The influence of travel vlogs on tourists' decisions to visit destinations in the Philippines

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of travel vlogs on tourists' decisions to visit destinations in the Philippines in the context of the growing prominence of digital media. Travel vlogs have emerged as a popular and credible source of information, offering firsthand experiences, visual narratives, and practical insights that appeal to potential travelers seeking authentic guidance when choosing destinations. Using a mixed-methods approach that includes surveys and interviews of 360 hospitality and tourism students in Metro Manila, the study explores patterns and trends in how travel vlogs shape tourists' knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and interest in visiting various tourist locations across the country. It further analyzes the key factors that tourists consider when engaging with travel vlogs, such as credibility, content quality, relatability, and accessibility, and how these factors influence their decision to rely on vlogs as a primary source of travel information and itinerary planning. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of digital media, particularly travel vlogs, in shaping contemporary travel behavior, especially among future professionals in the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover, the results may inform destination marketing strategies by providing insights into tourists' preferences and decision-making processes, enabling tourism stakeholders to design more targeted, engaging, and effective promotional campaigns that align with the expectations of digitally driven travelers.

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1. Introduction

Traveling is a fun and relaxing experience that every person deserves. Traveling alone or with family and friends can be considered a skill or hobby that teaches many new things, such as discovering new places, languages, cultures and traditions, meeting new friends, and, most especially, experiencing foods for which a country is famous. In the Philippines, 43.3% of people travel during their free time, with most travelers preferring rural destinations that help them relax (Cambosa, 2024; Rosales, 2024).

Tourism is an essential industry in the Philippines and contributes significantly to the country's economy. With its unique culture, natural beauty, and vibrant local communities, the Philippines has become a popular tourist destination for visitors worldwide. In recent years, the emergence of social media and online content creation has greatly influenced people's travel decisions. Travel vlogs have become increasingly popular, as they provide immersive and personal experiences of different destinations. Travel vloggers are considered social influencers who help enhance local tourism activities by attracting their target markets. Tourists often visit destinations featured in travel vlogs because these vlogs serve as valuable sources of information and personal experience that can significantly influence travel decisions and enhance knowledge about traveling.

According to Abad and Borbon (2021), internet usage in the hospitality industry has increased, and many hospitality and tourism firms have successfully utilized travel influencers to communicate with their target clients and improve brand recognition. The opinions of travel vloggers are now essential to the industry in enhancing the marketing of travel destinations. A video blog, or vlog, is a form of online video that documents an individual's daily life, beliefs, ideas, and, most importantly, experiences. Vlogs allow tourists to share travel tips, encouraging others to consider visiting the featured locations. The travel and hospitality market has benefited from video content, which is often perceived by tourists as more reliable.

Nowadays, people enjoy watching YouTube content to obtain general feedback from travel influencers. More importantly, viewers value connecting with content creators by listening to their real-life experiences at specific destinations. In travel vlogging, influencers share their experiences online and receive feedback from their followers, who may be persuaded or inspired to visit the same destinations. Influencers often recommend locations and highlight their main characteristics. As travel vlogs continue to gain popularity, exploring their effects on travel behavior has become increasingly relevant.

Xu et al. (2021) stated that travel vlogs have grown in popularity as social media and other digital technologies have proliferated, serving as sources of travel ideas and information. These vlogs are an engaging method of promoting tourism, as they often include personal stories, travel tips, and recommendations for other destinations. Although travel vlogging can influence students to visit different places, certain issues may arise, such as unfair treatment across regions, which may affect tourist experiences by lowering expectations or increasing prices for uninformed tourists. Millions of tourists visit the Philippines each year to experience its distinctive culture and natural attractions. However, both foreign and local tourists may sometimes become victims of fraud. While traveling is meant to provide relaxation and an escape from daily problems, exposure to diverse cultures and traditions may also lead to unexpected experiences in terms of treatment received.

The emergence and popularity of travel vlogs on platforms such as YouTube have significantly influenced the behavior and decision-making of students, particularly those enrolled in the hospitality and tourism programs. The impact of travel vlogs on students' motivations and choices in visiting tourist destinations within the Philippines raises important questions regarding the extent and nature of this influence. This study investigates how travel vlogs affect travelers' decision-making when visiting nearby locations in the Philippines. Social media has transformed the way people interact, as vloggers generate ideas and share information that may influence perceptions of specific topics, leading to a new level of brand identification and destination marketing. Specifically, it aims to identify the factors that make travel vlogs effective in influencing travel decisions and how these factors can be leveraged to promote local tourism in the country.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Influence of Travel Vlogs on Tourists' Motivation and Destination Preference

Travel vlogs significantly inspire tourists, particularly students who are highly engaged with digital media and advanced communication technologies. Viewers are inclined to share, comment on, and interact with travel vlog content, making vlogs a powerful source of travel motivation. According to Rinaldi and Salerno (2020), travel vlogs strongly influence consumers' decision-making processes related to travel products and services, as social media platforms shape both personal and organizational travel choices. Online reviews created by

influencers are often perceived as more credible due to their detailed and experiential nature. Supporting this, Priyanga and Ashokkuma (2023) emphasized that impartial online reviews provide deeper insights into tourism services compared to traditional star rating systems.

Social norms and perceived similarities between viewers and vloggers also affect destination preferences. Vloggers frequently showcase high-end destinations and experiences, encouraging viewers to emulate these travel behaviors as a form of social conformity (Musafa, 2024; Aquino & Cabalquinto, 2025; Zaim et al., 2025). Viewers often evaluate destinations based on unique landmarks and visual appeal, particularly those suitable for photography or video documentation (Yu & Egger, 2021; Xiao et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Budget considerations also play a role, as Acharjee et al. (2025) found that travelers are willing to take advantage of promotions, save money, or engage in part-time work to finance trips. Yu (2021) further highlighted that understanding these motivations enables travel marketers to design more effective vlog-based promotional strategies.

2.2. Role of Social Media and Influencers in Shaping Travel Behavior

Social media significantly shapes individuals' travel behavior through social influence and digital engagement. Travel decisions are often influenced by family, friends, and online communities, which serve as reference groups. Teng et al. (2023) and Otegui-Carles et al. (2022) observed that women are more likely to travel alone for self-care, influenced by traditional caregiving roles. Shankar and Hampesh (2023) emphasized that social media has transformed everyday life and opened new marketing opportunities for organizations, particularly within the tourism industry.

Content creation also impacts vloggers and viewers alike. Lalangan (2020) found that creating travel content allows vloggers to transform personal passion into a sustainable lifestyle, often supported by audience engagement and compensation. For viewers, travel vlogs provide entertainment, education, expert guidance, and inspiration. Irfan et al. (2022) further demonstrated that platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, combined with electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), significantly influence destination image, travel intent, and purchasing behavior. Cheng et al. (2024) supported this by explaining how consumer engagement with travel vlogs affects word-of-mouth and travel intention, especially among independent travelers. Wang et al. (2022) suggest that travel vlogs stimulate travel intentions, facilitate social interaction, and allow individuals to share personal experiences.

During the global pandemic, social media served as a key source of travel inspiration amid travel restrictions.

2.3. Travel Vlogs as an Effective Destination Marketing Tool

Travel vlogs have emerged as a highly effective destination marketing tool due to their ability to rapidly disseminate information and shape destination image. Chen et al. (2021) noted that travel vlogs enhance a destination's reputation by creating visually appealing and authentic content that resonates with viewers. Kemp (2023) emphasized that travel vlogs are crucial components of destination marketing, as they help build confidence and trust among tourists. The Philippines' high level of social media usage, 73.1% in early 2023 and ranking second globally among blog readers and video uploaders, further amplifies the impact of travel vlogs on tourism promotion.

Before the digital era, tourists relied on traditional media such as magazines and television; however, modern travelers prefer firsthand experiences shared by vloggers (Arias et al., 2020). Borbon (2021) emphasized that travel vloggers strongly influence tourists' decision-making by enhancing the perceived credibility of travel information. Similarly, Silaban et al. (2022) highlighted the role of YouTube travel vlogs in transmitting eWOM and influencing travel intentions, grounded in the uses and gratification (U&G) framework. The advancement of social media and user-generated content has further strengthened this influence, as travelers increasingly rely on online videos to visualize destinations and plan future trips (Cheng et al., 2020; Peralta, 2019). Despite global challenges, travel-related content continues to promote exploration and adventure, reinforcing social media's role as a cost-effective and influential marketing communication platform (Liu & Chong, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research methodology, specifically using a survey method to examine the variables and derive findings through statistical analysis. Quantitative research was deemed appropriate due to its systematic approach and ability to generalize results from a sample to a larger population. According to Siedlecki (2020), descriptive research techniques focus on describing the characteristics and attributes of a population or phenomenon rather than explaining underlying causes. In line with this perspective, the study

emphasized identifying and analyzing the attributes of a specific demographic group, students enrolled in the tourism and hospitality program to understand their exposure to and perceptions of travel vlogs.

The participants of the study were students from Metro Manila during the first semester of Academic Year 2023–2024. These students were selected based on the assumption that they had prior exposure to travel influencers, making them relevant participants for the research. A random sampling technique was employed to ensure that all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected, which supports the representativeness of the sample (McCombes, 2019). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics

Characteristics	F	%
Sex		
Male	165	45.83
Female	195	54.17
Age		
Prefer Not to Say	2	0.56
17 - 19 Years Old	11	3.06
20 - 22 Years Old	235	65.28
23 - 25 Years Old	101	28.06
26 - 28 Years Old	7	1.94
Above 28 Years Old	4	1.11
Year Level		
First Year	16	4.44
Second Year	69	19.17
Third Year	117	32.5
Fourth Year	144	40
Others	14	3.89
Frequency Social media usage		
Once a Day	114	31.67
Twice a Day	181	50.28
Every Night	62	17.22
Never	3	0.83
Total	**360**	**100**

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the majority of the 360 participants are female, with 195 students (54.17%) compared to 165 males (45.83%). Regarding age, most respondents (65.28%, 235 students) are between 20–22 years old, indicating that the sample predominantly consists of young adults, with a small fraction (0.56%, 2 students) choosing not to disclose their age. In terms of academic level, fourth-year students form the largest group at

40% (144 respondents), followed by third-year students at 32.50% (117 respondents), second-year students at 19.17% (69 respondents), first-year students at 4.44% (16 respondents), and others at 3.89% (14 respondents), showing that senior students constitute the majority. The most enrolled program was BSIHM Major in CLOCA (27.50%), while BSIHM Major in HRA had the lowest enrollment (13.89%), showing minor variation across programs. The data also reveal that students engage heavily with travel vlogs, with the majority watching once or twice daily, and only 0.83% (3 respondents) indicating they never watch such content.

The research instrument used was a researcher-made questionnaire developed through extensive review of books, journals, and related studies on travel vlogs. The questionnaire was anchored on the study objectives and focused on participants' perceptions of travel vlogs, decision-making processes related to destination selection, and proposed strategies for creating effective travel vlogs. Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent content and face validation with the guidance of the research adviser and five validators, including internal and external experts in tourism and research. Their feedback guided the revision of the questionnaire to ensure clarity, relevance, and validity.

A pre-test was conducted among hospitality and tourism students to ensure that all questions were clear, understandable, and appropriate for the target respondents. The results of the pre-testing indicated high internal consistency, suggesting that the instrument reliably measured the constructs related to the influence of travel vlogs on students' perceptions and decision-making. This strengthened the credibility and suitability of the questionnaire for the main data collection.

Data were gathered through an online survey using Google Forms. Prior to participation, respondents were informed of the study's objectives and assured of the confidentiality of their personal information and responses. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including securing institutional permission and providing respondents with informed consent. Although the survey was conducted online, measures were taken to maintain transparency, trust, and data protection.

For data analysis, collected responses were carefully organized, reviewed, and screened for errors. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic data and assess respondents' perceptions and decision-making patterns. Inferential statistics were applied to determine whether significant differences existed among respondents when grouped according to demographic variables. The analysis revealed no significant differences in perceptions based

on age, gender, or frequency of watching travel vlogs, while significant differences were observed based on year level and college program.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 2 presents the students' perceptions of the desirability of visiting selected tourist destinations in the Philippines based on attractions. All indicators yielded high mean scores ranging from 3.42 to 3.47, with standard deviations between 0.39 and 0.41, and were descriptively interpreted as "Strongly Agree."

Table 2

Perception of the desirability of visiting selected tourist destinations in the Philippines

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Attraction	0.41	3.47	Strongly Agree
Price	0.41	3.42	Strongly Agree
Accessibility	0.41	3.43	Strongly Agree
Number of Tourist Visits	0.39	3.42	Strongly Agree
Travel Aspiration	0.39	3.44	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.26–4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.25 Agree; 1.76-2.50 Disagree; 1.00-1.75 Strongly Disagree

The highest mean score was recorded for attractions (M = 3.47, SD = 0.41), indicating that visual appeal, diversity of attractions, authenticity, and recommendations from travel vloggers strongly influence students' destination preferences. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a high level of agreement among respondents, reflecting consistent perceptions across the sample. These findings imply that travel vlogs play a crucial role in shaping students' travel preferences by enhancing destination attractiveness and credibility. The strong consensus highlights the influence of travel vloggers in motivating travel intentions, as viewers are more inclined to consider destinations endorsed by influencers they trust. This supports the assertion of Zhu and Cheng (2025), Gholamhosseinzadeh (2023) and Silaban et al. (2023) that travel vloggers frequently showcase aspirational destinations and activities that satisfy viewers' desires and stimulate their intention to travel.

In terms of price, the results indicate a high overall mean of 3.42 with a standard deviation of 0.41, corresponding to a "Strongly Agree" interpretation. The statement with the highest weighted mean (M = 3.46, SD = 0.56) emphasizes the importance of affordability,

budget considerations, and perceived economic value in travel decision-making. These findings demonstrate that price-related information presented in travel vlogs significantly affects students' destination choices. The narrow variability in responses further indicates that cost consciousness is a shared concern among students. Destinations that highlight affordability and value for money through travel vlogs are therefore more likely to appeal to student travelers. This aligns with Ngo et al. (2025), who noted that social media serves as an effective marketing communication platform by enabling the timely and cost-efficient sharing of product and service information that strongly influences consumer behavior.

In terms of accessibility, the results reveal an overall mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 0.41, with all statements interpreted as "Strongly Agree." The highest weighted mean (M = 3.50, SD = 0.54) reflects students' strong agreement that ease of access, transportation connectivity, and convenience are essential considerations when selecting travel destinations. The low variability in responses indicates a shared perception among respondents that destinations with efficient transportation systems are more attractive. These findings suggest that travel vlogs highlighting accessibility and infrastructure improvements can enhance destination appeal and provide a competitive advantage, as students value convenience and ease of travel when making destination choices.

Based on the number of tourist visits, all statements received a "Strongly Agree" interpretation, with an overall mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.39. The highest weighted mean (M = 3.50, SD = 0.51) was recorded for the statement regarding the influence of tourist volume portrayed in travel vlogs on opportunities for cultural and social interaction. These results indicate that students consider the presence and visibility of other tourists as an important factor in their travel decisions, as it signals popularity, social validation, and opportunities for meaningful interaction with locals and fellow travelers. The consistency of responses underscores the role of travel vlogs in shaping perceptions of destination popularity and experiential quality. This supports Aquino and Cabalquinto (2025), who emphasized that YouTube is a widely used platform among young travelers due to its ability to rapidly disseminate travel content, encouraging viewers to visit destinations featured in vlogs to experience what they have seen online.

Based on travel aspiration, the results show an overall mean of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.39, with all statements interpreted as "Strongly Agree." The highest weighted mean (M = 3.50, SD = 0.51) corresponds to the statement regarding destinations depicted in

travel vlogs that resonate with students' travel dreams. This indicates that personal aspirations, emotional connections, and alignment with lifestyle and cultural interests play a central role in destination selection. The low standard deviation reflects a strong consensus among respondents, suggesting that travel vlogs effectively influence students by portraying destinations as fulfilling personal travel goals and offering transformative experiences. These findings reinforce the notion that societal standards and aspirational portrayals contribute to viewers' desire to emulate travel vloggers. Consistent with Zhu and Cheng (2025), travel vloggers often present aspirational destinations that stimulate viewers' motivation to travel and shape their long-term travel aspirations.

Table 3

Impact of travel vlog exposure in choosing tourist destinations in the Philippines

Indicators	SD	Mean	Level of Impact
Perceived popularity of a destination in vlogs	0.60	3.26	Moderate Impact
Approach to planning trips, itinerary creation and activity scheduling	0.61	3.29	Major Impact
Discussions with peers and friends about potential travel destinations	0.59	3.31	Major Impact
Grand Mean	**0.43**	**3.30**	**Major Impact**

Legend: 3.26–4.00 Major Impact; 2.51-3.25 Moderate Impact; 1.76-2.50 Minor Impact; 1.00-1.75 No Impact

Table 3 presents the level of impact of travel vlog exposure on the students' decision-making in choosing tourist destinations in the Philippines. The results show a grand mean of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.43, which corresponds to a "Major Impact." This indicates that exposure to travel vlogs plays a significant role in shaping the decision-making processes of students when selecting destinations to visit. The relatively low standard deviation further suggests consistency in respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of travel vlogs.

Among the indicators, the statement on the impact of travel vlogs on discussions with peers and friends about potential travel destinations obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.31, SD = 0.59) and was interpreted as having a "Major Impact." This suggests that travel vlogs actively stimulate conversations and information sharing among students, reinforcing social influence in travel decision-making. Similarly, the statement related to trip planning, including itinerary creation and activity scheduling, recorded a mean of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 0.61, also interpreted as having a "Major Impact." This finding implies that students rely on

travel vlogs as practical guides when organizing their trips, highlighting the role of vlog content in shaping structured and informed travel plans.

In contrast, the perceived popularity of a destination portrayed in travel vlogs registered the lowest mean (M = 3.26, SD = 0.60) and was interpreted as having a "Moderate Impact." Although destination popularity influences students' decisions, the result suggests that it is less influential than peer discussions and trip-planning considerations. Overall, the findings demonstrate that travel vlogs exert a substantial influence on students' travel-related decision-making, particularly by shaping planning behavior and encouraging social interaction and discussion. This supports the findings of Rinaldi and Salerno (2020), who emphasized that social media significantly affects individual decision-making processes, as contemporary consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and influencer-generated content when making travel-related choices.

Table 4

Significant difference on the impact of exposure to travel vlogs

Profile Variables	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender	0.538	Accepted	Not Significant
Age	0.072	Accepted	Not Significant
Year Level	0.006	Rejected	Significant
College Program	0.000	Rejected	Significant
Social Media Travel Vlog Frequency	0.077	Accepted	Not Significant

Note: Significant at a 5% significance level

Table 4 presents the statistically significant differences in the students' insights regarding the impact of exposure to travel vlogs on their decision-making in choosing tourist destinations in the Philippines, based on selected profile variables. The results show that the p-values for gender (p = 0.538), age (p = 0.072), and social media travel vlog frequency (p = 0.077) are all greater than the 0.05 level of significance. These findings indicate that the null hypothesis for these variables is accepted, suggesting that there are no significant differences in students' perceptions of the impact of travel vlogs when grouped according to gender, age, and frequency of travel vlog exposure. This implies that the influence of travel vlogs on destination choice is generally consistent across these demographic categories.

In contrast, the p-values for year level (p = 0.006) and college program (p = 0.000) are less than the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for these variables. This indicates the presence of significant differences in students' perceptions of the impact of travel vlogs based on their academic year level and college program. These results suggest that students at different stages of their academic progression and those enrolled in different programs may interpret and utilize travel vlog content differently when making travel-related decisions.

The findings indicate that academic-related factors, rather than basic demographic characteristics, play a more influential role in shaping how students perceive and respond to travel vlog content. From a practical perspective, this may be attributed to differences in academic exposure, professional orientation, and learning experiences associated with varying year levels and programs, which can influence students' travel motivations, priorities, and decision-making criteria. Conversely, the lack of significant differences across gender, age, and vlog consumption frequency suggests that travel vlogs exert a broadly similar influence on students regardless of these characteristics.

5. Conclusion

The present study examines the impact of travel vlogs on the cognitive processes and decision-making of hospitality and tourism students regarding their selection of tourist destinations within the Philippines. The research focuses on five key factors influencing travel preferences: attractions, price, accessibility, number of tourist visits, and travel aspirations. The sample size consisted of 360 student respondents, representing approximately 7% of the total population of 5,000 students.

The findings indicate that travel vlogs have a substantial influence on students' perceptions and decision-making regarding tourist destinations in the Philippines. Students reported strong agreement that factors such as attractions, price, accessibility, number of tourists, and alignment with personal travel aspirations significantly guide their destination choices. Exposure to travel vlogs also had a major overall impact on decision-making, particularly affecting cultural perceptions, itinerary planning, peer discussions, and overall travel decisions. While gender, age, and frequency of vlog engagement did not significantly influence perceptions, differences were observed based on year level and college program, suggesting that academic progression and program of study shape how students interpret and

respond to travel content. These results highlight the critical role of travel vlogs as influential tools in shaping travel preferences, decisions, and planning behaviors among students.

The study concludes that travel vlogs are powerful tools for inspiring and guiding potential travelers. Effective travel vlogs should prioritize authentic experiences, leverage word-of-mouth influence, and provide practical travel information. Such strategies not only enhance the appeal of local destinations but also contribute to the growth of the Philippine tourism industry.

Based on the findings, the study proposes strategies for creating effective travel vlogs to promote local tourist destinations. Travel vlogs should focus on real experience marketing, prioritizing authentic travel experiences rather than solely showcasing attractions. By highlighting genuine experiences, influencers can motivate travelers, facilitate word-of-mouth promotion, and offer accurate, practical information to viewers, including recommendations on accommodations, local transportation, and travel preparation. This approach strengthens the emotional connection between viewers and destinations and enhances the credibility of the content.

For travel influencers, the study recommends creating authentic travel vlogs based on personal experiences to ensure credibility and viewer satisfaction. Collaborating with local tourism boards and academic institutions can further enhance the reach and effectiveness of content. For travelers, it is advised to use travel vlogs as a resource to research destinations, including practical information such as dos and don'ts and travel tips. For local communities, understanding the power of social media can help in promoting tourism awareness and accessibility. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the impact of digital marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry and investigate how social media trends influence travel behaviors.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of Lyceum of the Philippines University - Manila. The conduct of this study has been approved and given relative clearance(s) by the Lyceum of the Philippines University - Manila.

Declaration

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the author used ChatGPT in paraphrasing ideas. The author takes full responsibility in ensuring proper review and editing of contents generated using AI.

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