycle described in the ECT operate as an interdependent system that evolves through continuous interaction. Building on this, the conceptual model proposed in this study seeks to unpack how Chinese tourists gradually form a destination image of Lapland by viewing and interacting with content in the Xiaohongshu context, and develop a continuous cycle between cognition, affect, and behavior.

2.8 Summary and hypotheses

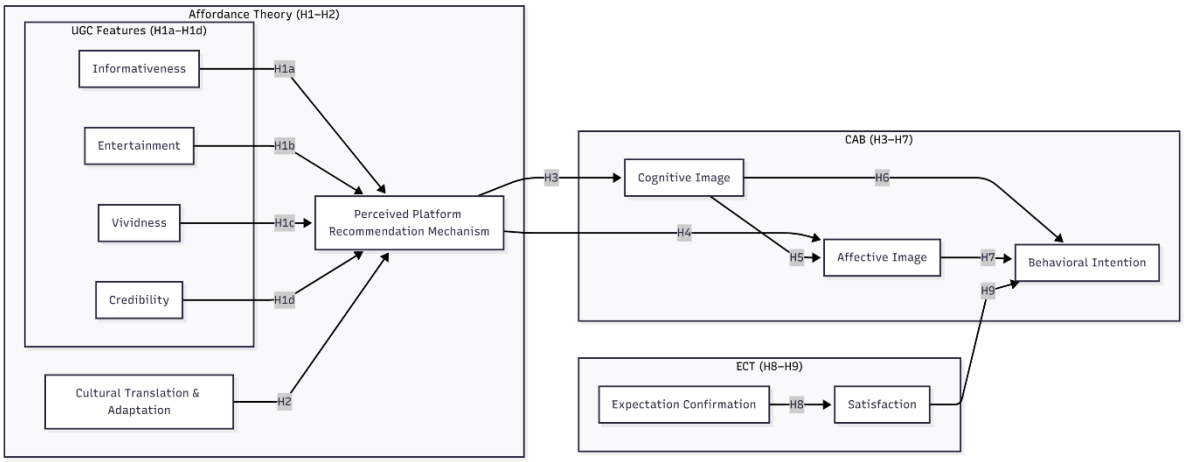
Building on the integrated framework established earlier, this study connects content features, cultural translation, perceived platform recommendation mechanism, and users' psychological responses to explain how these factors jointly shape users' cognitive, affective, and behavioral intentions. By combining the CAB model (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) with the Expectation–Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), this framework explains how cognition, affect, and satisfaction work together to shape behavioral intentions in cross-cultural short-video communication.

The framework proposed in this study explains how several interrelated components shape psychological responses. The quality and credibility of information in short-video content increase the chances of that content being emphasized within the

platform's recommendation flow (Zhuang et al., 2023; Bai et al., 2023). Cultural translation promotes comprehension across cultural contexts by bridging interpretive differences (Katan & Taibi, 2021). At the same time, users' perceptions of recommendation mechanisms influence the way cognitive and affective impressions of destinations take form (Wan et al., 2025; Guo et al., 2025). Cognitive and affective evaluations work together in shaping behavioral intention (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Stylidis et al., 2017). When the experience confirms or exceeds previous expectations, the satisfaction arises and strengthens this connection through the continuous communication between the evaluation and the experience (Oliver, 1980; Bhattacherjee, 2001; Thong et al., 2006; Chen & Chen, 2010; Jia et al., 2023).

To address the three research questions (RQ1–RQ3), this study constructs a conceptual framework that brings together the CAB model and ECT. Under this framework, nine hypotheses were proposed. The hypotheses are organized into three groups. H1 to H4 relate to RQ1 and look at how short-video features, cultural translation, and users' perceptions of recommendation mechanisms are connected. H5 to H7 are related to RQ2, mainly exploring the role of cognitive processing and affective experience in shaping behavioral intentions. H8 and H9 are related to RQ3, explore how expectation confirmation and satisfaction promote the reinforcement of this process (Stylidis, 2020).

Figure 1. Integrated Conceptual Model of Affordance Theory, CAB, and ECT



Note. The relationships among UGC features, cultural translation, and perceived platform recommendation are based on Affordance Theory (Gibson, 1979; Treem & Leonardi, 2013). The links among cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions follow the CAB Model (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), while the paths from expectation confirmation to satisfaction and behavioral intention are from Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) (Oliver, 1980).

Informativeness describes the extent to which short videos provide useful and practical information for users. When content is perceived as informative, users are

more likely to find it helpful and to place greater trust in it (Zhuang et al., 2023). In this context, users may also come to believe that videos containing richer information are more likely to be selected and recommended by the platform. Building on this reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1a: The informativeness of UGC short videos has a positive effect on users' perceived platform recommendations.

Entertainment value is the key to driving user retention and interaction. Guo et al. (2025) pointed out in their research on tourism short videos that the entertainment value and immersion of short video content enhance users' viewing experience and participation willingness. This dual enhancing effect further influences the formation of users' behavioral intentions. It can be seen from this that entertainment value not only enhances the appeal of content but also makes it easier for the content to receive interactive feedback from users. Since recommendation algorithms usually tend to favor content with frequent interaction, highly entertaining videos are more likely to be magnified by the platform, which helps users regard such videos as platform recommendations. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1b: The entertainment value of UGC short videos has a positive effect on users' perceived platform recommendations.

Vividness is the visual and sensory representation of content. Research shows that visual appeal and multimodal features typically enhance people's attention and strengthen the recognition and content amplification capabilities of recommendation mechanisms (Metzler & Garcia, 2023). Therefore, it can be considered that videos with strong vividness are more likely to enable users to perceive the recommended content. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1c: The vividness of UGC short videos has a positive effect on users' perceived platform recommendations.

Credibility reflects users' assessment of content authenticity and source reliability. In the domain of UGC research, content credibility has been empirically verified to enhance users' trust in the content and their willingness to accept it (Zhuang et al., 2023). Thus, videos with high credibility are more likely to make users see them as worthy of platform recommendations. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1d: The credibility of UGC short videos has a positive effect on users' perceived platform recommendations.

In cross-cultural communication, cultural translation not only involves language conversion but also emphasizes recontextualization at the narrative, symbolic, and value levels to reduce comprehension barriers and boost information acceptability (Katan & Taibi, 2021). For travel content dissemination, such translations make short videos more likely to resonate with target audiences and drive their interaction. Since recommendation mechanisms favor high-interaction, high-acceptability content, videos processed via cultural translation stand for a better chance of being recommended, which in turn strengthens users' perception of the recommendation mechanism. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Cultural translation and adaptation have a positive effect on users' perceived platform recommendations.

Recommendation mechanisms largely determine which destination information users can access and focus on. The study finds that short-video platforms' recommendation logic focuses first on boosting content with strong interactivity and appeal and it shapes how users understand and perceive destinations on a cognitive level in turn (Guo et al., 2025). Thus, recommendation mechanisms not only serve the function of information distribution but also subtly influence users' cognitive construction. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Users' perceptions of platform recommendations have a positive effect on tourists' cognitive image.

When users feel that the platform continuously pushes reliable and useful content, they are more likely to form a clear and systematic impression of the destination, and this experience will affect the way they process and obtain destination information (Kitchens et al., 2020). After the cognitive image is strengthened, users are more likely to have a positive emotional evaluation of the destination. Therefore, users' positive perception of platform recommendations not only shapes their cognitive judgment but also further enhances their affective image. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Users' perceptions of platform recommendations have a positive effect on tourists' affective image.

In the study of destination image, cognition is usually regarded as the foundation of affect. Tourists will first form judgments based on aspects such as the landscape, environment, cultural atmosphere or services of the destination, and these judgments will affect their subsequent emotional experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Existing studies have also shown that cognition and affect are two interrelated levels

and jointly act on the overall destination image (Stylidis et al., 2017). Therefore, when tourists form a more positive and clear perception of their destination, their affective image is also more likely to improve accordingly. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H5: Tourists' cognitive image has a positive effect on their affective image.

Cognition refers to how tourists understand and evaluate the basic features of a destination. These cognitive evaluations are closely related to behavioral intentions. When tourists hold positive cognitive impressions, they tend to show a stronger willingness to visit the destination and to recommend it to others (Gartner, 1993; Stylidis et al., 2017). On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H6: Tourists' cognitive image has a positive effect on their behavioral intentions.

The affective image describes tourists' affective responses to a destination, such as feelings of pleasure or fondness. These affective responses are often more closely related to behavior than purely rational evaluations. When tourists experience positive emotions toward a destination, they tend to show stronger intentions to visit and recommend it to others (Stylidis et al., 2017). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H7: Tourists' affective image has a positive effect on their behavioral intentions.

In the short-video environment, the expectation of confirmation does not entirely rely on real travel experiences; it may also stem from the psychological reactions of the audience. When the video content aligns with or even exceeds the potential tourists' imagination of the destination, a sense of confirmation will be generated, thereby enhancing the tourists' satisfaction. Previous studies have consistently shown that there is an association between expectation confirmation and satisfaction in different tourism scenarios (Yuan & Marzuki, 2024; Weng, Tan, & Yu, 2023). This indicates that even before the journey begins, the sense of confirmation formed through video content can enhance tourists' satisfaction. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H8: Expectation confirmation has a positive effect on tourists' satisfaction.

Satisfaction is regarded as an important factor influencing behavioral intention in tourism research. Research highlights that in the context of digital tourism, tourists' satisfaction has significantly increased their willingness to continue using related services and revisit destinations (Yao et al., 2025). In empirical research on health tourism, satisfaction has also been identified as a key driver of revisit intention and

recommendation intention (Seow, Foroughi, & Choong, 2024). When potential tourists are satisfied with the content of short videos, they tend to have more positive behavioral intentions. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H9: Tourists' satisfaction has a positive effect on their behavioral intentions.

Overall, this set of hypotheses incorporates content features, cultural translation, user perception, platform recommendation, cognition and emotion, behavioral intention, expectation confirmation and satisfaction into a dynamic framework, providing support for the subsequent empirical analysis (Koo, Byon and Baker, 2014).

3.RESEARCH METHOD

This research design combines the theoretical framework with specific steps to achieve the research goals. It Outlines the overall structure of the research, data collection and analysis methods, as well as how to interpret the empirical results based on the theoretical framework. This study explores how short videos on Xiaohongshu build the image of Lapland as a tourist destination and how these media influence tourists' perception and behavioral intentions. As this study focuses on examining the relationships among multiple theoretical constructs, a quantitative research design was adopted. This method ensures that the analysis is focused and systematic, and lays a clear foundation for testing the proposed relationships using empirical data.

3.1 Research philosophy and approach

This research follows a positivist view. It assumes that social phenomena can be measured and studied in a clear and organized way. Researchers rely on data to examine how different variables relate to each other (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2023). Knowledge is built on observable evidence rather than on personal impressions or individual feelings (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In this study, the relationship between destination image and social media content is examined through elements that can be recorded and compared, such as short-video features, processes of cultural meaning adaptation, and users' perceptions of the platform's recommendation logic. By focusing on observable and measurable aspects, the analysis remains grounded in empirical evidence (Bell, Harley, and Bryman, 2019).

In line with this philosophical stance, the study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine relationships between variables. Quantitative research relies on numerical data and uses structured procedures to analyse these relationships. Statistical techniques are applied to test theoretical assumptions and to assess the stability of the results (Bell et al., 2019). In contrast, qualitative research focuses on context and meaning, so quantitative methods are more suitable when the aim is to test hypotheses and evaluate models (Shorten and Smith, 2017).

In this study, data were collected through questionnaires. The analysis focused on how informativeness, entertainment, vividness and credibility of short videos, together with cultural translation and users' perception of platform recommendations, shape tourists' cognitive images, affective images and behavioral intentions. This approach allows the theoretical model to be examined in a direct and systematic way. It also produces results that can be compared across respondents.

But quantitative research cannot fully capture personal or subjective experiences (Almeida, 2017).

This study uses a deductive approach. Deductive reasoning moves from general theory to concrete observation. Researchers develop hypotheses from existing theories and test them with empirical data (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This approach keeps the link between theory and data analysis clear and stable (Proudfoot, 2022). Chapter Two builds the framework through five main parts, short-video dissemination, UGC content characteristics, user perception of platform recommendations, the CAB model and ECT theory. These theories form the basis for the development of hypotheses based on deductive reasoning. The perception of Lapland, Finland by Chinese tourists on Xiaohongshu was examined through questionnaire data. Compared with induction, deduction can construct structured hypotheses based on existing theories, reduce the subjective biases of researchers, and test the generalization of theories through empirical data (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018).

The operability of the constructs in this study was developed based on the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2. Affordance theory provides a reference for the research on the characteristics of UGC and cultural translation. The recommendation mechanism of the perception platform originates from the intermediary of the perception algorithm, aiming to reflect users' subjective perception of the algorithm recommendation process. The three dimensions of cognition, affect and behavioral intention are constructed based on the CAB model. The expectation confirmation and satisfaction section is based on the ECT theory (Norman, 2013; Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Oliver, 2014).

The methodological design of this study keeps a smooth link between theoretical development and empirical testing. This structure gives clear logical support for the data analysis that follows (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019).

3.2 Research design

This section provides a detailed account of the overall research design, covering the design of the questionnaire, access and participant, sampling strategy, and ethical considerations.

3.2.1 Questionnaire design

In this study, data is collected only through a questionnaire. There are two sections in the questionnaire. The first section contains screening questions and items

concerning basic demographic information. It serves to confirm whether the respondents are genuine users of Xiaohongshu and to collect data on gender, age, educational level, frequency of use, and travel experience. The second one corresponds to the core variables in the model, including UGC features, cultural translation, perceived platform recommendation, cognitive image, affective image, behavioral intention, as well as expectation confirmation and satisfaction. The expectation-confirmation and satisfaction section assesses respondents perceived fit of viewing experiences and overall feelings.

All items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, that 1 indicates strong disagreement, and 7 indicates strong agreement. The Likert scale is a tool for examining attitudes and perceptions, and respondents are asked to show their level of agreement with a series of statements (Finstad, 2010). It turns personal judgments into numerical data that can be used for statistical analysis. The seven-point scale helps show differences in respondents' attitudes and keeps the questionnaire clear and easy to answer (Weijters, Cabooter, and Schillewaert, 2010). Compared with a five-point scale, it offers higher sensitivity and avoids confusion that may appear when there are too many response choices (Allen and Seaman, 2007). The seven-point scale is suitable for the measurement design of this study.

The measurement instruments used in this study consisted of two types of items: some were adapted from established scales, while others were self-developed to fit the specific context of the research.

In terms of measuring the content features of short videos, the four constructs of informativeness, entertainment, vividness and credibility have been developed on the basis of existing research on information quality, content presentation methods and the motivation for watching short videos, and adjusted in combination with the content style of the Xiaohongshu platform. The items on informativeness and entertainment refer to the discussions of Wang and Yan (2022) as well as Zhao et al. (2022) on the usefulness, interest and viewing motivation of content. The items on vividness and credibility are based on the literature of Hui (2022), Lai et al. (2023), and Hanninen (2018) on immersion, authenticity, and credibility. Through contextualization transformation, they are used to better reflect the respondents' subjective judgments on the degree of immersive experience and credibility. The measurement of cultural translation is also a self-developed item, mainly based on the cross-cultural meaning construction and cultural adaptation theory proposed by Katan and Taibi (2021) as well as Addeo (2023), focusing on presenting the expression methods of short videos when interpreting, transforming and recontextualizing Finnish cultural information, making the content more aligned

with the understanding habits of Chinese audiences. The items for platform recommendation perception are also self-developed, referring to the conceptual discussions on algorithm visibility, content ranking and distribution logic by Eslami et al. (2015), Bucher (2018), and Cotter (2019), etc. The aim is to capture users' subjective understanding of the platform's presentation and push mechanism.

In the constructs related to destination image and behavioral response, this study adopted an adapted scale. The measurement of cognitive imagery originated from the destination imagery framework of Baloglu and McCleary (1999), which was used to assess the respondents' views on the natural landscapes, cultural attractions and other destination characteristics of Lapland. The affective imagery is adapted based on the emotional dimension model of Russell and Pratt (1980), aiming to capture the emotional experiences such as pleasure, excitement and relaxation triggered by short videos. Behavioral intentions refer to the relevant scales of Koo et al. (2014) and Baker and Crompton (2000), and are appropriately adjusted in combination with the characteristics of Lapland as an Arctic tourism destination to measure the possibility of respondents visiting, recommending or further understanding the destination in the future. The measurement of expectancy confirmation is adapted based on Oliver's (2014) expectancy confirmation theory to assess the degree of conformity between the new impression formed after watching short videos and the original expectations. The satisfaction items were adjusted by referring to Koo et al. (2014) and Oliver (2014) to evaluate the overall experience of respondents when watching short videos related to Lapland.

Overall, all the measurements in this study were strictly designed based on the construct definitions and their theoretical sources, ensuring that the scales not only have a solid theoretical foundation but also can be adapted to the actual usage scenarios of short videos on Xiaohongshu, thereby more accurately capturing the true perceptions of the respondents. A detailed overview of all measurement items, construct definitions, original sources, and scale formats is provided in Appendix 1.

3.2.2 Access and participants

The participants of this study were users in China who watched or searched for travel short videos on Xiaohongshu. Among them, those who focused on traveling to Finland, Lapland or Northern Europe constituted the core sample. The questionnaire was distributed through the Wenjuanxing platform. This platform is commonly used in China for online surveys and data collection. Its functions are like those of Webropol, allowing users to design questionnaires, distribute links, and process responses automatically. The survey link was shared on WeChat, Xiaohongshu, and

online communities related to tourism. Before answering, participants were asked to confirm that they were users of Xiaohongshu. The completion of the questionnaire was entirely voluntary, without any material incentives provided. The full questionnaire used in this study is provided in Appendix 2.

3.2.3 Sampling strategy

The study uses both convenience sampling and snowball sampling. These two types of non-probability sampling methods are often used in social media research. And they are suitable when potential participants are scattered, and a complete sampling frame cannot be easily built (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

Convenience sampling means choosing participants who are easy for the researcher to reach. It makes it possible to collect data through platforms such as WeChat and Xiaohongshu (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This method focuses on how easily participants can be reached. In actual data collection, researchers usually rely on the users they can reach most easily within their own networks and environment (Sharma, 2017). Most responses were collected simply because the users who received the link were willing to answer at that moment. It made the process quick and did not require much cost, which was important for the study. The downside is that the users who end up in the dataset depend on who happens to be reachable, so the sample may not reflect the wider user group very well (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

For the snowball sampling part, the link was passed by respondents to other users they thought might fit the study. In many cases, the survey was forwarded to classmates, friends, or users in the same online circles who have similar habits related to short-video use (Goodman, 2011; Noy, 2008). This chain-style spread works when the target users are scattered or not easy to approach directly, since individual researchers often cannot reach them on their own (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). As the link moves from one user to another, the sample grows and gradually brings in respondents from slightly different backgrounds (Saunders et al., 2023).

The questionnaire link was first shared on social media to find the first respondents. Participants who met the study requirements were asked to share the link with others. Each IP address was allowed to submit only one response to keep the data accurate (Leiner, 2019).

A priori power analysis with G Power was used to determine the sample size suitable for the research model and its variables. Using a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and a power of 0.80, the required minimum sample size was estimated at about 160 to 170

participants.

To ensure the sufficiency of the sample size setting, this study, in addition to G Power, also referred to other common sample size estimation methods. According to Green's (1991) empirical rule of regression ($N \geq 50 + 8m$), when this study included 9 predictor variables, the minimum sample size was approximately 122. The formula ($N \geq 50 + m^2$) of Tabachnick & Fidell (2013) yields approximately 131 samples. According to the rule of "5 to 10 samples for each structural path" proposed by Bentler & Chou (1987), the minimum sample requirement corresponding to the 9 paths of the model in this study is approximately 45 to 90 samples.

In the literature recommendations on structural equation models, Kline (2023) pointed out that SEM models of medium complexity typically require at least approximately 200 samples to ensure the stability of parameter estimation. In addition, this study also used the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator for cross-validation (Raosoft, 2025). When the overall size cannot be accurately known, using its default value (20,000), a 5% error range, a 95% confidence level and a 50% response distribution, the ideal sample size calculated is 385.

By integrating the mentioned multiple methods above, the results obtained by different tools vary significantly: the lowest estimate is between 45 and 131, the middle estimate is approximately 160 to 170 (G Power), and the more stringent recommendation can reach 200 to 385. Combining research resources and practical feasibility including time, human and financial costs, and considering the need to control the proportion of invalid questionnaires (approximately 15-20%), the target sample size of this study was ultimately set at 200 (Hair et al., 2019; Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). It meets the general requirements for studies with medium effect sizes and follows common practice in regression-based research in tourism and marketing (Cohen et al., 1983; Kline, 2023).

3.2.4 Research ethics and use of AI

The study follows the ethical standards of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It complies with the national principles for research involving human participants in human and behavioral sciences. The questionnaire description explains the purpose of the study, the rule of anonymity, and how the data will be used. All participants could proceed to complete the questionnaire only after reading and confirming their consent. The questionnaire does not collect any personal identifiers. All data is used only for academic research and has no commercial purpose. After exporting, the data are stored in an encrypted folder that only the research team can access. All collected

data will be kept only for the duration of the study. After the research is completed, the files will be permanently deleted or processed so that no individual can be identified. The whole procedure follows the ethical and legal rules for academic research. Participation is voluntary, and respondents can stop at any time without any consequences. These measures ensure that the study respects ethical standards and protects participants' privacy and consent (Hanken School of Economics Library, 2025).

According to the regulations of the Hanken School of Economics on the use of artificial intelligence tools, during the writing process of this thesis, generative artificial intelligence tools were only used in a limited auxiliary manner. Its function is limited to verifying citation formats and checking grammatical correctness and other technical aspects during the final manuscript preparation stage. AI tools were not used to generate content, conduct literature reviews, build theoretical frameworks, design questionnaires, process or analyze data, or interpret results. All academic decisions, reasoning and writing are independently completed by the authors. No personal data or research materials have been input into the AI system. All work complies with the institution's ethical guidelines and data protection requirements. The detailed AI usage statement is provided in Appendix 3.

3.3 Data collection

Data collection in this study was carried out through an online questionnaire. After the questionnaire was prepared, it was shared with the target group through the planned channels. The questionnaire stayed open for five days, and this short period helped reduce the influence of external changes on the results. The survey started at 00:00:00 on November 10, 2025 and closed at 00:00:00 on November 15, 2025. In total, 343 questionnaires were received. Each response was reviewed individually, and questionnaires with missing information were excluded. Following Zhang and Conrad (2014), questionnaires would be excluded if they were completed in an implausibly short time or contained conflicting answers. Considering the number of items and the normal pace required to complete the survey, a completion time of less than one minute was considered insufficient for meaningful reading and response. Responses that did not belong to the target group were also excluded. After the data screening process, a total of 343 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.

After questionnaire collection, the data were exported into Excel and SPSS for processing and analysis. Incomplete responses, unusually fast submissions, and logically inconsistent answers were excluded to improve data quality (Leiner, 2019). Missing values were checked and handled, and variable coding was standardized to

ensure consistency across the dataset. The data was checked and only the verified data was used for statistical testing.

No missing responses were found in the final sample, which was related to the environment in which the questionnaire was distributed and the behavioral characteristics of the participants. As the questionnaire was mainly disseminated in the travel interest community and discussion groups related to Nordic destinations on Xiaohongshu, respondents generally had a high willingness to participate, and the overall completion rate was relatively high. In addition, although some respondents had not watched short videos related to Lapland before, they usually browsed the relevant content out of interest or for verification purposes before filling out the questionnaire. During the collection stage, the researcher had brief exchanges with some respondents. Generally, they would first watch several related videos and then complete the questionnaire based on their perceptions after watching them. Therefore, the final 343 answers obtained are not only complete but also reflect the real experiences and perceptions of the target users on the Xiaohongshu platform.

3.4 Data analysis

After data collection and quality screening, statistical analysis was conducted. The analysis first provides a descriptive overview of the sample, and then conducts model estimation within the framework of the structural equation model. Descriptive statistics, data cleaning and reliability tests were conducted using SPSS, while confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were carried out using AMOS (Hair et al., 2019). Since SPSS does not support variable modeling, AMOS was used for confirmatory factor analysis and to establish structural equations. In this way, the combined use of SPSS and AMOS enables different stages of data analysis and model evaluation to be carried out in a structured and appropriate manner.

Firstly, to form an overall understanding of the sample characteristics, this study conducted descriptive statistics on the respondents' age, gender, educational level, Xiaohongshu usage habits, and the frequency of exposure to Finnish-related content. Although these background variables do not directly enter the estimation of the structural model, it helps to determine the fit between the sample and the research context and provide necessary references for the interpretation of subsequent results (Field, 2024). Meanwhile, this study also calculated the mean and standard deviation of the main latent variables to present the overall distribution of each psychological perception construct in the sample.

After completing the sample overview, this study conducted a basic measurement

quality check on the questionnaire scale. First, the internal consistency of the scale was examined. Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the measurement model to confirm the structural relationship between latent variables and their items. These procedures provide the necessary measurement basis for the subsequent model estimation.

After the measurement basis was confirmed, relevant analyses were carried out in this study. Calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient to describe the linear relationship between latent variables. These correlation coefficients serve as supplementary references for evaluating potential multicollinearity and providing background information for structural path estimation.

Subsequently, the structural Equation Model (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships in the theoretical model. The model estimation adopted the maximum likelihood method (ML), which is applicable to the sample size and data characteristics of this study. SEM enables the simultaneous examination of the relationships among multiple latent variables and takes measurement errors into account. It is suitable for analyzing the multi-dimensional psychological and behavioral structures proposed in this study.

Overall, the analysis followed a sequential procedure, including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity assessment, correlation analysis, and structural model testing. The procedure ensures that the testing of theoretical hypotheses is based on reliable and adequately processed data.

3.5 Reliability and validity

After the data preparation was completed, the quality of the measurement scale was evaluated to test whether the potential structure was suitable for the subsequent construction of the structural equation model. The evaluation considered the reliability, convergent validity and discriminative validity of the scale, as well as the fit of the measurement model, in accordance with the established structural equation model procedure (Hair et al., 2019).

Firstly, Cronbach's α is used to determine whether the project can stably reflect the corresponding latent variables. The α coefficients of each configuration all conform to the commonly used judgment criteria in the literature, indicating that the scale has acceptable internal stability (DeVellis， 2016).

Then, the convergent validity was tested through confirmatory factor analysis. Standardized factor loadings are used to show the strength of the link between each

item and its latent variable. The average variance extracted, AVE, and composite reliability, CR, help assess whether the construct has enough statistical concentration. Earlier studies suggest that AVE is usually judged against a value of 0.50, and CR is commonly assessed with a value of 0.70 (Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2019).

Discriminant validity is mainly judged by the correlations among constructs. The AVE of each construct is compared with its maximum shared variance, and the average shared variance is also examined. These indicators show whether each construct remains clearly separated. To strengthen the assessment, this study also reports the hetero–monotrait ratio, HTMT, to check for possible overlap between latent variables (Kline, 2023).

This study also examined how well the measurement model matched the data. The degree of fit was assessed with several indicators: chi-square divided by degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and incremental fit index (IFI). These indicators together show how well the model aligns with the sample data. Based on the scope suggested in the literature, this study comprehensively considers the characteristics of the model and samples to make an overall judgment on the fitting effect (Kline, 2023).

Overall, the measurement model passed the tests of reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity and model fitting. These experiments indicate that the model is applicable to the next step of structural path analysis, providing the necessary measurement basis for the work in Chapter Four.

4.RESULT

This chapter focuses on the core content of data analysis, presenting descriptive statistics, reliability and validity tests of the scale, correlations among constructs, and path results of structural models in sequence. Based on the above, respond to the three research questions raised in Chapter 1 and summarize the main empirical findings of this study.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

A total of 343 valid questionnaires were collected in this study. The demographic characteristics of the samples and the usage of the platform are shown in Table 1. From the perspective of overall composition, the respondents were mainly concentrated in the 25-44 age group, accounting for 82.5%, among which those aged 25-34 accounted for 48.7% and those aged 35-44 accounted for 33.8%. The proportion of respondents under the age of 25 and over 44 is relatively low, indicating that the sample mainly represents young and middle-aged users among the core user groups of Xiaohongshu.

The gender composition of the sample is relatively balanced. Male respondents accounted for 53.6% of the sample, female respondents for 45.2%, and 1.2% of the participants did not report their gender. It reflects a relatively diverse gender composition.

From an educational background, the respondents generally have a relatively high level of education. Among them, 60.1% have a bachelor's degree, 19.2% have a master's degree, only 2.9% of the respondents have a high school education or below, and the rest have other forms of higher and vocational education. This structure is consistent with the features that the user group of Xiaohongshu generally has a relatively high level of education.

Regarding how often participants use Xiaohongshu, there are many high-frequency users in the sample. 43.4% of the respondents said they use the platform multiple times a day, while another 14.6% use it 3 to 6 times a week. In contrast, 20.7% of the respondents said they rarely use it, and 4.4% use it only 1 to 3 times a month. Overall, the platform has a significant majority of heavy users, and there is also a certain proportion of light users.

Although Xiaohongshu is generally used frequently, the exposure of content related to Finland or Lapland is relatively limited. 18.7% of the respondents said they had never seen the relevant content, 22.2% had almost never seen it, 31.2% had rarely

seen it, and about 19.0% said they sometimes saw it. Only 6.7% said they often saw it, and less than 3% of the respondents said they saw such content every day or almost every day. It indicates that Finland and Lapland, as tourist destinations, still belong to relatively marginal and low-exposure topics in the content ecosystem of Xiaohongshu.

When looking at the respondents' travel experience, most respondents in the sample have never visited Finland, accounting for as high as 91.8%. Only 2.9% have visited Finland and reached Lapland, while another 5.3% have visited Finland but have not gone to Lapland. It can be seen from this that the respondents' understanding of Lapland in this study mainly comes from online content rather than their personal travel experiences, which is highly consistent with the research purpose of this study, which focuses on forming the destination image through platform content.

Overall, the sample characteristics of this study present the following: a relatively high level of education, a high frequency of use on Xiaohongshu, but a low exposure to Finnish-related content, and most respondents lack direct travel experience to Finland. Such a sample structure conforms to the context of the research's concern and provides an appropriate basis for subsequent analysis.

Table 2. Sample characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–24 years	8	2.33
	25–34 years	167	48.69
	35–44 years	116	33.82
	45–54 years	22	6.41
	55 years and above	30	8.75
Gender	Male	184	53.64
	Female	155	45.19
	Prefer not to say	4	1.17
Xiaohongshu usage frequency	Seldom	71	20.70
	1–2 times per week	33	9.62
	3–6 times per week	50	14.58
	Once per day	25	7.29
	Multiple times per day	149	43.44
	1–3 times per month	15	4.37
Education level	High school or below	10	2.92
	Junior college	52	15.16
	Bachelor's degree	206	60.06

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Master's degree	66	19.24
	Doctorate or above	9	2.62
Frequency of seeing Finland/Lapland-related	Never	64	18.66
	Almost never	76	22.16
	Almost every day	2	0.58
	Rarely	107	31.20
	Sometimes	65	18.95
	Every day	6	1.75
	Often	23	6.71
Travel experience in Finland	Never visited Finland	315	91.84
	Visited Finland and Lapland	10	2.92
	Visited Finland but not Lapland	18	5.25

Note. Percentages are based on the valid sample (N = 343). All responses were complete with no missing data. Categories were coded according to the questionnaire options.

4.2 Reliability analysis

In the reliability test, the Cronbach's α of each latent variable was at a relatively high level, and the internal stability of the scale was relatively clear. Among several constructs related to content features, the α of informativeness is 0.910, that of entertainment is 0.905, that of vividness is 0.932, and that of credibility is 0.914. The respondents' reactions when answering these questions were relatively concentrated, and the differences among the questions were not significant. The α of cultural translation and adaptation was 0.882, slightly lower than that of other content features, but it remained within a relatively reliable range.

The α value for the perception of the platform recommendation mechanism was 0.913, which is like the stability observed for the content feature constructs. The α values of the two dimensions of destination image, cognitive image and affective image, are 0.932 and 0.920 respectively, and the distribution of responses shows relatively consistent characteristics. Among the three constructs related to behavior, the α value of satisfaction is 0.921, that of behavioral intention is 0.919, and that of expectation confirmation is 0.927. The items of these three items are highly correlated, and the scale structure is relatively concentrated in the data.

Viewed as a whole, the results show that all constructs in this study met the commonly accepted standards for internal consistency. The reliability of these constructs provides the necessary measurement basis for subsequent validity tests and path analysis.

Table 3. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's α)

Construct	Cronbach's α
Informativeness (INF)	0.910
Entertainment (ENT)	0.905
Vividness (VIV)	0.932
Credibility (CRE)	0.914
Cultural Translation and Adaptation (CUL)	0.882
Perceived Platform Recommendation Mechanism (PPR)	0.913
Cognitive Image (COG)	0.932
Affective Image (AFF)	0.920
Behavioral Intention (BI)	0.919
Expectation Confirmation (EC)	0.927
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.921

Note. All constructs exceeded the generally accepted reliability threshold, and the Cronbach α values were all above 0.70, indicating that all measurement scales had acceptable excellent internal consistency.

4.3 Validity analysis

Based on the reliability test in the previous section, this section summarizes the main results of confirmatory factor analysis, with a focus on convergent validity, discriminative validity, and the measurement model fit.

4.3.1 Convergent validity

From the perspective of factor loading, the standardized loading of all items on their respective constructs has reached a significant level, with the vast majority concentrated above 0.70, and a few items slightly lower, but all above the commonly used lower limit of 0.50. The items related to content features, such as informativeness, entertainment, vividness and credibility, have a relatively high overall load on the respective factors, indicating that these items can well reflect the same underlying concept together. The items of perception, cognitive imagery, affective imagery, and behavior-related constructs in the platform recommendation mechanism also show similar load levels, and the overall structure is relatively clear.

On this basis, this study further examined the mean variance extraction amount AVE and the combined reliability CR. The AVE of each construct ranges from 0.640 to 0.811, all exceeding the general reference standard of 0.50. The CR values are mostly around 0.90, and all are above 0.70. In other words, the variances of many items can be fully explained by their respective latent variables; the residual parts are relatively limited, and the combined reliability remains at a relatively robust level. Considering

the three aspects of factor loading, AVE and CR, it can be considered that the overall performance of each construct in this study in terms of convergent validity is good.

Table 4. Standardized factor loadings of the measurement model

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading	SMC
INF (Informativeness)	INF1	0.784	0.615
	INF2	0.854	0.729
	INF3	0.878	0.770
	INF4	0.863	0.744
ENT (Entertainment)	ENT1	0.856	0.732
	ENT2	0.775	0.601
	ENT3	0.867	0.752
	ENT4	0.858	0.736
VIV (Vividness)	VIV1	0.883	0.780
	VIV2	0.894	0.799
	VIV3	0.873	0.762
	VIV4	0.874	0.764
CRE (Credibility)	CRE1	0.847	0.718
	CRE2	0.853	0.728
	CRE3	0.821	0.674
	CRE4	0.887	0.786
CUL (Cultural Adaptation)	CUL1	0.862	0.743
	CUL2	0.869	0.756
	CUL3	0.814	0.663
PPR (Perceived Platform Recommendation)	PPR1	0.789	0.622
	PPR2	0.848	0.719
	PPR3	0.817	0.667
	PPR4	0.791	0.626
	PPR5	0.799	0.639
	PPR6	0.754	0.569
COG (Cognitive Image)	COG1	0.827	0.684
	COG2	0.868	0.753
	COG3	0.886	0.784
	COG4	0.838	0.702
	COG5	0.870	0.756
AFF (Affective Image)	AFF1	0.869	0.755
	AFF2	0.885	0.784
	AFF3	0.862	0.742

Construct	Item	Standardized Loading	SMC
BI (Behavioral Intention)	AFF4	0.840	0.706
	BI1	0.891	0.794
	BI2	0.883	0.780
	BI3	0.892	0.796
EC (Expectation Confirmation)	EC1	0.906	0.822
	EC2	0.917	0.840
	EC3	0.878	0.771
SAT (Satisfaction)	SAT1	0.912	0.831
	SAT2	0.888	0.788
	SAT3	0.875	0.766

Note. The loads of all standardized factors exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating a strong relationship between the items and the constructs. Square multiple correlations (SMCs) also show that each entry can explain a considerable proportion of the variance of its corresponding latent construct.

Table 5. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR)

Construct	AVE	CR
INF (Informativeness)	0.715	0.909
ENT (Entertainment)	0.705	0.905
VIV (Vividness)	0.776	0.933
CRE (Credibility)	0.726	0.914
CUL (Cultural Adaptation)	0.721	0.885
PPR (Perceived Platform Recommendation)	0.640	0.914
COG (Cognitive Image)	0.736	0.933
AFF (Affective Image)	0.747	0.922
BI (Behavioral Intention)	0.790	0.919
EC (Expectation Confirmation)	0.811	0.928
SAT (Satisfaction)	0.795	0.921

Note. A composite reliability (CR) value higher than 0.70 indicates acceptable internal consistency, while a mean variance draw (AVE) value higher than 0.50 suggests sufficient aggregate validity (Hair et al., 2019).

4.3.2 Discrimination validity

Discriminant validity is mainly determined by the correlation between constructs. The correlation matrix shows that the correlation coefficients between most groups of variables fall within the range of medium to high, reflecting the theoretical close connection among different variables. By comparing the values after the square root of AVE, the square roots of most constructs are still greater than their correlation of

coefficients with other constructs, indicating that there is still a certain degree of discrimination in a statistical sense. This study simultaneously referred to the maximum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) indicators. The MSV and AVE values of some constructs are close to or even slightly higher, such as expectation confirmation, satisfaction, and behavioral intention, etc. This indicates that the relationship among these constructs is relatively close, and the discriminative validity is not very ideal under very strict judgment criteria. However, ASV has remained at a relatively reasonable level and has not been extremely high. Considering that expectation confirmation, satisfaction and behavioral intention are inherently hierarchical in the ECT theory, it is expected that there will be a high correlation among these constructs. To further verify the discrimination between constructs, the HTMT values were calculated in this study (see Table 7). The HTMT values of all construct pairs were all below the common criterion of 0.90, indicating that the latent variables remain statistically identifiable. Based on the results of the correlation matrix, MSV/ASV, and HTMT, it can be considered that the constructs of this study are generally at an acceptable level in terms of discriminative validity. In the discussion chapters, further reflections will also be made on the constructs with higher correlations.

Table 6. Discriminant validity: AVE square roots and correlation matrix

Construct	INF	ENT	VIV	CRE	CUL	PPR	COG	AFF	BI	EC	SAT
INF	0.845										
ENT	0.801	0.840									
VIV	0.737	0.820	0.881								
CRE	0.735	0.784	0.852	0.852							
CUL	0.705	0.744	0.784	0.849	0.849						
PPR	0.657	0.713	0.733	0.772	0.811	0.800					
COG	0.646	0.637	0.661	0.693	0.731	0.737	0.858				
AFF	0.633	0.646	0.658	0.698	0.727	0.727	0.676	0.865			
BI	0.643	0.631	0.627	0.703	0.701	0.726	0.769	0.804	0.889		
EC	0.630	0.670	0.705	0.749	0.750	0.739	0.707	0.813	0.810	0.900	
SAT	0.665	0.670	0.730	0.729	0.754	0.744	0.734	0.835	0.795	0.892	0.892

Note. The bolded values on the diagonal represent the square root of AVE for each construct. The non-diagonal values show the correlations between constructs. When the value of each diagonal is higher than the correlation coefficient of the row and column it belongs to, discriminative validity is supported.

Table 7. Discriminant validity indices: AVE, CR, MSV and ASV

Construct	AVE	CR	MSV	ASV
INF	0.715	0.909	0.795	0.572

Construct	AVE	CR	MSV	ASV
ENT	0.705	0.905	0.803	0.617
VIV	0.776	0.933	0.841	0.629
CRE	0.726	0.914	0.981	0.688
CUL	0.721	0.885	0.981	0.705
PPR	0.640	0.914	0.807	0.667
COG	0.736	0.933	0.805	0.616
AFF	0.747	0.922	0.810	0.649
BI	0.790	0.919	0.774	0.614
EC	0.811	0.928	0.900	0.663
SAT	0.795	0.921	0.900	0.684

Note. AVE reflects the variance quantity contained in each construct. CR stands for internal consistency reliability. MSV and ASV respectively represent the maximum shared variance and the average shared variance with other constructs. To ensure sufficient discriminant validity, the AVE of each construct should be greater than its MSV and ASV.

Table 8. HTMT results (Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio)

Construct	INF	ENT	VIV	CRE	CUL	PPR	COG	AFF	BI	EC	SAT
INF											
ENT	0.883										
VIV	0.801	0.893									
CRE	0.806	0.863	0.922								
CUL	0.787	0.832	0.863	0.993							
PPR	0.721	0.783	0.794	0.844	0.901						
COG	0.696	0.672	0.696	0.735	0.806	0.845					
AFF	0.692	0.698	0.750	0.804	0.850	0.905	0.813				
BI	0.704	0.694	0.674	0.766	0.792	0.813	0.785	0.874			
EC	0.693	0.673	0.745	0.804	0.830	0.826	0.820	0.880	0.876		
SAT	0.727	0.742	0.787	0.793	0.829	0.839	0.842	0.900	0.861	0.947	

Note. All HTMT values are below the 0.85 criteria, indicating discriminant validity.

4.3.3 Measurement model fitting

The overall fitting of the measurement model is evaluated through multiple indicators. The χ^2 value is 1944.232, the degree of freedom is 805, and the corresponding chi-square degree of freedom ratio is approximately 2.42, which is within the reasonable range commonly seen in the study of structural equation models. For the value-added fit indices, both CFI and IFI are close to 0.93, and the TLI value is around 0.92. These indicators all exceed the commonly used reference line of 0.90, indicating that the overall fitting of the model is good. The residual-

related SRMR is approximately 0.032, which is lower than the recommended upper limit of 0.08. The RMSEA is approximately 0.064, falling within the range of 0.05 to 0.08, and its confidence interval is also concentrated in this range. Overall, it is at an acceptable level.

It should be noted that the performance of individual indicators such as the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) and the root mean square residual (RMR) was slightly inferior to the ideal standard, with GFI below 0.90 and RMR above 0.05. This situation is not uncommon when the model structure is relatively complex, and there are many latent variables and question items. Based on the overall performance of the comprehensive value-added fitting index and residual index, this study still regards this measurement model as having an acceptable degree of fit at the data level and capable of supporting subsequent structural path analysis.

Table 9. Model fit indices

Fit Index	**Cut-off Criteria**	**Observed Value**
χ^2	–	1944.232
df	–	805
p-value	> 0.05 (non-significant)	0.000
χ^2/df	< 3.0	2.415
GFI	> 0.90	0.797
RMSEA	< 0.10 (acceptable); < 0.08 (good)	0.064
RMR	< 0.05	0.117
CFI	> 0.90	0.929
NFI	> 0.90	0.885
NNFI (TLI)	> 0.90	0.920
AGFI	> 0.90	0.761
IFI	> 0.90	0.929
PGFI	> 0.50	0.678
PNFI	> 0.50	0.789
PCFI	> 0.50	0.828
SRMR	< 0.10	0.032
RMSEA 90% CI	–	0.061–0.068

Note. The cut-off criteria follow the widely used structural equation model (SEM) guidelines to evaluate model fitting. The observed values show that most indicators have reached or exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating that the overall model fitting is acceptable.

Based on the results, the scale has reached an acceptable level in terms of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and overall fitting. The matching degree between the measurement model and the theoretical setting is basically reasonable, providing a

necessary foundation for structural model verification in the next section.

4.4 Correlation matrix

This section conducts a preliminary relationship examination of the main latent variables in the study through the Pearson correlation coefficient. The complete correlation matrix is shown in Table 9. The correlation coefficients among the various variables are roughly concentrated in the range of 0.63 to 0.89, all reaching statistical significance. Judging from the numerical distribution, although there is a clear correlation among the variables, the correlation coefficients of a few pairs are close to 0.90. According to the suggestions of Hair et al. (2019) and Kline (2023), when the correlation coefficient between latent variables exceeds 0.90, it may imply that the constructs are statistically difficult to distinguish. The maximum correlation coefficient of this study is lower than this limit, so there is no serious risk of collinearity. The correlation matrix is suitable as the basis for subsequent structural model analysis.

At the content feature level, there is a positive relationship among informativeness, entertainment, vividness, credibility, cultural translation, and the platform recommendation mechanism. For instance, the correlation coefficient between cultural translation and the platform recommendation mechanism is approximately 0.81, while that between vividness and the platform recommendation mechanism is approximately 0.73. Based on the content of the questionnaire, this means that when respondents believe that the video is more appropriate in cultural expression, clearer in picture or more vivid in presentation, it is easier to form the impression that the platform's recommendation is more accurate. This trend is consistent with the theoretical inference proposed earlier.

A relatively stable positive correlation can also be observed between content features and destination imagery. The correlation coefficient between the platform recommendation mechanism and cognitive imagery is approximately 0.78, with affective imagery is approximately 0.78, and that with behavioral intention is approximately 0.73. In other words, when respondents find the platform's recommendations valuable for reference, they are more likely to form a more positive understanding and affective experience of Lapland in their minds and be willing to consider this destination in their future travel plans. This model is consistent with the theoretical expectations of this study.

In terms of the internal relationship of destination images, cognitive images maintain a medium to high level of correlation with affective images and behavioral intentions. The correlation coefficient between cognitive imagery and behavioral intention is

approximately 0.77, while that between affective imagery and behavioral intention is approximately 0.80. Both indicate that having a clearer understanding of the destination or developing a stronger favorable impression will increase the likelihood of respondents visiting or recommending Lapland in the future.

Meanwhile, the relationship among expectation confirmation, satisfaction, and behavioral intention is also quite close. The correlation coefficient between expected confirmation and satisfaction is approximately 0.88, that between satisfaction and behavioral intention is approximately 0.79, and that between expected confirmation and behavioral intention is approximately 0.81. If the expectations of respondents after exposure to short video content can be verified, it often significantly enhances overall satisfaction, and the increase in satisfaction is also more likely to be reflected in a stronger intention to visit or recommend. These relationships are in line with the basic logic of the expectancy confirmation theory.

Collectively, the current relevant analysis results are largely consistent with the theoretical direction and hypotheses proposed in this study. The magnitude and distribution of the correlation coefficient provide a foundation for the path estimation of the subsequent structural equation model and lays the necessary background for understanding the interaction relationship among various variables.

Table 10. Pearson correlation matrix

Construct	INF	ENT	VIV	CRE	CUL	PPR	COG	EC	AFF	BI	SAT
INF	1.00										
ENT	0.801	1.00									
VIV	0.737	0.820	1.00								
CRE	0.735	0.784	0.851	1.00							
CUL	0.705	0.744	0.784	0.891	1.00						
PPR	0.657	0.710	0.733	0.772	0.811	1.00					
COG	0.646	0.637	0.661	0.692	0.731	0.781	1.00				
EC	0.636	0.670	0.705	0.740	0.754	0.755	0.739	1.00			
AFF	0.633	0.646	0.655	0.692	0.727	0.784	0.838	0.813	1.00		
BI	0.643	0.633	0.629	0.669	0.701	0.726	0.769	0.810	0.804	1.00	
SAT	0.665	0.676	0.731	0.729	0.754	0.764	0.777	0.875	0.834	0.793	1.00

Note. N = 343. All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$.

4.5 Structural model and hypotheses testing

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural

equation model is further utilized to test the relationships among the latent variables. The overall fit degree remains within a relatively stable range, and all core indicators have met the common judgment criteria. Therefore, the explanation can be based on the path results. From the perspective of model performance, the explanatory power of key variables such as recommendation mechanism perception, cognitive image, affective image, and behavioral intention is all at a relatively high level, indicating that the entire structure has a relatively stable logical chain in the sample.

Among the content feature-related paths, the differences among the four UGC features are obvious. Both entertainment and vividness maintained a significant positive effect after entering the structural model, which means that the emotional response, picture details or presentation method brought by the content during viewing will directly affect users' perception of the recommendation mechanism. In contrast, the informativeness and credibility have not shown significant effects, indicating that in the current platform environment, users do not judge the accuracy of the recommendation mechanism based on the rigor of the content.

The path coefficient of cultural translation is the highest among all content features, indicating that presenting destination information in an expression familiar to the audience is more easily absorbed and understood. This presentation method reduces the cost of information processing and makes it easier for users to judge the match between the recommended content and their own interests. Based on this, the enhancing effect of cultural translation on the perception of the recommendation mechanism is the most obvious.

The recommendation mechanism perception acts simultaneously on cognitive images and affective images, and the path coefficients of both are significant and consistent in direction. When users receive push notifications that are more relevant to their interests, they often feel that the content they see is more structured and logical, and it is easier for them to form a further understanding of the destination from it. At the same time, it will also bring more positive emotional responses. The influence of cognitive imagery on affective imagery is significant, and the direction is in line with the model's expectations.

The influence of images on behavioral intentions is also consistent with expectations, but there are differences in the intensity of their effects. Cognitive images can enhance users' willingness to take further actions, but their influence is weaker than that of affective images. In the model, the path coefficient of affective images is relatively high, which more directly promotes the formation of behavioral intentions. This result is consistent with the existing empirical research on destination image.

In the ECT module, expectation confirmation maintains a significant positive impact on satisfaction, and satisfaction does indeed drive an increase in behavioral intention. Combining the overall structure, satisfaction does not act alone but, together with the image path of the previous part, constitutes the source of the final behavioral intention.

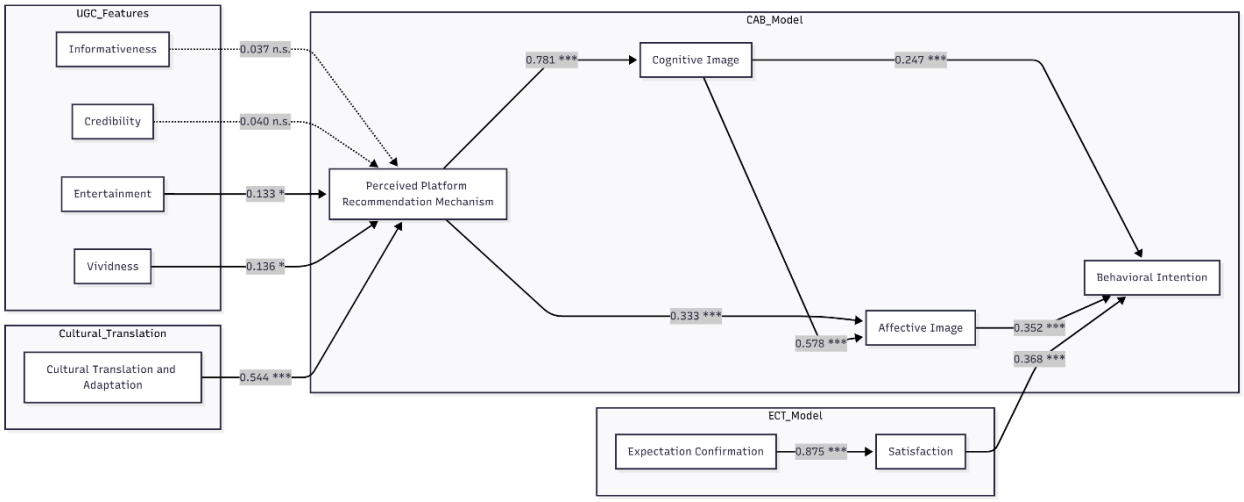
The overall performance of the comprehensive structural model has supported most of the assumptions. The main areas that failed to hold true were the informational and credible features of UGC content, while other paths basically presented directions and intensifies consistent with the theory. Combining all the results, when dealing with travel-related short videos, Xiaohongshu users rely more on the presentation method and cultural relevance of the content and are less driven by information density or content rigor. This also indicates that in an environment where algorithms and content styles jointly influence each other, emotions and perceptions are more likely to influence users' final intentions than rational judgments.

Table 11. Path coefficients of the structural model

Hypothesis	**Path**	**B(Unstd.)**	**SE**	**z**	**p**	**β (Std.)**
H1a	INF → PPR	0.034	0.049	0.696	0.487	0.037
H1b	CRE → PPR	0.038	0.075	0.504	0.614	0.040
H1c	ENT → PPR	0.125	0.058	2.153	0.031	0.133
H1d	VIV → PPR	0.125	0.060	2.090	0.037	0.136
H2	CUL → PPR	0.506	0.063	8.074	0.000	0.544
H3	PPR → COG	0.867	0.037	23.139	0.000	0.781
H4	PPR → AFF	0.362	0.047	7.630	0.000	0.333
H5	COG → AFF	0.566	0.043	13.264	0.000	0.578
H6	COG → BI	0.232	0.054	4.254	0.000	0.247
H7	AFF → BI	0.337	0.056	6.058	0.000	0.352
H8	EC → SAT	0.882	0.026	33.444	0.000	0.875
H9	SAT → BI	0.343	0.033	10.415	0.000	0.368

Note. B represents unstandardized estimates, and β represents standardized estimates. All paths were estimated to be using maximum likelihood.

Figure 2. Structural equation model



Note. Solid lines indicate significant paths; dotted lines indicate non-significant paths. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, n.s. = not significant. Standardized path coefficients are shown.

4.6 Summary of findings

This chapter systematically tests the measurement model and structural path based on 343 valid samples. The reliability and validity both meet the common statistical standards, and the correlation between constructs is within an acceptable range. The data are suitable for structural equation analysis. The main findings of this study revolve around three research questions.

Regarding RQ1, the analysis results show that the impact of different content features on the perception of recommendation mechanisms is not consistent. Entertainment and vividness have a significant positive relationship with the perception of the recommendation mechanism, but the extent of their effect is limited. The paths of informativeness and credibility are not significant. The influence of cultural translation is the most prominent, and it is the variable with the highest amplitude among all content features. Subsequently, the recommendation mechanism perceives a significant impact on cognitive image and affective image. The directions of the two paths are consistent, and the influence on affective image is more prominent.

Regarding RQ2, the results show that both cognitive image and affective image significantly influence behavioral intention. The directions of the two paths are consistent, but the influence range of affective image is higher.

Regarding RQ3, the model results show that expectation confirmation significantly enhances satisfaction, and satisfaction subsequently significantly influences behavioral intention. Both paths are positive and significant.

This chapter verifies most of the path relationships of the research model, presenting

the structure that influences the destination image through the perception of content features and cultural cues via the recommendation mechanism. At the same time, it demonstrates the continuous effect of expectation confirmation and satisfaction on behavioral intention, laying the foundation for theoretical and practical implications in the next chapter.

Table 12. Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	**Description**	**Result**
H1a	Informativeness → Perceived Platform Recommendation	Not supported
H1b	Credibility → Perceived Platform Recommendation	Not supported
H1c	Entertainment → Perceived Platform Recommendation	Supported
H1d	Vividness → Perceived Platform Recommendation	Supported
H2	Cultural Translation/Adaptation → Perceived Platform Recommendation	Supported
H3	Perceived Platform Recommendation → Cognitive Image	Supported
H4	Perceived Platform Recommendation → Affective Image	Supported
H5	Cognitive Image → Affective Image	Supported
H6	Cognitive Image → Behavioral Intention	Supported
H7	Affective Image → Behavioral Intention	Supported
H8	Expectation Confirmation → Satisfaction	Supported
H9	Satisfaction → Behavioral Intention	Supported

5. DISCUSSION

The structural equation model in the previous chapter has already presented the main paths among content features, cultural translation, users' perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism, destination image, expectation confirmation, satisfaction and behavioral intention. Based on these results, this chapter will discuss from several aspects including research findings, theoretical significance, practical implications, and future research directions, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how users form the cognition and attitude towards destinations in the content environment involving algorithms on the semi-closed social platform like Xiaohongshu.

5.1 Interpretation of findings in relation to prior literatures

Research shows that when users watch short videos, they will combine the presentation of the content, the ease of understanding of cultural translation, and their own subjective inferences about the platform's recommendation mechanism to understand the videos. Compared with traditional graphic and text-based tourism information, short videos are dominated by visual cues, prompting users to form initial judgments mainly based on intuitive impressions. This feature is reflected in multiple paths of the model.

Cultural translation shows the most prominent influence in this study. Users can more easily understand content that is close to daily expressions and thus are more likely to regard it as related to personal interests. The way of cultural expression not only affects whether users can understand the video but also shapes the judgment on why the platform shows this content to users. This result is consistent with the view that cultural familiarity helps enhance relevance (Katan & Taibi, 2021; Kim, 2017) and indicates that the time point when cultural translation enters the cognitive stage in the context of short videos is earlier than that emphasized by traditional studies.

Entertainment and vividness both have a positive influence. Short videos emphasize rhythmic flow, visual impact, and all presentation, making it easy for users to form a feeling that the content is consistent with their own interests (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2017). This immediate interest enhances acceptance and strengthens users' positive perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism.

Informativeness and credibility have no significant impact on users' judgment of the platform's recommendation mechanism. Unlike traditional tourism research which emphasizes information depth and source reliability (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013), in the

short-video environment, users rely more on intuition and experience. This point will be further explained in 5.2.

Research also shows that during the viewing process, users will take their previous interactive behaviors as the basis for the appearance of the content, forming an intuitive judgment of the platform's recommendation mechanism, rather than based on the authority or reliability of the content itself (Bucher, 2018). This experience-driven approach further amplifies the role of content presentation methods and cultural translation in the perception of recommendation mechanisms. In terms of the target image, the model results are consistent with the classic cognitive-affective structure. Cognition continues to shape users' emotional responses to the target content. The strong visual impact and emotion-centered style of short videos make emotional imagery a particularly important factor in explaining users' behavioral intentions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Han et al., 2022)

The expected confirmed research results follow the main viewpoints of the ECT theory. When the content presentation is consistent with the user's expectations, the user's satisfaction tendency will increase, thereby enhancing the user's willingness to visit or recommend the destination (Bhattacherjee, 2001). In the short-video scenario, users' expectations are shaped by cultural translation, visual presentation and perception through the recommendation mechanism, but the overall path still conforms to the existing theoretical framework.

The findings of this study are not only supported by existing literature but also reflect the uniqueness of short-video media. Cultural translation plays a primary role in how users understand the content. Visual and affective cues strengthen the sense of interest alignment. Users also rely heavily on their interaction experience when they form assumptions about how the platform works. Together, these mechanisms form an important pathway through which destination images take shape on short-video platforms.

5.2 Explanations for non-significant paths

While the main paths were confirmed above, the study also found that some content features did not show significant effects and are worthy of further explanation. The informativeness and credibility did not significantly affect users' perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism, a result that differs from traditional tourism information research based on graphic and textual materials. Starting from the presentation logic of short videos and the way users make inferences, this phenomenon can be further explained.

The rhythmic structure of short videos itself limits users' handling of information details. Short videos often use fast transitions, short narrative segments, and highly compressed visual cues. Under this mode of presentation, users have very limited time to process the information more carefully. Earlier studies also note that when media moves quickly, people tend to form impressions based on what they see at first glance rather than through careful reasoning (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Therefore, features such as rich information or reliable sources often cannot serve as the main basis for inferring recommendation mechanisms in short videos.

The results with insignificant credibility are closely related to the way users explain the source of the recommendation. The study found that users are more inclined to explain the logic behind push notifications through their own interactive behaviors rather than based on the source or professionalism of the content (Bucher, 2018). Under this experience-driven judgment framework, the reliability of the content is difficult to enter the user's inference process, thereby weakening its role.

In addition, short-video platforms generally present explicit prompts such as tags, topics, and interaction volumes. Compared with the features of the content, these clues are more easily detected by users and are therefore more often used to explain why certain contents are recommended by the platform (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2015). Relatively speaking, attributes such as informativeness and credibility usually require users to invest more cognition and effort to identify. In the context of quick browsing, their influence is often relatively limited.

In conclusion, the non-significant effects of informativeness and credibility reflect the way users make judgments in short-video environments rather than a decline in the importance of these features in tourism information. Under this media structure, users rely more on cultural translation, visual presentation methods and interaction records to understand the recommendation mechanism, which reflects the significant immediacy and experiential characteristics in the process of short video consumption.

5.3 Theoretical implications

This study provides a deeper understanding of destination image formation by integrating short video content features, cultural translation, and user perception of the recommendation mechanism. The research results reveal how they interact in digital and cross-cultural contexts to jointly shape the meaning of the destination.

Firstly, this study indicates that cultural translation plays a more active role in the interpretation of short video content. Previous studies on cross-cultural communication have typically regarded cultural factors as background conditions for

explaining differences in audience understanding or emotional responses (Katan & Taibi, 2021; Kim, 2017). This study found that when users come into contact with destinations with significant cultural differences, they tend to interpret visual symbols and landscapes by applying their own cultural experiences in the early stage of viewing. Cultural translation not only influences behavioral intentions but also participates in the process of destination formation. This expands the existing discussions on destination image construction (Xu et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023).

This study further found that users do not passively accept the content pushed by the platform, but gradually form their personal understanding of the platform's recommendation mechanism during long-term use. Existing algorithm research indicates that users will establish an informal cognitive framework for the operation mode of recommendation systems based on their own usage experiences (Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019). Based on this, this study shows that this subjective judgment of recommendation logic can affect how users view content related to the destinations, including whether such content is useful and whether it is trustworthy. More importantly, these judgments will further influence users' overall perception and emotional impression of the destination. Therefore, this study points out that it is necessary to incorporate algorithmic visibility into the analytical framework of tourism destination image research, so as to more comprehensively explain the formation mechanism of destination images on digital platforms. It provides a new theoretical point for introducing algorithmic visibility into tourism image research.

This study further explains the logic by which emotional pathways function in the context of short videos. Existing studies generally hold that destination image is composed of both cognitive and affective dimensions (Guo et al., 2017; Stylidis et al., 2017), but this study finds that the common short and direct narrative style in short videos is more likely to stimulate users' emotional responses. This emotional response not only occurs more quickly, but also shows a stronger role in interpreting users' behavioral intentions (Cao et al., 2021; Han et al., 2022). Compared with traditional forms of communication mainly based on text or static images, short videos are more likely to influence users' overall feelings towards the destination through emotions. This result indicates that in the communication context of short-video platforms, emotional factors play a more prominent role in the formation of destination images. The findings help clarify how emotional pathways work in the digital media environment and add a media-centered perspective to the existing destination image research.

This study expands the application of the Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) and examines it in an algorithm-driven short video environment. Previous studies

have shown that expectation confirmation is influenced not only by the way content is presented but also by the cultural translation process (Yuan & Wang, 2022). This study finds that users' perception of the platform's recommendation mechanism can also affect the formation of expectations. Against this backdrop, the formation of expectations is influenced by multiple information sources, which broadens the applicability of the expectation confirmation theory in the digital environment.

This study integrates cultural translation, perceived recommendation mechanisms, and the characteristics of short video content into an analytical framework, thereby more elaborately explaining the formation process of destination images in digital and cross-cultural contexts. Thus, this study has contributed to the discussion on the formation of destination image mediatization in tourism and media research.

5.4 Practical implications

The findings of this study are of great significance to both theoretical research and practical application. Specifically, these findings are closely related to destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in the Nordic region, semi-closed social media platforms in China, and tourism enterprises that interact with Chinese tourists.

For DMOs in the Nordic region, the research results offer several suggestions for the design of short video content. Analysis shows that users' interest in a destination is not only influenced by cognitive evaluation, but also by emotional expression and visual details. This means that, in addition to the simple information content, more attention should be paid to the experience elements that can convey atmosphere and emotions. For instance, showcasing seasonal experiences, local events or interactions between people and the natural environment can help the audience form a more specific and easily understandable impression of Nordic destinations (Tran & Rudolf, 2022; Alshammari, Alamri & Alharbi, 2024). These methods can enable potential tourists to imagine themselves in the destination environment and help increase the exposure of Nordic destinations in the digital environment.

This study further focuses on how semi-closed social platforms like Xiaohongshu influence users' perception of destinations through recommendation mechanisms. Research has found that users' subjective feelings towards the recommendation mechanism will directly affect how they interpret the content related to the destination and whether they consider such content relevant to themselves. This result also indicates that the tag Settings and topic classifications within the platform play a crucial role in guiding users to understand the content (Bakti & Marpaung, 2024). From a practical perspective, the research results show that the platform's tagging and content classification mechanisms play a significant role in the

dissemination of cross-cultural tourism content. Clearer topic tags and contextual clues can help users more easily identify the types of destinations and travel themes presented in videos, thereby helping to reduce misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. For users, this clarity helps them form a more stable and coherent impression of the destination.

The findings are also relevant for tourism enterprises and service providers that target Chinese tourists. Cultural translation plays an important role in users' understanding of short videos related to destinations (Wang, 2023). In this context, the presentation of local experiences often needs to align with cultural references familiar to Chinese audiences. Explaining the meaning behind local customs or adopting a narrative style that resonates with Chinese audiences can help make unfamiliar destinations easier to understand and more attractive. The research results also emphasize the role of emotional cues and expectation formation in the dissemination of short video content. Emotional appeal can effectively attract attention and stimulate interest (Tran & Rudolf, 2022), but highly idealized descriptions may lead to unachievable expectations. When emotional narratives are combined with credible and concrete information, the audience's expectations are more likely to remain realistic. This fit helps to enhance satisfaction and leads to more positive post-trip evaluations (Seow et al., 2024).

The findings show that content features, cultural translation, and platform recommendations jointly shape digital tourism communication. These elements do not operate independently but jointly shape people's perception and evaluation of tourist destinations in the short-video environment. For DMOs, platform operators and tourism enterprises, if better cooperation can be established, such as optimizing the content structure, improving the accuracy of tags, and strengthening cultural explanations, it will help to display destination information more effectively on digital platforms and improve the overall communication quality (Chen et al., 2023).

5.5 Limitations and directions for future research

Although this study has made several valuable findings, the conclusions are still limited by the research design and sample structure. It focuses on the process by which users form destination cognition, affect and behavioral tendencies in the short-video environment, and particularly examines the relationship between cultural translation, content features and perception of recommendation mechanisms. Although the research results provide new evidence for understanding this process, there are still several limitations, which offer space for expansion in future research.

Based on the responses given by users according to their own feelings, the

respondents' judgments on the displayed content and recommendation mechanism are mainly based on personal experience rather than from the real push records of the platform. Due to the continuous update of algorithms, there may be a gap between users' subjective judgments and the recommendation logic. Future research can incorporate behavioral logs, interaction records and browsing times to enhance the understanding of the recommendation mechanism.

Secondly, this study employed a relatively simple model to maintain focus on the core variables. Although this method enhances clarity, it also reduces the user's ability to reflect the more dynamic psychological processes that occur when watching short videos. For instance, attention diversion and immediate emotional responses are not included. Future research may be addressed through experimental methods or by establishing models of more complex relationships.

Thirdly, the samples of this study are from Chinese users who are familiar with the Xiaohongshu platform. Although it has improved the consistency of measurement, its cultural applicability is limited. Users from different cultural backgrounds may adopt different strategies when understanding visual cues, narrative styles or recommendation mechanisms. Future research can compare the differences in the formation of destination images among different cultural groups.

Fourth, the measurement of content features in this study is based on users' subjective feelings and does not incorporate a systematic analysis of real short video content. Future research can adopt multimodal content analysis methods to objectively encode visual symbols, affective cues, or cultural presentation methods, to enhance the depth of interpretation.

Finally, this study focuses on the Xiaohongshu platform, which takes interest tags and interaction history as the main basis for recommendation. Other platforms, such as open search platforms or those mainly based on social relationships, may present different mechanisms. In the future, the model of this research can be applied to different platform structures to compare how platform differences affect users' content exposure and the formation of destination images.

In summary, these limitations provide directions for further research. With the increasing dissemination of cross-cultural tourism information on digital platforms, cultural cues, visual expression methods and users' judgments on recommendation mechanisms will continue to influence the destination cognition of tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Expanding the sample range and platform types will help to have a more comprehensive understanding of the destination image construction process of cross-cultural tourists in the digital age.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Measurement of Constructs

Construct	Item code	Measurement item	Source(s)	Adapted / Self-developed	Scale
Informativeness	Q8	These videos provide specific and useful travel information	Self-developed items based on studies of information quality in tourism media research (e.g., Wang & Yan, 2022), particularly usefulness, relevance, and content richness	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q9	These videos give me a better understanding of the destination.	Self-developed items based on studies of information quality in tourism media research (e.g., Wang & Yan, 2022), particularly usefulness, relevance, and content richness	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q10	These videos are helpful for my travel planning and decisions.	Self-developed items based on studies of information quality in tourism media research (e.g., Wang & Yan, 2022), particularly usefulness, relevance, and content richness	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q11	The information in these videos is clear and easy to understand.	Self-developed items based on studies of information quality in tourism media research (e.g., Wang & Yan, 2022), particularly usefulness, relevance, and content richness	Self-developed	7-point Likert
Entertainment	Q12	These videos are interesting and enjoyable.	Self-developed items based on studies of entertainment motivation and leisure-driven viewing behavior in tourism short-video platforms (e.g., Zhao, Shen, & Zhang, 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q13	I watch these videos for entertainment or relaxation.	Self-developed items based on studies of entertainment motivation and leisure-driven viewing behavior in tourism short-video platforms (e.g., Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q14	The videos make me feel happy and amused.	Self-developed items based on studies of entertainment motivation and leisure-driven viewing behavior in tourism short-video platforms (e.g., Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q15	The presentation style makes me want to continue watching them.	Self-developed items based on studies of entertainment motivation and leisure-driven viewing behavior in tourism short-video platforms (e.g., Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert

Construct	Item code	Measurement item	Source(s)	Adapted / Self-developed	Scale
Vividness	Q16	The videos are attractive and create a strong sense of presence.	Self-developed items based on studies of vividness, presence and immersion in digital tourism experiences (e.g., Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025; Zhao et al., 2022)."	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q17	The visuals, editing, and music enhance my immersion.	Self-developed items based on studies of vividness, presence and immersion in digital tourism experiences (e.g., Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025; Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q18	The videos are rich in detail, making me feel as if I were there.	Self-developed items based on studies of vividness, presence and immersion in digital tourism experiences (e.g., Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025; Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q19	The videos convey a strong atmosphere or mood.	Self-developed items based on studies of vividness, presence and immersion in digital tourism experiences (e.g., Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025; Zhao et al., 2022).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
Credibility	Q20	The content of these videos is true and reliable	Self-developed items based on studies of trust, authenticity and credibility of tourism-related user-generated content (e.g., Aboalganam, AlFraihat,&Tarabieh, 2025; Sujatmiko, Ar, Hamdat, & Salam, 2025).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q21	I trust the experiences and suggestions shared in the videos.	Self-developed items based on studies of trust, authenticity and credibility of tourism-related user-generated content (e.g., Aboalganam et al., 2025; Sujatmiko et al., 2025).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q22	Compared with official promotions, these videos are more helpful.	Self-developed items based on studies of trust, authenticity and credibility of tourism-related user-generated content (e.g., Aboalganam et al., 2025; Sujatmiko et al., 2025).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q23	The content feels honest and not overly exaggerated.	Self-developed items based on studies of trust, authenticity and credibility of tourism-related user-generated content (e.g., Aboalganam et al., 2025; Sujatmiko et al., 2025).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
Cultural translation	Q24	The videos use expressions and references familiar to me, making them easier to understand.	Self-developed items based on studies of cultural translation, cultural adaptation, and intercultural meaning-making in tourism communication (e.g., Katan & Taibi, 2021; Agorni, 2012).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q25	The emotional expressions in the	Self-developed items based on studies of cultural translation,	Self-developed	7-point

Construct	Item code	Measurement item	Source(s)	Adapted / Self-developed	Scale
		videos resonate with me.	cultural adaptation, and intercultural meaning-making in tourism communication (e.g., Katan & Taibi, 2021; Agorni, 2012).		Likert
	Q26	The videos reduced my sense of unfamiliarity with Lapland.	Self-developed items based on studies of cultural translation, cultural adaptation, and intercultural meaning-making in tourism communication (e.g., Katan, 2014; Katan & Taibi, 2021; Agorni, 2012).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q27	When I like, save, comment on, or watch the whole video, I start to see more videos that I like.	Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q28	The platform often shows me travel videos that look vivid and feel immersive.	Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q29	I notice that videos with strong emotions, like surprises or healing, appear more often.	Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
Perceived platform recommendation	Q30	Some types of travel videos, like the aurora or reindeer, seem to be shown more often than others.	Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q31	The videos I watch always match my personal interests.	Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q32	Videos with more likes or comments usually appear higher or more often on my feed.	B Self-developed items based on studies of algorithmic personalization, visibility, and ranking mechanisms in social media feeds (e.g., Bucher, 2018; Cotter, 2019; Eslami et al., 2015).	Self-developed	7-point Likert
	Q33	Lapland has beautiful natural scenery.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring beautiful scenery.	Adapted	7-point Likert
Cognitive image	Q34	Lapland offers many travel activities, such as skiing, seeing reindeer, and watching the aurora.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring attractions (cultural and natural attractions).	Adapted	7-point Likert

Construct	Item code	Measurement item	Source(s)	Adapted / Self-developed	Scale
Affective image	Q35	Lapland is a safe and well-managed place to visit.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring personal safety.	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q36	Lapland has good facilities.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring quality of infrastructure.	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q37	Lapland's local culture is attractive and special.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring cultural attractions.	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q38	Watching these videos makes me feel happy.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring the pleasant–unpleasant affective dimension.	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q39	Watching these videos makes me feel calm and relaxed.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring the relaxing–distressing affective dimension.	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q40	Watching these videos makes me want to visit Lapland someday.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring arousal (arousing–sleepy).	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q41	Watching these videos makes me feel amazed or excited.	Adapted from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the original item measuring the exciting–gloomy affective dimension.	Adapted	7-point Likert
Behavioral intention	Q42	I plan to visit Lapland in the future.	Adapted from Koo et al. (2014): "I am likely to revisit this marathon event."	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q43	I will consider Lapland as one of my travel options.	Adapted from Koo et al. (2014): "I am likely to revisit this marathon event."	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q44	I would recommend Lapland to my friends or family.	Adapted from Baker & Crompton (2000): "I would recommend this destination to other people."	Adapted	7-point Likert
Expectation confirmation	Q45	The Lapland videos I watched were better than I expected.	Adapted from Wang et al. (2021): "What were your expectations for this rural destination before you came here?"	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q46	The videos matched what I expected to see about Lapland.	Adapted from Wang et al. (2021): "Did you think your travel experience was what you had expected?"	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q47	The videos confirmed what I already thought about Lapland.	Adapted from Wang et al. (2021): "Did you think your travel experience was what you had expected?"	Adapted	7-point Likert

Construct	Item code	Measurement item	Source(s)	Adapted / Self-developed	Scale
Satisfaction	Q48	I am satisfied with my experience of watching Lapland videos.	Adapted from Koo et al. (2014): "I am satisfied with the overall experience."	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q49	Watching Lapland videos was a pleasant and enjoyable experience for me.	Adapted from Koo et al. (2014): "I truly enjoyed my visit to this sport event."	Adapted	7-point Likert
	Q50	Watching the Lapland videos made me feel it was well worth my time.	Adapted from Oliver (2014): "I feel that using this service was worth my time."	Adapted	7-point Likert

Note. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

"Adapted" items are modified from existing validated scales but adjusted to the Xiaohongshu short-video context.

"Self-developed" items are written for this study when prior literature provides a construct definition but no ready-made item wording.

"New (self-developed)" items refer to constructs and items that do not appear in prior research and were created specifically for this study.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

Hello!

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. This survey is part of a master's thesis study at Hanken School of Economics, with the topic "Constructing the Destination Image of Finnish Lapland: Chinese Tourists' Perceptions of Xiaohongshu Short Video Content". The purpose of is to understand Chinese tourists' cognitive perceptions, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions after viewing Xiaohongshu travel videos.

This survey is completely anonymous, and no personally identifiable information (e.g., name or contact) will be collected. All data collected will be used solely for academic research and thesis writing and comply with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Before starting the survey, please note that this study is intended for users of Xiaohongshu who have watched videos related to Finland on the platform. Participation is voluntary, and you could withdraw at any time.

Please confirm the following:

A. I have read the above instructions and voluntarily agree to participate.

B. I do not agree to participate (the survey will end).

Q1. Age

18–24/ 25–34/ 35–44/ 45–54/ Above 55

Q2. Gender

Female / Male /Prefer not to say

Q3. Education level

High school or below / Junior college / Bachelor's degree / Master's degree / Doctorate or above

Q4. Xiaohongshu usage frequency

Multiple times a day / Once a day / 3–6 times a week / 1–2 times per week / 1–3 times per month / Seldom

Q5. Frequency of seeing Finland/Lapland-related content on official website

Every day/Almost every day / Often / Sometimes / Rarely / Almost never/Never

Q6. Travel Experience

Have visited Lapland, Finland / Have visited Finland (excluding Lapland) / Have never visited Finland

Q7. How well do you know Finland (especially Lapland)?

Very unfamiliar/ Unfamiliar /Slightly unfamiliar / Moderately / Somewhat Familiar / Familiar / Very familiar

Please evaluate based on the short videos related to "Finland/Lapland" you have seen on Xiaohongshu.

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7= Strongly agree)

Question	**Evaluation**						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Informativeness							
Q8. These videos provide specific and useful travel information (e.g., routes, budget, equipment).							
Q9. These videos give me a better understanding of the destination							
Q10. These videos are helpful for my travel planning and decisions							
Q11. The information in these videos is clear and easy to understand.							
Entertainment							
Q12. These videos are interesting and enjoyable							
Q13. I watch these videos for entertainment or relaxation.							
Q14. The videos make me feel happy and amused.							
Q15. The presentation style makes me want to continue							

watching them.							
Vividness							
Q16. The videos are attractive and create a strong sense of presence							
Q17. The visuals, editing, and music enhance my immersion.							
Q18. The videos are rich in detail, making me feel as if I were there.							
Q19. The videos convey a strong atmosphere or mood.							
Credibility							
Q20. The content of these videos is true and reliable							
Q21. I trust the experiences and suggestions shared in the videos.							
Q22. Compared with official promotions, these videos are more helpful.							
Q23. The content feels honest and not overly exaggerated.							
Culture translation							
Q24. The videos use expressions and references familiar to me, making them easier to understand.							
Q25. The emotional expressions in the videos resonate							

with me							
Q26. The video reduced my sense of unfamiliarity with Lapland.							
Perceived platform recommendation							
Q27. When I like, save, comment on, or watch the whole video, I start to see more videos that I like.							
Q28. The platform often shows me travel videos that look vivid and feel immersive.							
Q29. I notice that videos with strong emotions, like surprises or healing, appear more often.							
Q30. Some types of travel videos, like the aurora or reindeer, seem to be shown more often than others.							
Q31. The videos I watch always match my personal interests.							
Q32. Videos with more likes or comments usually appear higher or more often on my feed.							
Cognitive image							
Q33. Lapland has beautiful natural scenery.							
Q34. Lapland offers many travel activities, such as skiing, seeing reindeer, and watching the aurora.							
Q35. Lapland is a safe and well-managed place to visit.							

Q36. Lapland has good facilities for travel, including transport, hotels, and restaurants.							
Q37. Lapland's local culture is attractive and special.							
Affective image							
Q38. Watching these videos makes me feel happy.							
Q39. Watching these videos makes me feel calm and relaxed.							
Q40. Watching these videos makes me want to visit Lapland someday.							
Q41. Watching these videos makes me feel amazed or excited.							
Behavioral intention							
Q42. I plan to visit Lapland in the future.							
Q43. I will consider Lapland as one of my travel options.							
Q44. I would recommend Lapland to my friends or family.							
Expectation Confirmation							
Q45. The Lapland videos I watched were better than I expected.							
Q46. The videos matched what I expected to see about							

Lapland.							
Q47. The videos confirmed what I already thought about Lapland.							
Satisfaction							
Q48. I am satisfied with my experience of watching Lapland videos.							
Q49. Watching Lapland videos was a pleasant and enjoyable experience for me.							
Q50. Watching the Lapland video made me feel it was well worth my time.							

Appendix 3. AI Use Report for Thesis Work

1. Purpose of AI Use

During the process of writing this thesis, I used generative artificial intelligence tools only in an auxiliary way. After completing the text, I used AI to check whether the grammar and expressions were accurate, and, when organizing the references, to help confirm that the APA citation format was correct. None of these uses involved content generation or academic judgement. The theories, structure and analysis presented in the thesis were all independently completed by me.

2. Extent of AI Use

The application scope of AI is very limited, mainly focusing on proofreading at the format and language levels. I did not ask AI to summarize literature, generate paragraphs, or involve it in theoretical construction, research design, questionnaire development, data analysis or the writing of discussion sections. Its role was restricted to checking citation formats and helping me identify grammatical issues in sentences. It did not interfere with the substantive research content of the thesis.

3. Impact of AI Use

I used AI only at the very end of the writing process to check a few sentences for grammar and to make sure that the reference list followed APA format. It did not affect the research process or the conclusions of the thesis in any way. All academic content, including theoretical analysis, selection of research methods, interpretation of data and development of the analytical logic, was completed independently by me. AI only offered some conveniences in the final stage of writing, while the core work of the thesis still entirely depended on my own judgement and effort.

4. Personal Contribution

All the research work for this thesis, including topic selection, literature reading, construction of the research framework, compilation of questionnaires, collection and analysis of data, results and discussion, as well as the writing of the full text, was independently completed by me. Every part of the thesis was written after repeatedly consulting materials and thinking carefully about how to present the argument. Although I used AI to assist in checking grammar or format in the later stage of my writing, these tools never took my place in any tasks that require academic thinking. The viewpoints and analyses in this thesis are entirely derived from my own work.

5. Ethical Considerations & Data Privacy

When using AI tools, I strictly abided by the relevant regulations of the school and took care not to input any content involving personal information or research data into the AI system. All questionnaire data and research materials were processed and analyzed locally and were not uploaded or shared with external tools. The use of AI was limited to language proofreading and format confirmation, and did not involve data processing, thereby ensuring that the entire research process complies with ethical norms and data privacy requirements.

6. Version History

The first draft of the thesis was independently written based on personal reading and analysis. During the continuous revision process, I used AI in a few paragraphs to check grammatical correctness or to confirm whether citation formats needed to be adjusted. All the modifications were made by me on the basis of the research logic and feedback from my supervisor. The content and structure of the thesis did not undergo essential changes due to AI; it merely helped me refine the final text to be more accurate.

7. Reflection on Non-Use

In terms of theoretical framework construction, research question determination, questionnaire design, data processing, statistical testing and result discussion, I did not use any AI tools at all. These parts rely on the researcher's own understanding and academic judgement, so it was more important to maintain the rigour of my thesis through manual analysis. Precisely because of this, I chose to rely entirely on my own reading, reasoning and writing in these sections to ensure the independence and credibility of the thesis.