

The new media environment effect on travel consumption among Generation Z in China

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Abstract. In recent years, with the rapid development of the Internet era leading to sustained economic growth, people's consumption level continues to rise, which triggered a growing demand for social tourism. Among them, Generation Z, as a group growing up on the Internet, has higher consumption power and willingness to consume. They play an important role in promoting the development of the consumer market and have slowly become the main force in the tourism market. Therefore, studying the tourism consumption characteristics of Generation Z in the new media environment is the key element for the breakthrough and development of the tourism market. Through literature integration and questionnaire survey, this paper analyses the tourism consumption behavior of the Generation Z group when using new media, explores the close relationship between Generation Z tourism and new media marketing, and gives suggestions on the future development of new media tourism marketing for the Generation Z from different aspects.

Keywords: Generation Z, new media, China, travel consumption, marketing approach.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's economic development has been stable and the per capita income has increased, so people are focusing more on hedonic consumption. This means that national demand for tourism is growing, especially since 2023, when China entered the post-pandemic era, people's desire to travel is stronger and China's tourism market has seen a marked recovery. In addition to the strong government's support in tourism policy, these booms in tourism should thanks to the support of the new media. New media as an effective marketing channel sets off a wave of travel experience sharing through various new media platforms, which have helped to create numerous tourism hotspots in the whole society. In this environment, as a group with a strong connection to the Internet, Generation Z has gradually become an important consumer group in the tourism market, and their huge potential consumption capacity in tourism is slowly emerging [1].

New media is a new way of communication relative to traditional media, including not only digital magazines, digital newspapers, and mobile TV, which are supported by digital technology but also social media that is based on the Internet. This new mode of communication has a distinct real-time nature equivalent to traditional media while integrating the advantages of the Internet such as good interactivity, diversified information, and high efficiency. New media provides a positive peer-to-peer communication channel for tourism [2]. Many travelers post blogs on social media platforms with travel experiences and recommendations, which allow people to preview information about destinations online, as well as participate in discussions to evaluate destinations based on suggestions by all. Social media platforms have thus been recognized as spaces where travel consumers connect [3]. The involvement of digital technology in tourism marketing allows tourism consumers to have proper access to information, while it also helps new media marketing to participate in the decision-making process of tourism consumers [4]. Social media can lead to the transformation of non-prospective customers into prospective customers through visual, interactive, and personalized tweets [5]. It also helps customers to make decisions faster and amplifies their satisfaction with the entire process of shopping [6]. Indeed, new media can also play an important role in managing customer relationships in the tourism market [7]. Browsing data and Status of discussion on social media platforms help marketers to get more intuitive feedback from consumers, and digital technologies can

also help with case studies as well as place-based analyses, which can assist companies in better-improving tourism products and services [3,6].

New media is becoming increasingly important in helping with tourism marketing. In addition to tourism companies, many national destination management organizations (DMOs) have started to use this promotional channel. The goal of this new type of marketing strategy focuses more on creating an interactive relationship, such as the interaction between the tourism industry and the consumers to provide consumers with customized information as well as the interaction between new media users and consumers to provide consumers with authentic and extensive sources of information [2,8]. This interaction reflects the personalized needs of people in tourism nowadays, implying that the further development of new media marketing needs to segment the tourism market and make different promotional content for different markets [2]. There is a study found that Virtual Reality (VR) technology has been widely used in the tourism industry, but the marketing communications effectiveness of VR is better compared to pictures only when it awakens consumers' emotions [9]. It's essential to build a good relationship between new media and consumers to create a media effect and promote the development of the industry. It's essential to build a good relationship between new media and consumers to create a media effect and promote the development of the tourism industry [5].

New media tourism marketing should pay special attention to the tourism market segment of Generation Z. Generation Z refers to the generation born between 1995 and 2009. In recent years, they have demonstrated great consumption potential and have been the most popular target of research in various industries [10].

Generation Z has grown up in an Internet environment, with a high usage rate of new media platforms. Because of this, they are susceptible to the influence of new media information throughout the entire tourism process and have become an important consumer force in the new media tourism marketing market nowadays. Generation Z tends to seek a pleasurable experience in consumption and pays more attention to the value of activity and social attributes [11]. This also implies that the tourism market should pay attention to the value and social attributes of these consumption activities. It implies that the tourism market should pay emphasis on the optimization of the consumption environment, the reshaping of the consumption culture, and the upgrading of consumer goods. The in-depth development of the tourism industry requires new media marketing content that is more in tune with the consumer behavioral preferences of Generation Z to stimulate their consumption potential [12].

This paper focuses on the great influence of new media in tourism marketing and the huge consumption potential of Generation Z. With the intent of exploring the relevance and influence of the new media environment on tourism consumption of Generation Z in China, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of new media as a marketing tool. And investigate the future direction of new media marketing to better utilize the marketing advantages of new media to stimulate the tourism consumption level of Generation Z.

2. Results of the Questionnaire

To further explore the relationship between new media marketing and Generation Z in China, this paper distributed research-related questionnaires. A total of 116 valid questionnaires have been collected, and the data sources cover most regions of China. The results of the questionnaire data analysis are as follows.

2.1. High Acceptance and User Stickiness of New Media-Involved Forms of Tourism Among Generation Z

Most of the surveyed Generation Z have used new media to participate in their traveling activities, and nearly 90% of the respondents are willing to continue to use new media platforms to obtain traveling information. There is a wide range of new media platforms that can provide traveling

information, including short video platforms, social platforms, Q&A platforms, and traveling service platforms, etc. Among them, social media platforms like TikTok and Red are the most important sources of information for Generation Z during their traveling (Fig.1).

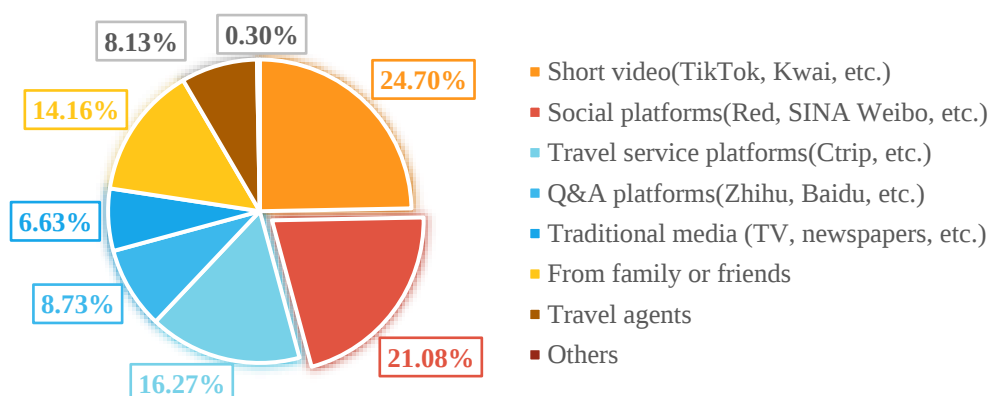


Figure 1. Travel information channels used by Generation Z in China

2.2. Generation Z Has a High Level of Travel Consumption, Which Can Be Heavily Influenced by New Media Marketing Method

The results of the questionnaire show that Generation Z has a strong desire to travel. The proportion of respondents who never traveled was less than 3%, and even more than half of the respondents said they traveled more than three times a year. Although a part of Generation Z is students with unstable economic sources, the data results reflect that their annual traveling consumption is high, and the number of respondents who spend more than 5,000 yuan per year reaches 30%. These results confirm the existence of a huge potential traveling consumption capacity in Generation Z (Fig. 2).

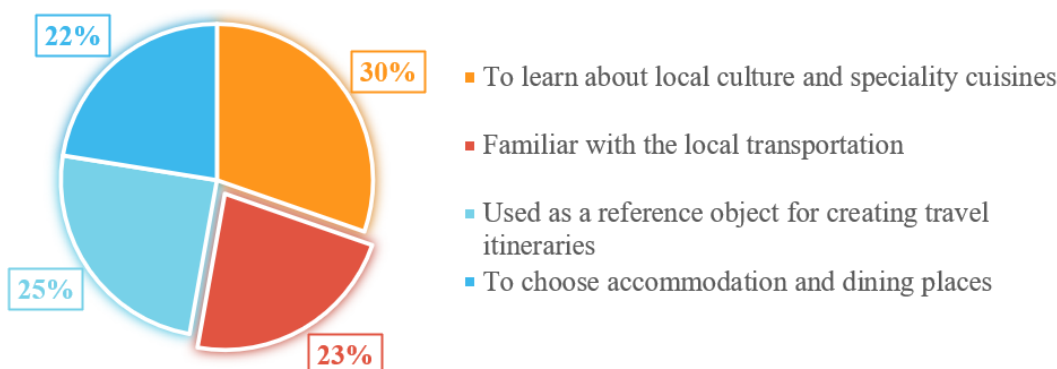


Figure 2. Purpose of searching for travel information on new media platforms

In addition, the results of the questionnaire reflect that Generation Z's consumer behavior is influenced by new media platforms over the entire travel cycle. They use the information on new media platforms to choose travel destinations and plan travel routes before traveling, as well as for choosing transport, accommodation, and meals during travel. At the same time, some may post about their feeling on the new media after the trip. The travel experiences posted by ordinary users or We-media bloggers, together with the official promotional content released by the destination cities, will enter the vision of Generation Z through the hot list's module or personalized recommendations. 88.5% of respondents said they would be attracted by the content, leading to the idea of traveling to a certain attraction or city. This is undoubtedly a good way to develop potential customers for the tourism market. It is worth noting that the results reflect that the travel information that Generation Z wants to learn about on new media platforms is more inclined to keywords such as culture and special features, which are paid more attention than topics such as transport, accommodation, and dining.

2.3. New Media Tourism Marketing Methods Still Have Promotion Space

In terms of travel experiences using new media platforms, some Generation Z in China will feel that pre-trip expectations are higher than post-trip satisfaction. Although the questionnaire survey data shows that the gap between the two values is not very large, and the overall satisfaction of the content of the tourism module of new media exceeds 80%, it means that there is an imbalance between the content of the tourism marketing of new media and the experience of traveling (Table 1). There is still room for the development of the new media industry in the tourism module, and certain measures need to be taken to regulate new media marketing, as well as to enhance the satisfaction of Generation Z.

Table 1. Generation Z's feelings about the new media tourism marketing

	pre-trip expectations	post-trip satisfaction
Average value	4.45 / 5.00	3.79 / 5.00

3. Analysis of Reasons for Questionnaire Results

3.1. Analysis of Reasons for Questionnaire Results

Generation Z is deeply connected to new media in their daily life. According to the data of the 2023 China Network Audiovisual Development Research Report, as of December 2022, the scale of China's network audiovisual users reached 1.040 billion, of which Generation Z users accounted for a relatively high proportion. At the same time, the report also reflects the high frequency of platform usage among users, with the per capita single-day usage of short videos alone exceeding 2.5 hours. The high number of users and high usage means that there exists a great likelihood that Generation Z will be influenced by the fragmented information about travel placed in the new media platform when entertaining themselves through it, thus generating motivation to travel.

Generation Z is socially focused and has a large degree of engagement in the new media travel module. The data in the China Short Video Development Research Report (2023) shows that the proportion of users who have posted homemade short videos climbed from 28.2 percent to 46.9 percent between 2018 and 2022. In such social media platforms as Red, Generation Z is equally keen on posting experience posts, and giving recommendations for attractions, accommodations, restaurants, and so on. Vlogs, blogs, and posts have become an important form for Generation Z to record their lives and express themselves. The new media industry's developed trend of universal creation and sharing has deepened the interactive influence of new media. This is because widespread and authentic sharing by the public can better motivate Generation Z to create consumption motivations, make consumption decisions, and improve the sensation of experience during the traveling process.

3.2. Support of Digital and Network Technologies

The increasing sophistication of immersive technologies is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the popularity of new media marketing in the tourism industry. Many present-day travel product displays contain 3D renderings, and VR technology allows potential customers to interact with the destination online before booking the product [13]. These advancements help consumers understand the tourism product more intuitively, prompting them to make faster and more satisfying consumer decisions. As a concentration of information, new media platforms contain multi-dimensional content from officials, bloggers, and ordinary users, which can satisfy travel consumers' needs for most of the search content and search efficiency. The integration of personalized algorithms makes the content of push notifications more in line with the user's preferences, thus increasing the success rate of marketing and reducing marketing costs. In particular, the incorporation of the OTA platform makes the new media marketing form a closed loop, which enables consumers to book tourism products directly

online after generating a willingness to buy them. This format facilitates the product purchasing process for customers of tickets, accommodation, and scenic entertainment items [3].

3.3. Impact of New Media Promotion on Destination Image and Tourism Culture

The 2023 China Consumption Trend Report mentions that in 2023, consumers will pay more attention to their small worlds, and increasingly pursue a sense of access, value, and meaning in consumption. The questionnaire survey shows that Generation Z has a high demand for the special cultural information of tourist destinations, which coincidentally confirms this statement. As a perfect platform for creating the image and spreading cultural connotations of tourist destinations, new media caters to the travel consumption preferences of Generation Z, leading to more travel consumption. For example, Quanzhou's rich natural and cultural landscapes and unique southern Fujian regional culture presented in new media platforms have helped to create an image of a culturally vibrant city, attracting many Generations Z to experience it.

New media can change travel culture [2]. In recent years, traveling to experience the character of the city in a short period has become popular among China's Generation Z. This type of travel has been called "flashpacker" or "silent traveler", which means those who are media savvy and relies heavily upon social media in his/her entire travel process [14]. They choose this form of travel not only because they have less money and time available, but because they are greatly influenced by the new media's promotion and other users' experience of that. New media promotional content plays an important role in influencing tourism culture and the environment of tourism will change permanently through the influence of media consumption and the construction of tourism imaginations [15].

3.4. New Media Platforms Have Drawbacks

The discrepancy between the satisfaction of the new media tourism-related modules compared to the expectations is caused by the drawbacks of the new media itself. In the questionnaire, most respondents feedback that the quality of tourism information provided by new media platforms varies, and many restaurants, accommodations, and attractions are falsely advertised. The difference between the publicity content and the experience can easily cause disappointment among consumers and discourage Generation Z from traveling. Due to the nature of new media to create hotspots and pursue traffic, many enterprises will release excessive promotional information or false propaganda, resulting in information overload and users' trust. Meeting the needs of the users with good management and planning is an important development direction for new media tourism marketing today.

4. Recommendations and Development Insights

New media undoubtedly plays an irreplaceable role in information sharing and is a powerful tool for tourism marketing. Its influence is not only seen in its ability to engage with Generation Z's whole tourism process, but also in its ability to link to reputation management, brand management, and evaluation of companies [2]. However, it is worth warning that such ability can have negative consequences if not properly managed [16,17]. Therefore, it is urgent to consider how to circumvent the disadvantages of new media marketing and better utilize its advantages to provide strong momentum for the tourism industry.

4.1. New Media Tourism Marketing Content Should Target Key Customer Groups

Since similar promotional content will resonate differently in the minds of different categories of consumers and new media marketing can only be utilized to its advantage if the connection between the video and the user is well established [5]. So, it is needed to segment the market and create marketing content for the target group. Among them, it is necessary to pay special attention to Generation Z, a mainstream tourism consumer group and a loyal user of new media. Marketing managers should understand their consumption habits and preferences to change the marketing

content in response to the changes in their interests [9]. After the epidemic, Generation Z prefers living a more authentic life, pursuing local customs and culture, which requires the new media tourism marketing content to focus more on the theme of "special" and "culture" to cater to the needs of Generation Z.

4.2. The New Media Tourism Marketing Market Needs to Be Better Managed

Most of China's Generation Z have had bad travel experiences due to low-quality or false information. They resent rip-off consumption and look forward to a healthy, friendly, and honest tourism market. In this regard, the Chinese government should introduce policies to curb new media marketing behaviors that are contrary to the healthy development of the tourism market. The China National Tourism Administration and the tourism bureaus of each destination should strengthen market supervision, monitor the operation of tourism marketing on new media platforms to reduce the impact of false information on User's sense of experience, and take strict measures against illegal issues. In terms of tourism products, tourism bureaus should strengthen the management of the construction of local tourism facilities, and ensure convenient transport, fire, and health safety for a better traveling experience for tourists. They should also improve the monitoring and feedback mechanism, and identify the pain points of development through field visits and market research.

4.3. New Media Tourism Marketing Needs Rational Planning

Tourism enterprises face problems such as the conflict between corporate culture and social media culture, adaptive changes in management structure, and low formalization when using new media for marketing [18]. For this, systematic strategic planning for new media marketing is needed. Firstly, tourism enterprises should pay close consideration to the social and cultural preferences of Generation Z, and make differentiated products and services, to enhance the tourism consumption satisfaction of Generation Z. In the process of new media marketing, it is necessary to guarantee the quality and authenticity of the marketing content, ensure sufficient marketing investment, and timely update of marketing technical knowledge. Besides, tourism enterprises should hire professional new media tourism marketing management and operation personnel to achieve low-cost and high-conversion rates of marketing. Creating cultural IP and a good corporate image is an essential new media marketing component for tourism companies. Only creating word-of-mouth with quality can make Generation Z more trusting of this marketing method.

5. Conclusion

The inextricable relationship between Generation Z and new media largely determines they made extensive use of new media platforms to assist with travel consumption, even the use of new media has continued throughout all stages of their travel process. However, the new media now has the disadvantage of overexploitation of traffic, insufficient positioning of the tourism needs of Generation Z, and insufficient market segmentation and marketing. In this regard, it is recommended that the government should strengthen management and formulate policies to create a better new media environment. And relevant enterprises should also build systems to improve the quality of tourism information, as well as make new media marketing content and travel products that are more adaptable to China's Generation Z. With the emergence of the new media medium "vision pro", which means that 3d technology will be deeply integrated with new media, the relationship between new media and Generation Z will likely be even stronger, and the development of the Generation Z tourism market is left to be explored.

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