

Exploring word-of-mouth: The Impact of Social Interaction, Attitudes and Video Ad Design in Tourist Behaviour

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Abstract: Internet travel advertising shapes and influences consumer behaviour and purchase decisions. The quality and form of the messages conveyed through these advertisements directly impact customer purchasing intent. Considering the information-intensive nature of the tourism industry and the growing significance of online platforms in destination marketing, web-based advertising has emerged as a popular method for promoting travel products to consumers. The initial perception of the destination showcased in the ad, and its presentation can substantially influence social interactions and ultimately affect how information about it is shared among acquaintances, both online and offline. By creating persuasive and captivating ads, marketers have the power to influence consumer behaviour profoundly and arouse their interest in various destinations. Therefore, this study focuses on the interactions between attitude towards the region, advertising design, and social interaction and how these can affect word-of-mouth behaviours in tourism promotional videos. The study collects 906 responses and examines the data using a structural equation model. For this purpose, a quantitative methodology using the SMART-PLS program was used. This study's findings highlight the importance of social interaction in spreading word-of-mouth, emphasising the crucial role of captivating visual design in creating positive associations with the brand. In addition, the mediating role of social interaction has also proved essential in the influence of visual design in ads on the spread of word-of-mouth among video viewers. These results are essential for marketing professionals, providing indispensable guidelines for creating persuasive and impactful content in tourism promotion videos.

Keywords: Attitude Towards the Region, Advertising Design, Social Interaction, Word-Of-Mouth, Tourism Promotional Videos

1. Introduction

In the increasingly competitive market, it is crucial to capture consumers' attention. This can be achieved through the development that is visually appealing and emotionally engaging. By leveraging emotional appeals and emphasising the unique characteristics of our tourism products, we can forge a deep connection with potential tourists and create a lasting impression in their minds. Social media destination advertisement videos play a crucial role in influencing travel decision-making. With their interactive and shareable features and effective destination promotion strategies, these are among the most impactful sources of information for travelers (Firoz, 2021).

The influence of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer decision-making in the digital era is substantial. In today's age, travelers actively share their experiences and seek information through online platforms, significantly impacting their attitudes towards different destinations (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). As a result, this plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of the attractiveness of specific locations. Therefore, electronic word-of-mouth has emerged as a decisive factor in driving travelers' choices and facilitating an informed decision-making process (Bui et al., 2022). Tourists' perceptions and attitudes towards a destination are crucial to its success. Portugal, known for its cultural diversity, historical significance, delicious food, and welcoming atmosphere, has become a popular choice among travelers. To keep up with the evolving digital landscape of tourism, Turismo de Portugal's promotion managers are utilising platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram to market their offerings effectively and influence the perceptions of potential visitors (Turismo de Portugal, 2022). Regional branding initiatives aimed at shaping regional perception have the potential to influence tourist attitudes and preferences significantly, thus impacting their destination choices (Charton-Vachet et al., 2020).

Moreover, to captivate consumers' attention and generate interest, tourism promotional campaigns should use visually appealing and emotionally engaging designs (Duffett, 2015). The visual appeal of online advertisements can significantly influence consumer confidence and preference (Charton-Vachet et al., 2020). Visual elements

such as images and colours are vital in conveying commercial messages and attracting attention without requiring extensive cognitive effort (Scott, 1994).

In this context, the study presents a comprehensive model that examines the connections between social interaction and electronic word-of-mouth, the visual design of advertisements, and attitudes towards tourism promotional videos. Extensive research was conducted to explore and validate these relationships using the SMART-PLS program and PLS-SEM methodology. The study gathered data from 906 participants who interacted with promotional videos. The findings of this research not only enhance the understanding of how social interactions and visual perception influence the spread of electronic word-of-mouth but also highlight the significant impact that promotional videos can have on shaping destination marketing in the future.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Interaction and Word of Mouth

Travelers intensely yearn for social connections as they seek to feel a sense of belonging and form relationships within a larger community. Travel is widely recognised as inherently social, with positive interactions crucial in shaping destination image perception (Prayag & Hosany, 2014). Social media engagement encompasses the range of emotions and perceptions individuals experience when approached with specific content on a particular platform. These experiences can fulfil various needs, such as seeking valuable information, passing time, and connecting with others meaningfully (Voorveld et al., 2018). Hsin Chang et al. (2013) state that attitudes influence behaviour and actions. This means that people with a positive attitude towards advertisements are more likely to respond positively to those ads.

The powerful influence of online word of mouth must be addressed in today's digital age. As consumers exchange information and opinions on the Internet, it significantly shapes their decision-making behaviours (Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). With the ever-growing influence of social media platforms, more and more potential travelers embrace sharing their travel experiences online to make informed choices (Zhu et al., 2021). Nowadays, most people engage in this activity through the Internet since it offers instant communication, privacy, long-lasting information storage, influential impact, and freedom from limitations such as time and location (Ma et al., 2015). Tourists' attitudes towards a specific region can be influenced by the information they gather on social networks. This information, in turn, shapes their perception of the destination. Electronic word-of-mouth plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards destinations and allows tourists to share their experiences and acquire knowledge about travel sites (Bui et al., 2022). Multiple incentives motivate individuals to engage in word-of-mouth communication, including personal development, consideration for others' experiences, support for the company or brand, financial rewards, and social advantages (Shen et al., 2016). By sharing information, consumers can provide valuable feedback and assist others in making decisions. This act of engagement validates their opinions and allows them to feel included within a community that values their input. Whether through face-to-face interactions or digital platforms, word-of-mouth can connect ordinary consumers who freely share recommendations without seeking monetary compensation for their efforts (Kang et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is posed:

H1: Social Interaction influences Word of Mouth.

2.2 Tourist's Attitude Towards the Region

Tourism plays a crucial role in driving global economic growth and social development. Portugal, known for its diverse cultures and rich heritage, has emerged as a renowned tourism destination. The country is intriguing and unparalleled with its unique traditions and welcoming atmosphere. Furthermore, Portugal's gastronomy and overall pleasant ambience make it an attractive choice among vacationers (Ramos & Costa, 2017). The tourism industry in Portugal has experienced significant expansion and development, making it a crucial contributor to the country's economic prosperity. Turismo de Portugal (2022) states that this sector generates wealth and employment opportunities. The tourism industry is undergoing rapid technological change, leading tourism promotion managers to develop a communication strategy that relies mainly on digital marketing using platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. The emergence of YouTube as a video marketing platform has revolutionised how businesses aim to generate web traffic and promote their products. This powerful tool allows companies to engage with target audiences effectively, providing an opportunity to showcase their touristic products and services (Roy et al., 2020).

Attitude is a learned and experiential predisposition that shapes consumers' consistent responses towards something, whether favourable or unfavourable (Pereira et al., 2019). In the tourism context, attitude refers to tourists' feelings and predispositions towards vacation destinations and the services offered by those destinations (Bresciani et al., 2015). The distinguishing aspects of a region's culture, traditions, methods and geographical conditions must be considered. These factors, along with human activities and local resources, make that region's offerings unique and differentiate them from others (Charton-Vachet et al., 2020). According to the same author, efforts towards regional branding initiatives can shape how a region is perceived, ultimately influencing tourism attitudes and preferences for that destination. When consumers have a favourable opinion of the brand and positive experiences, coupled with a sense of emotional connection, they develop an affection for the brand (Karjaluo et al., 2016). According to Karjaluo et al. (2016), this emotional attachment ultimately results in the dissemination of positive and electronic word-of-mouth. That said, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Tourists' Attitude Towards the Region featured in the ad influence their Social Interaction.

H3: Tourists' attitudes towards the region featured in the ad influence Word-of-mouth.

2.3 Ad Visual Design

Internet users tend to focus on information or messages relevant to their current needs or interests while disregarding other irrelevant information. This is because attention is a limited mental resource, and individuals can only allocate a certain amount at any given time (Chang & Wang, 2019). In today's highly competitive environment, it is imperative to grab the consumers' attention and interest. This can be accomplished by designing campaigns that are visually captivating and emotionally compelling (Duffett, 2015). Persuasive information in tourism advertisements must effectively appeal to potential consumers, evoking emotions, desires and rationality (Kazakova et al., 2016). To effectively connect with consumers, regional branding strategies such as tourism promotional videos should focus on developing a solid and enduring relationship, as stated by Szondi (2010). Therefore, by using emotive appeals and highlighting the distinctive qualities of the region's tourism products, the opportunity to establish a deep connection with potential tourists and leave a lasting impact on their perceptions arises.

The visual design of a web ad is vital for its effectiveness and success. Aesthetically pleasing design positively impacts consumer confidence, making it an essential factor in the visual appeal of the web ad (Cho, 1999; Cyr, 2008). According to Visual Rhetoric Theory (Scott, 1994), visual elements, such as images and colour, play a crucial role in conveying commercial meaning in marketing messages, having the power to capture attention and significantly impact the target audience without requiring much cognitive effort. Therefore, various captivating techniques in online advertisements, like bold visuals and vibrant colours, can capture visitors' attention and create a lasting impression (Shaouf et al., 2016). The same research has shown that when consumers have a positive attitude towards web advertising, they are more likely to prefer the advertised brand and develop positive attitudes towards it (Shaouf et al., 2016). Thus, the following hypothesis is theorised:

H4: Ad Visual Design influences Tourists' Social Interaction.

H5: Ad Visual Design influences Word-of-Mouth.

The hypotheses proposed in this study have formulated a conceptual model, illustrated in Figure 1. This model aims to illustrate the interrelationships and associations between various variables being examined.

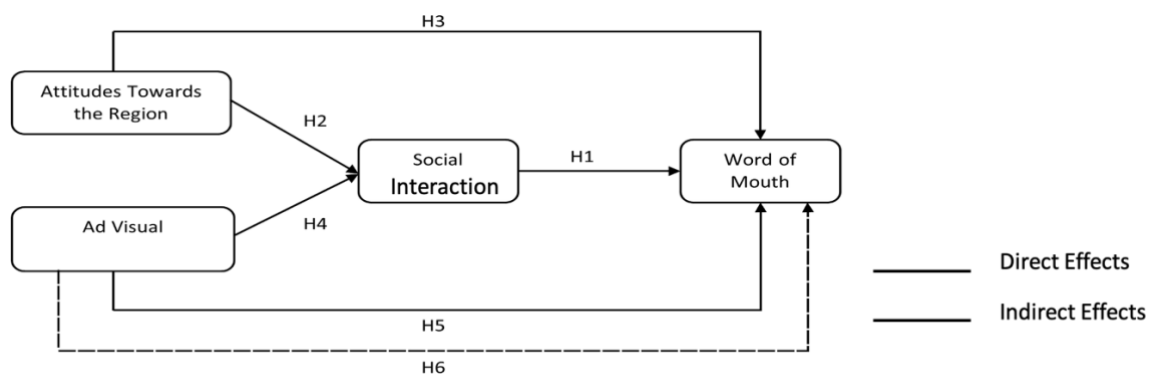


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach and utilises survey questionnaires to collect data. The variables used in the study were measured using scales created by previous researchers, which were adjusted for better understanding. Data was gathered by presenting participants with a video advertisement and providing them with a questionnaire link for completion. Upon viewing the video, the participants utilised their electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets, or laptops, to respond to the questionnaire effectively. The social interaction scale was derived from a study by Voorveld et al. (2018), while the scale for measuring word of mouth was based on the work of Kang et al. (2020). In order to assess ad visual design, a scale designed by Shaouf et al. (2016) was employed. Lastly, attitudes towards the region were evaluated using an adjusted version of the scale developed by Carlson et al. (2020). The survey questions were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This allowed participants to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements. The study's sample comprised 906 individuals in the Center of Portugal (70.3%). The data revealed that 68.3% of respondents identified as female, and 47.6% were under 22.

Table 1: Sample Characterisation

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	284	31.3
	Female	619	68.3
	Other	3	0.33
Age	≤22	431	47.6
	23-38	216	23.8
	39-54	195	21.5
	55-73	63	7.0
	≥74	1	0.1
Academic Qualifications	Primary Education	71	7.8
	Secondary Education	416	45.9
	Bachelor Degree	342	37.7
	Master's Degree	70	7.7
	Doctorate	7	0.8
Occupation	Student	381	42.0
	Worker-Student	79	8.7
	Employed	401	44.2
	Unemployed	25	2.8
	Retired	20	2.2
Residence	North of Portugal	122	13.5
	Center of Portugal	638	70.4
	Lisbon Region	48	5.3
	Alentejo Region	63	7.0
	Algarve Region	13	1.4
	Açores	3	0.3
	Madeira	3	0.3
	Out of Portugal	16	1.8

4. Results

The analysis was performed using the Smart PLS 3.3.2 software, employing a two-step procedure. Firstly, the measurement model's validity and reliability were assessed. Then, the structural model was analysed to examine the connections between constructs and evaluate hypotheses accordingly. Table 2 presents the findings of the measurement model analysis, which includes various metrics to evaluate the model's performance. The explained variance within each construct is satisfactory, with the average variance extracted ranging from 0.814 to 0.858 (AVE>0.5). All standardised coefficients for the items meet the minimum acceptable value of 0.7, as Hair et al. (2017) recommended, confirming their validity. Additionally, high levels of internal consistency are observed among items within each construct, indicated by composite reliability values ranging from 0.932 to .960, which exceed literature recommendations (CF > 0.7) provided by Hair et al. (2017), ensuring robustness and validity of the constructs.

Table 2: Measurement Model

Latent Variable	Code Items	λ	<i>t-values</i>	CF	AVE
Ad Visual Design	AD_DSG01	0,907	79,655	0,960	0,858
	AD_DSG02	0,937	152,440		
	AD_DSG03	0,929	118,815		
	AD_DSG04	0,932	112,959		
Attitude	Att01	0,905	97,048	0,946	0,814
	Att02	0,889	71,801		
	Att03	0,910	93,786		
	Att04	0,905	83,826		
Social Interaction	SOCINT01	0,915	123,511	0,936	0,829
	SOCINT02	0,920	119,160		
	SOCINT03	0,897	95,242		
Word of Mouth	WOM01	0,925	132,611	0,932	0,820
	WOM02	0,931	154,229		
	WOM03	0,858	71,795		

To evaluate the measurement model, discriminant validity was examined. The Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was used to assess if the square root of the average variance extracted from each construct is more significant than its correlations with other latent constructs (Hair et al., 2017), as shown in Table 3. These findings demonstrate that there is differentiation between the constructs, supporting discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant validity - Fornell and Larcker criterion (1981)

Construct	AD_DSG	Attitude	SOCINT	WOM
AD_DSG	0,926			
Attitude	0,408	0,902		
SOCINT	0,489	0,425	0,911	
WOM	0,343	0,367	0,743	0,905

After verifying the accuracy and consistency of the measurement model, the causal link between these variables was examined. The results strongly support six out of seven tested hypotheses, with one hypothesis remaining unsupported (Table 4).

Table 4: Hypothesis Validation – Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Trajectory	β	<i>t-values</i>	<i>p-values</i>	Validation
H1	SOCINT \rightarrow WOM	0,734	29,755	0,000	Corroborated
H2	Att \rightarrow SOCINT	0,272	8,486	0,000	Corroborated
H3	Att \rightarrow WOM	0,075	2,746	0,006	Corroborated
H4	AD_DSG \rightarrow SOCINT	0,378	11,372	0,000	Corroborated
H5	AD_DSG \rightarrow WOM	-0,047	1,755	0,079	Not Corroborated

The indirect results were also analysed and are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Hypothesis Validation – Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Trajectory	β	<i>t-values</i>	<i>p-values</i>	Validation
H6	AD_DSG \rightarrow WOM	0,277	10,271	0,000	Corroborated

5. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 was proven valid ($\beta_{\text{SOCINT} \rightarrow \text{WOM}} = 0,734$; $p < 0.01$), indicating that engaging in social interaction significantly impacts the dissemination of word-of-mouth information. Interacting with others validates consumer opinions and creates a sense of belonging within a community where their contributions are valued. Whether through face-to-face conversations or online platforms, word-of-mouth serves as a means for everyday individuals to establish connections and willingly share recommendations. Consequently, when consumers engage socially, they are more inclined to participate in word-of-mouth behaviours by expressing their opinions.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were confirmed ($\beta_{\text{Att} \rightarrow \text{SOCINT}} = 0,272$; $p < 0.01$; $\beta_{\text{Att} \rightarrow \text{WOM}} = 0,075$; $p < 0.01$) and are in line with the views of authors such as Karjaluoto et al. (2016) and Charton-Vachet et al. (2020). The attitude of tourists towards a destination impacts their social interactions and willingness to share opinions, both offline and online. According to Charton-Vachet et al. (2020), culture, cuisine, local people, and advertisements shape tourists' perceptions of the destination, affecting their attitudes and preferences. The connection between tourists and the destination leads to positive word-of-mouth spread through various channels, including electronic platforms (Karjaluoto et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 4 ($\beta_{\text{AD_DSG} \rightarrow \text{SOCINT}} = 0,378$; $p < 0.01$) has been validated, so it is possible to conclude that the design of advertisements, including colours, visuals, and overall aesthetics, significantly impacts viewers' social interaction. These factors are crucial in capturing consumers' attention and generating attraction towards the advertised brand, ultimately leading to positive feelings and perceptions. These views align with those of Shaouf et al. (2016). The findings did not support Hypothesis 5 ($\beta_{\text{AD_DSG} \rightarrow \text{WOM}} = -0,047$; $p > 0.05$), suggesting no significant connection between the visual design of the advertisement and the spread of word-of-mouth. This is not in line with authors such as Al-Gasawneh et al. (2023), who state that visual social media marketing aims to provide entertainment and valuable information, engaging customers and encouraging them to share their feedback. The study described is conducted in the real estate sector and is based in Jordan, which is why the results may differ, given that this study is in the tourism sector and features Portuguese tourists as its target audience. Under these conditions, ad visual design does not contribute significantly to spreading word of mouth among viewers. However, by examining the indirect relationships between the visual design of advertisements and word-of-mouth while considering the mediating role of social interaction (H6), it can be determined that there is a positive correlation.

6. Conclusion

This study delves into the complex dynamics between attitude towards a destination, design elements in advertising, social interactions, and their impact on word-of-mouth behaviours within tourism promotional videos. Internet travel advertising shapes consumer behaviour and purchase decisions. The messages conveyed through these ads directly impact customer intent. Web-based advertising is popular for promoting travel products to consumers. The initial perception of the destination showcased in the ad substantially influences

social interactions and affects how information about it is shared online and offline. Marketers can profoundly influence consumer behaviour towards destinations by creating persuasive and attractive ads.

This research highlights the importance of social engagement in stimulating the expression of opinions and facilitating the spread of word-of-mouth. Additionally, it underscores how various factors shape tourists' perceptions and preferences, ultimately fostering a solid connection between tourists and their chosen destinations. This connection serves as a catalyst for positive word-of-mouth dissemination through electronic platforms and other channels. Notably, captivating visual design is crucial in capturing consumers' attention and generating attraction towards the advertised brand. As a result, they evoke positive emotions and perceptions among the public, reinforcing the association between visual design aesthetics and social interaction dynamics. The mediating role of social interaction also proved essential in the influence of visual design in ads on the dissemination of word of mouth by video viewers.

The research highlights some insights for marketers in the tourism sector. Firstly, developing positive perceptions towards a destination or brand is essential to marketing strategy. By understanding which attitudes influence social interactions and word-of-mouth, marketers can focus on strategies to foster these attitudes, such as promotional campaigns and creating impactful customer experiences. Additionally, it is crucial to recognise that ad design, including colours, visuals, and overall aesthetics, plays a significant role in capturing the audience's attention. Marketers should aim to create visually appealing ads that evoke positive emotions and align with brand values. The quality of ad design directly affects social interactions and subsequently influences WOM.

To enhance future research, exploring the variability of these variables in diverse cultural contexts and international tourist destinations is recommended. Gaining insights into how cultural factors impact the connections between these variables could facilitate the development of more efficient global marketing strategies. It would also be interesting to explore the impact of various social media platforms on social interactions, attitudes, and word-of-mouth. Each platform possesses distinct qualities that can shape communication dynamics and audience perspectives.

The findings of this study are derived from data explicitly gathered from Portuguese tourists, which may restrict the broader application of these results to different demographics or cultural settings. To validate the generalizability of these findings on a global scale, further research with more diverse samples is required. Additionally, it is worth noting that approximately half of the respondents in this study are women under 22 years old. This limited demographic representation could impact the robustness of the conclusions drawn. Therefore, a comprehensive and balanced analysis is recommended for future studies to obtain more accurate and reliable insights.

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