

THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON THE URBAN IMAGE OF TIANJIN, CHINA

FENG, W.^{1,2*} – COSTA, F. D.¹ – SABRI, M. F.³

¹ Faculty of Modern Languages And Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

² Faculty of Media Design, Tianjin Modern Vocational Technology College, Tianjin, China.

³ Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author

e-mail: [gs61869wangfeng\[at\]163.com](mailto:gs61869wangfeng[at]163.com)

(Received 17th June 2025; revised 11th September 2025; accepted 20th September 2025)

Abstract. In the era of social media and short-video platforms, digital content has become a central driver of urban perception, city branding, and cultural communication. Cities increasingly rely on user-generated content (UGC) to construct distinctive images, attract tourism, and engage residents, reflecting the growing intersection of digital media, urban culture, and audience participation. This study investigates the influence of Douyin (China's TikTok) UGC on the urban image of Tianjin. Combining qualitative research with theoretical analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both content creators and audience members to explore how UGC shapes perceptions of the city. The findings indicate that Douyin videos enhance Tianjin's image through authentic storytelling, selective framing of cultural and urban landmarks, and emotional engagement that encourages tourism intention. The study also highlights the reciprocal relationship between creators and audiences, emphasizing the participatory nature of digital urban branding. Based on these insights, it is recommended that city authorities collaborate closely with content creators, diversify narrative strategies, integrate interactive features, and develop guidelines to ensure accurate and engaging portrayals of urban culture. These strategies can optimize digital urban branding, strengthen public perception, and support sustainable cultural and tourism development in a digitally connected era.

Keywords: *Tiktok, creative cognition, user-generated content, urban image*

Introduction

In recent years, short-form video platforms have become a major force in reshaping media consumption and content creation patterns (Balogun-Ibijunle et al., 2024; Liang et al., 2024). Among these, Douyin, the Chinese counterpart of TikTok, has emerged as a dominant player, attracting hundreds of millions of daily active users and influencing cultural, social, and economic spheres. Originally perceived as a space for entertainment, Douyin has evolved into a platform for marketing, education, and urban promotion. A distinctive feature of Douyin is its abundance of user-generated content (UGC), where individuals, rather than institutions, create and share media that can reach vast audiences (Kim and Kim, 2024). UGC has transformed the dynamics of urban image construction, shifting from top-down, official narratives to participatory, decentralized processes. Tianjin, a municipality in northern China, provides a compelling case to examine these dynamics. With a rich historical heritage, distinctive architectural styles, and a unique blend of Chinese and Western cultural influences, Tianjin possesses significant urban branding potential. However, it has often been overshadowed by Beijing in both domestic and international visibility. While local authorities have invested in promotional campaigns, the rise of Douyin offers an

alternative channel for enhancing the city's profile. Viral short videos showcasing Tianjin's food culture, historical districts, and modern urban landscapes have drawn nationwide attention, raising questions about how such grassroots portrayals shape perceptions of the city.

Traditionally, city images were crafted through official tourism campaigns, media reports, and cultural events—strategically curated and controlled (Liu, 2025; Pinhal et al., 2025). Douyin UGC differs in that it is diverse in style, personal in tone, and often spontaneous in nature. This content can amplify positive aspects of Tianjin, uncover hidden attractions, or, conversely, highlight fewer flattering realities. Its speed of dissemination and interactive features allow audiences not only to consume but also to remix and share content, thereby influencing the collective narrative. This democratization of image-making raises critical questions for media and communication research: How do Douyin creators choose to represent Tianjin? How do audiences interpret these representations? And to what extent do these interpretations influence emotional connections and behavioral intentions toward the city? Existing research on digital media and urban image has primarily focused on major metropolitan areas or internationally recognized tourist destinations such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu. Studies on Douyin often explore marketing strategies, content characteristics, or audience engagement but rarely integrate perspectives from both content creators and audiences (Qian et al., 2025; Fung et al., 2022). Furthermore, research on Tianjin's image in the context of UGC remains scarce. This gap calls for a qualitative approach that can capture the nuanced motivations, interpretations, and cultural meanings embedded in UGC production and reception. The present study addresses this gap by examining how Douyin UGC influences the urban image of Tianjin from both the production and audience perspectives. Using semi-structured interviews, the research engages with content creators who feature Tianjin in their videos and with audiences who regularly consume such content. This dual approach enables a comparison between creators' intended portrayals and audiences' interpretations, offering a more holistic view of the communication process.

This study contributes in three main ways: (1) It expands the understanding of urban image formation within the participatory media environment, integrating concepts from uses and gratifications theory, framing theory, and participatory culture; (2) It demonstrates the value of qualitative interviews for unpacking the complex interplay between production and reception in UGC contexts; (3) It provides insights for municipal authorities, tourism boards, and cultural organizations on how to engage with grassroots media to promote city branding effectively.

Literature review

User-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) refers to media content produced and shared by individuals who are not formally affiliated with media organizations or institutional actors (Ozuem et al., 2024). The term encompasses a wide range of formats, including videos, photos, blog posts, and reviews, that are voluntarily created and publicly disseminated via digital platforms (Elhariry et al., 2024). UGC is typically characterized by three features: content created outside of professional routines and practices; publication on publicly accessible platforms; and creative input from users rather than corporate producers. With the proliferation of Web 2.0 technologies, UGC has shifted

the balance of power between media producers and consumers, giving rise to what McCorkle (2024) calls “participatory culture,” in which audiences actively shape the media environment through creation, commentary, and circulation of content. In the context of social media, UGC plays a significant role in shaping opinions, influencing consumer behaviors, and creating cultural trends. Short-form video platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and TikTok have accelerated this trend by lowering technical barriers to production and offering algorithmic recommendation systems that enable content to reach large audiences quickly. Unlike traditional media content, which often undergoes editorial gatekeeping, UGC reflects a diversity of perspectives, styles, and levels of production quality. This diversity allows for more authentic and relatable representations, which can foster higher audience engagement and trust (Burgess et al., 2024). From a communication theory perspective, UGC aligns with the uses and gratifications framework, which posits that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy needs such as information, entertainment, and social interaction (Bae, 2023). In practice, UGC also operates as a form of peer-to-peer communication, in which creators and audiences share similar social standing, thereby reducing the perceived distance between them. This democratization of content production, however, raises questions about accuracy, quality control, and representational ethics. Nonetheless, in domains ranging from product marketing to political communication, UGC has demonstrated its capacity to influence public perception at scale, making it a central topic in media and communication research.

Urban image

Urban image refers to the mental representation individuals hold about a city, encompassing both tangible and intangible attributes. Conroy-Dalton and Bafna (2003) conceptualized urban image as the combination of physical elements, such as landmarks, paths, and districts, and symbolic meanings attached to them. Later studies expanded this view to include emotional and evaluative dimensions, framing urban image as a multi-dimensional construct that includes cognitive (knowledge and beliefs about the city), affective (emotional responses), and conative (behavioral intentions) components (Chen et al., 2025; Mansour et al., 2023). The formation of urban image is influenced by both direct experiences, such as visiting the city, and indirect sources, including media portrayals, word-of-mouth, and advertising. In traditional media environments, urban images were predominantly shaped through official tourism campaigns, travel literature, and mass media coverage, which often presented idealized and consistent narratives. These representations served as strategic tools for place marketing and city branding, aiming to attract tourists, investors, and residents. In recent years, the rise of digital media has diversified the sources through which urban images are formed. Social media platforms, online review sites, and travel blogs have allowed ordinary individuals to contribute their perspectives, often offering more personal and localized insights than institutional sources. As a result, urban image has become more fragmented and dynamic, reflecting the multiplicity of experiences and interpretations circulating in online spaces. This shift challenges traditional city branding strategies, as municipal authorities must now compete with, or incorporate, grassroots narratives in their promotional efforts.

Douyin UGC and urban image

Douyin has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for UGC in China, particularly in shaping perceptions of places. Its short-form, visually oriented format is well-suited to capturing the sensory and experiential aspects of urban life, from panoramic shots of cityscapes to close-up portrayals of street food. The platform's algorithm-driven recommendation system enables content to spread rapidly beyond the creator's immediate social network, allowing representations of cities to reach diverse and geographically dispersed audiences. Several studies have highlighted the role of Douyin in place promotion and urban branding. For example, research on Chengdu's "panda culture" videos and Xi'an's Tang Dynasty-themed performances shows how localized cultural elements can be packaged into short, shareable videos that attract tourism interest (Li et al., 2024; Li and Tay, 2024). These examples demonstrate that Douyin UGC can serve as a form of unofficial place marketing, often more engaging and relatable than professionally produced materials. The participatory nature of the platform also allows audiences to interact with, remix, and contribute to these narratives, reinforcing the visibility and memorability of certain urban features. However, Douyin's influence on urban image is not unidirectional or uniformly positive. While UGC can highlight a city's strengths, it can also expose weaknesses, such as overcrowding at tourist spots or inadequate public services. Moreover, the platform's emphasis on entertainment and novelty can lead to selective representation, where visually appealing or sensational aspects are prioritized over comprehensive portrayals. For Tianjin, this means that its rich historical and cultural heritage may be overshadowed by viral trends unless creators intentionally integrate deeper narratives into their content. Understanding how creators frame the city and how audiences interpret these frames is therefore crucial for assessing Douyin's impact on urban image.

Research gap

Although the relationship between UGC and urban image has been explored in both international and Chinese contexts, significant gaps remain. First, existing research tends to focus on major or internationally recognized cities, leaving second-tier cities like Tianjin underrepresented in scholarly discourse. This limits our understanding of how UGC functions in cities that do not dominate national or global tourism markets. Second, many studies adopt a single-perspective approach, analyzing either the content itself or audience reception, but rarely integrating both. Without examining creators' intentions alongside audiences' interpretations, it is difficult to capture the full communication process. Third, while there is growing recognition of Douyin's role in shaping urban narratives, much of the literature emphasizes quantitative metrics such as view counts, likes, and shares. These indicators, while useful, cannot fully explain the meanings and cultural contexts embedded in UGC. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews and thematic analysis, are better suited to uncovering these dimensions. Finally, research has yet to systematically apply communication theories, such as framing theory, uses and gratifications, and participatory culture, to analyze the intersection of Douyin UGC and urban image. Addressing these gaps will not only advance theoretical understanding but also offer practical insights for cities seeking to navigate the opportunities and challenges of digital-era place branding.

Materials and Methods

Research design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on semi-structured interviews to explore how Douyin user-generated content (UGC) influences the urban image of Tianjin. The qualitative approach is well-suited for capturing the subjective meanings, interpretations, and motivations that underpin both content creation and audience reception. Unlike quantitative methods that emphasize measurement and statistical relationships, qualitative research prioritizes depth over breadth, allowing researchers to uncover nuanced insights into complex communication processes. The semi-structured interview format offers a balance between structure and flexibility (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). A pre-prepared set of guiding questions ensures that core topics are consistently addressed across interviews, while open-ended prompts encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives (Quintela Do Carmo et al., 2024). This format is particularly valuable for this study because it accommodates the varied backgrounds and experiences of two distinct participant groups: Douyin content creators who feature Tianjin in their videos, and audiences who engage with such content. By integrating both perspectives, the study aims to construct a more holistic understanding of how UGC shapes perceptions of the city. The research is grounded in communication theories, particularly framing theory, uses and gratifications theory, and participatory culture. Framing theory informs the analysis of how creators construct narratives and emphasize certain aspects of Tianjin, while uses and gratifications theory provides insight into why audiences consume and respond to this content. The concept of participatory culture underscores the bidirectional flow of influence between creators and audiences, situating UGC within broader social and cultural contexts.

Sample selection

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant experience and knowledge of the research topic. Two primary groups were targeted: Douyin content creators and audience members. Content creators were defined as individuals who had produced and shared videos prominently featuring Tianjin's cultural, historical, or contemporary urban elements. To be included, they needed to have uploaded at least ten videos featuring Tianjin within the past twelve months, achieved an average of 5,000 or more views per video, and expressed a willingness to discuss their creative process as well as their perceptions of Tianjin. Audience members were defined as individuals who regularly consumed Douyin content related to Tianjin, regardless of whether they resided in the city. They were required to have watched at least twenty Tianjin-related videos on Douyin in the past six months and to be able to recall and discuss specific examples of content that influenced their perceptions of the city. In order to capture a broad range of perspectives, the sample was designed to be diverse in terms of age, gender, and occupation. Approximately six to eight content creators and eight to ten audience members were recruited, resulting in a total sample size of between fourteen and eighteen participants. Recruitment was facilitated through direct messages sent on Douyin, snowball sampling via personal contacts, and postings in Douyin-related online communities.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were adopted as the primary method of data collection, as this approach allowed for the exploration of participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across interviews. An interview guide was developed separately for content creators and audience members, ensuring that each group's unique experiences were addressed while still including overlapping questions to enable comparative analysis. For content creators, the interviews explored motivations for producing Tianjin-related content, strategies for selecting themes, locations, and visual styles, perceptions of audience reactions and feedback, and views on the role of Douyin in shaping the city's image. For audience members, the interviews examined the types of Tianjin-related content consumed, perceptions of the city before and after exposure to Douyin videos, specific elements of the videos that shaped their impressions, and the extent to which such content influenced their willingness to visit or recommend Tianjin. Interviews were conducted either in person, for participants located in Tianjin, or via online platforms such as Zoom or Tencent Meeting for those located elsewhere. Each interview lasted approximately forty to sixty minutes, allowing for in-depth discussion. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and subsequent analysis.

Procedures

Data collection was carried out over a two-month period from March to April 2025. The process began with participant recruitment, during which potential participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations. Written informed consent was obtained before any interviews commenced. For in-person interviews, meetings were held in quiet, mutually convenient locations such as university meeting rooms or cafés. Online interviews followed similar protocols, with participants encouraged to select a private and quiet environment to minimize distractions. The interviewer adhered to the semi-structured interview guide while remaining flexible enough to pursue unexpected but relevant lines of inquiry that arose during conversation. Following each interview, detailed field notes were produced to record initial impressions, non-verbal cues, and contextual observations that might not be apparent in the transcripts. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and all transcripts were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that enables the identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns of meaning within the data, following the six-step framework. The process began with familiarization, involving repeated reading of transcripts and field notes to gain an overall understanding of the material. This was followed by the generation of initial codes, where significant phrases and segments related to the research questions were systematically identified. The codes were then organized into broader themes, including "authentic representation," "selective framing," "emotional engagement," and "tourism intention." These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness, and each was clearly defined and named in relation to the study's objectives. The final stage involved integrating thematic findings with illustrative quotations from participants in order to convey the depth and variety of perspectives. NVivo software was used to assist with

data management and coding, facilitating the retrieval and comparison of text segments across participant groups. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was undertaken by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants for feedback, and peer debriefing sessions with academic colleagues were conducted to validate analytical decisions and minimize researcher bias. By combining insights from both content creators and audiences, the analysis seeks to reveal how Douyin UGC not only depicts Tianjin but also shapes the ways in which the city is imagined, emotionally experienced, and acted upon by diverse publics.

Results and Discussion

Authentic representation of Tianjin through Douyin UGC

Analysis of the interviews revealed that many participants perceived Douyin UGC as offering a more authentic and relatable portrayal of Tianjin compared to traditional media representations. Content creators emphasized their intentional focus on capturing “everyday life” and “hidden corners” of the city, such as small alleyway food stalls, community markets, or off-the-beaten-path cultural venues. Audience members frequently contrasted these depictions with the highly curated images of Tianjin found in official tourism campaigns, describing UGC as “real,” “unfiltered,” and “closer to the ground.” One creator (C3) noted, “When I film, I want people to see Tianjin the way locals live it, not just the landmarks that appear on postcards.” This sentiment was echoed by an audience participant (A7), who said, “I feel like I’m walking in the streets with the creator, it’s not just staged, it’s lived” as shown in *Table 1*. Creators achieved this authenticity through filming techniques such as handheld shots, real-time narration, and minimal editing, which were perceived by audiences as signs of sincerity. In particular, videos showcasing traditional Tianjin dialect, folk performances, and street interactions resonated strongly, reinforcing a sense of cultural intimacy. Audience members often described such content as “trustworthy” and “human,” with several reporting that it altered their perception of the city from being “industrial” or “historic” to being “vibrant” and “full of personality.”

Table 1. Perceived differences between UGC and official media representations.

Perceived attribute	Douyin UGC	Official media campaigns
Visual style	Handheld, casual, spontaneous	Professionally staged, polished
Content focus	Everyday life, local culture, hidden spots	Landmarks, iconic attractions
Language/tone	Conversational, often in local dialect	Formal, standard Mandarin
Audience perception	Authentic, relatable	Distant, promotional
Emotional impact	Builds trust and familiarity	Generates admiration but little intimacy

Selective framing and the curation of urban image

While authenticity was valued, the interviews also revealed that content creators actively curated their representations of Tianjin to align with personal or audience expectations. This selective framing involved emphasizing certain aspects of the city, such as its food culture, historical architecture, or modern skyline, while omitting less visually appealing or socially sensitive topics. Creators acknowledged that their aim was not to provide a comprehensive documentary of Tianjin, but rather to craft an appealing narrative that would engage viewers. As one creator (C5) explained, “If I post about the old neighborhoods falling into disrepair, it doesn’t get views. But if I show people eating jianbing guozi by the Haihe River, everyone loves it.” Audience members

recognized this selectivity and generally accepted it, describing it as a form of “storytelling” rather than misrepresentation. However, some expressed concern that the emphasis on “Instagrammable” visuals might create an overly romanticized or incomplete image of the city. This was particularly evident among non-resident viewers, who sometimes equated Tianjin entirely with its famous snacks and European-style architecture, overlooking its industrial heritage or contemporary social issues. The selective framing thus worked as both an attractor and a filter, bringing attention to specific cultural and visual elements while quietly erasing others.

Emotional engagement and audience connection

A key finding was that Douyin UGC fostered strong emotional connections between viewers and Tianjin, mediated through both visual storytelling and parasocial relationships with creators. As shown in *Table 2*, audience participants frequently described a sense of “familiarity” and “warmth” toward the city after repeated exposure to certain creators’ content. This was often attributed to recurring motifs, such as the same market vendor appearing in multiple videos, or to creators sharing personal anecdotes tied to specific urban spaces. For example, one audience member (A2) recalled, “There’s a vlogger who always films his grandma making mahua. Now when I think of Tianjin, I think of her kitchen.” Creators deliberately nurtured these connections by engaging with viewers in the comment sections, responding to questions, and incorporating viewer suggestions into future videos. This interactivity blurred the line between media producer and audience, fostering a participatory culture in which viewers felt invested in the representation of the city. Emotional engagement also extended beyond the digital realm, with some viewers reporting that they developed a nostalgic longing for Tianjin despite never having visited it in person.

Table 2. Emotional drivers identified in douyin UGC consumption.

Emotional driver	Description	Example from interviews
Nostalgia	Evoking memories of traditional Tianjin culture	“The videos remind me of visiting my grandparents in Tianjin.” (A4)
Curiosity	Sparking interest in unknown cultural aspects	“I didn’t know Tianjin had such a jazz scene until I saw it.” (A9)
Affection for Creators	Personal liking for the content producer	“I follow her not just for Tianjin, but because she’s so genuine.” (A5)
Sense of Belonging	Feeling part of a community of viewers	“We all share tips in the comments—it’s like a Tianjin club.” (A8)

Influence on tourism intention and city promotion

The final major theme concerned the influence of Douyin UGC on tourism intentions and broader city promotion. Many audience members reported that watching Tianjin-related UGC had made them more likely to visit the city or recommend it to friends and family. For non-residents, the videos functioned as informal travel guides, offering practical tips on where to eat, what to see, and how to navigate local customs. Several participants explicitly credited Douyin with moving Tianjin higher on their “travel wish list,” noting that the vivid and approachable style of the videos made the city seem more accessible. From the creators’ perspective, their role in promoting tourism was often incidental rather than deliberate. While some had received collaboration offers from local businesses or tourism boards, most described their work as motivated by personal interest or cultural pride rather than commercial intent. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that their videos might contribute to Tianjin’s reputation as a welcoming

and culturally rich destination. This organic promotion was viewed as more persuasive than formal advertising, precisely because it emerged from personal storytelling rather than institutional messaging.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of Douyin user-generated content (UGC) on the urban image of Tianjin, China. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with both content creators and audience members, the research explored how UGC shapes perceptions of the city, highlighting the interplay between authenticity, selective framing, emotional engagement, and tourism intention. The following sections summarize the main findings, provide practical recommendations, identify limitations, and suggest directions for future research. The first key finding is that Douyin UGC is perceived as a highly authentic representation of Tianjin, contributing significantly to the city's contemporary image. Content creators employ personalized storytelling, local cultural references, and visually engaging styles, which audiences interpret as trustworthy and relatable. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the credibility and immediacy of user-generated media compared with traditional promotional content. Authenticity, however, is a negotiated construct: creators selectively highlight appealing aspects of Tianjin, thereby shaping a curated, though emotionally resonant, urban narrative. Second, the study found that selective framing plays a central role in constructing the city's image. Creators tend to emphasize heritage sites, cultural festivals, and local cuisine while downplaying industrial or socio-economic complexities. Such framing generates a visually appealing and marketable image that attracts attention and engagement but risks simplifying the city's multifaceted reality. The strategic selection of content elements reflects a balance between artistic expression, audience expectations, and algorithmic visibility, underscoring the mediating role of digital platforms in urban image formation.

Third, emotional engagement emerged as a critical mechanism through which Douyin UGC influences perceptions of Tianjin. Audience members reported feeling warmth, familiarity, and a sense of connection to both the city and the creators. This affective dimension aligns with the concept of parasocial interaction, demonstrating that digital media can foster bonds between viewers and urban spaces beyond cognitive recognition. The interplay of visual storytelling, narrative structure, and interactive features enhances viewers' emotional involvement, which in turn influences their willingness to visit, recommend, or engage with the city. Fourth, the study highlights the organic promotional function of Douyin UGC. While creators are primarily motivated by personal interest, cultural pride, or creative expression, their content inadvertently promotes Tianjin as a desirable destination. This reflects a shift from top-down city branding strategies toward decentralized, participatory models in which ordinary citizens become active mediators of urban identity. By engaging audiences through content that is both entertaining and informative, UGC operates as an informal yet effective tool for city promotion.

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations emerge for urban stakeholders in Tianjin and similar cities. First, city authorities should recognize the potential of UGC as a complementary tool for urban promotion. Rather than attempting to replace or control user-generated narratives, municipal tourism boards could collaborate with creators, providing support such as training, access to cultural events,

or resource assistance to encourage high-quality content production. Such partnerships could amplify the city's positive image while maintaining the authenticity valued by audiences. Second, creators' selective framing highlights the importance of diversifying narratives to present a more comprehensive city image. Authorities could facilitate campaigns that showcase lesser-known neighborhoods, community initiatives, and socio-economic developments alongside traditional cultural landmarks. By broadening the content landscape, the city can maintain audience engagement while conveying a more nuanced understanding of its identity. Third, fostering emotional engagement through storytelling should be prioritized. Platforms like Douyin offer interactive features that can enhance parasocial relationships, such as live streaming, comment interactions, and collaborative content creation. Encouraging creators to leverage these features can deepen viewers' emotional connections, enhancing the city's perceived attractiveness and increasing tourism potential.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study focused exclusively on Douyin, China's leading short-video platform. While this platform has substantial reach, other social media channels, such as WeChat, Xiaohongshu, or Bilibili, may offer different dynamics in content production and audience engagement. A multi-platform approach could provide a more holistic understanding of UGC's influence on urban image formation. Second, the research relied on self-reported data from interviews, which may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. Although thematic analysis and triangulation were used to enhance reliability, complementary methods such as content analysis or audience surveys could strengthen the validity of the findings. Future research can build on this study in several ways. Comparative studies across multiple cities could explore how UGC impacts urban image differently depending on cultural, economic, or geographic contexts. Investigating cross-platform effects would clarify how varying algorithms, audience demographics, and content norms influence perception formation. In addition, quantitative research methods could complement qualitative insights, enabling the measurement of correlations between UGC exposure, emotional engagement, and behavioral intentions. Social network analysis and big data analytics could also uncover patterns of content diffusion and audience interaction at scale.

Acknowledgement

This research is self-funded.

Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adeoye-Olatunde, O.A., Olenik, N.L. (2021): Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. – *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy* 4(10): 1358-1367.

- [2] Bae, M. (2023): Coping strategies initiated by COVID-19-related stress, individuals' motives for social media use, and perceived stress reduction. – *Internet Research* 33(1): 124-151.
- [3] Balogun-Ibijunle, A., Ogunbola, O., Olatunji, O., Doyinsola, A., Akin-Odukoya, O., Ojenagbon, S., Ridwan, M. (2024): Dominance of short form videos: Cross-age analysis of TikTok's influence. – *Lakhomi Journal Scientific Journal of Culture* 5(2): 104-115.
- [4] Burgess, A., Wilkie, D.C.H., Dolan, R. (2024): The power of beliefs: how diversity advertising builds audience connectedness. – *European Journal of Marketing* 58(9): 1969-1994.
- [5] Chen, X., Ding, X., Ye, Y. (2025): Mapping sense of place as a measurable urban identity: Using Street view images and machine learning to identify building façade materials. – *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* 52(4): 965-984.
- [6] Conroy-Dalton, R., & Bafna, S. (2003): The syntactical image of the city: A reciprocal definition of spatial elements and spatial syntaxes. – In *4th International Space Syntax Symposium*, London 22p.
- [7] Elhariry, M., Malhotra, K., Goyal, K., Bardus, M., Team, S., CoMICs, Kempegowda, P. (2024): A SIMBA CoMICs initiative to cocreating and disseminating evidence-based, peer-reviewed short videos on social media: mixed methods prospective study. – *JMIR Medical Education* 10: 11p.
- [8] Fung, A., Ismangil, M., He, W., Cao, S. (2022): If I'm not Streaming, I'm not Earning: audience relations and platform time on douyin. – *Online Media and Global Communication* 1(2): 369-386.
- [9] Kim, J., Kim, H. (2024): Unlocking creator-AI synergy: Challenges, requirements, and design opportunities in AI-powered short-form video production. – In *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* 23p.
- [10] Li, C., Fang, Y., Wang, Y., Xu, Y., Zong, Z., Yang, Y., Wang, C., Ou, Z., Wang, M. (2024): How can tourism help to revitalize the countryside? Content analysis based on the case of tourism enabling rural revitalization. – *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 26(8): 20333-20354.
- [11] Li, H., Tay, K. (2024): Innovations in short video marketing strategies for tourism: The case of the director of Garzê culture and tourism bureau. – *Media Konservasi* 29(3): 349-349.
- [12] Liang, J., Wang, J., Yao, K. (2024): How Do Short-Form Video Creators Select Media Platforms? Research Based on the Extended UTAUT Model. – *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction* 7(3): 1-14.
- [13] Liu, Y. (2025): Douyin dynamics: Enhancing government cultural and tourism promotion and city image construction. – In *Global Dialogue on Media Dynamics, Trends and Perspectives on Public Relations and Communication*, CRC Press 7p.
- [14] Mansour, H.M., Alves, F.B., Da Costa, A.R. (2023): A comprehensive methodological approach for the assessment of urban identity. – *Sustainability* 15(18): 26p.
- [15] McCorkle, S. (2024): Participatory Culture for Social Justice: Students Deploying New Media as a Call to Action and Social Change. – *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 24(3): 105-118.
- [16] Ozuem, W., Willis, M., Howell, K., Ranfagni, S., Rovai, S. (2024): Examining user-generated content, service failure recovery and customer-brand relationships: An exploration through commitment-trust theory. – *Internet Research* 34(3): 784-809.
- [17] Pinhal, R., Estima, A., Duarte, P. (2025): See, like, and book: Eye-tracking the power of visual attention in destination marketing. – *Journal of Marketing Communications* 9(1): 1-21.
- [18] Qian, X., Yossakrai, K., Buranadechachai, S. (2025): Creation Process for Professional Content Creators through DouYin Short Video in People's Republic of China. – *Journal of Dhamma for Life* 31(1): 625-639.

- [19] Quintela Do Carmo, G., Vinuesa, V., Dembélé, M., Ayotte-Beaudet, J.P. (2024): Going beyond adaptation: An integrative review and ethical considerations of semi-structured interviews with elementary-aged children. – *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23: 15p.