Research Article

Strategizing marketing initiatives from tourism-seeking behaviors among travelers

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ABSTRACT

Understanding how tourism-seeking behaviors influence travel decisions is essential to designing effective marketing strategies. This qualitative exploratory study examined the motivations, preferences, and digital responses of frequent travelers to assess how this shapes their destination choices and perceptions of tourism promotions. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 28 participants who travel for leisure at least three times annually. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed four dominant behavioral patterns: the preference for nature-based and emotionally restorative travel; the integration of work trips with leisure; the influence of personal and cultural values; and the reliance on authentic, visual, and relatable digital content. Participants consistently favored tourism campaigns grounded in real experiences, practical messaging, and emotional storytelling over polished advertisements. Theoretically, the findings contribute to tourism behavior theory by reinforcing the emotional, identity-driven, and digitally influenced nature of modern travel decisions. Strategically, the study proposes a refined model for marketing innovation that emphasizes experiential authenticity, digital resonance, and adaptive storytelling in campaign design. These insights underline the need for tourism marketers to create content that aligns with travelers' emotional states, digital habits, and lifestyle values. However, this study was limited by its sample scope and demographic focus, which may not capture broader trends across less frequent travelers or different cultural contexts. Future research should explore comparative behaviors across age groups, regions, and travel types to enhance the generalizability and depth of strategic insights for tourism marketing. This paper addresses a gap in tourism behavior literature: how emotional needs, cultural values, and digital media co-influence travel decisions and marketing receptivity. It aims to understand the behavioral logic underlying destination choice and content engagement. Using a qualitative approach, it analyzes in-depth interviews to extract emergent themes and translate them into actionable insights. The paper contributes to theory and practice by offering a culturally grounded, emotionally intelligent, and digitally relevant model of travel behavior.

Keywords: Strategizing; marketing initiatives; tourism-seeking behaviors; travelers

1. Introduction

Understanding the motivations behind travel behavior offers valuable insight into the psychological and

sociocultural factors that shape how individuals choose destinations. Travel is not merely a recreational activity; it is often a deep personal decision influenced by a range of internal and external elements. These may include personal interests, lifestyle goals, emotional states, and cultural background. In the global economic context, tourism has undergone constant development and gained more and more momentum in the plethora of economic sectors [1]. The World Tourism Organization [2] emphasizes the continuous growth and significant diversification of tourism worldwide. Recognizing the interplay of these factors is essential for interpreting how travelers form preferences and ultimately decide where to go. Such insight contributes to a broader understanding of travel behavior, which is critical for tourism development and targeted communication efforts. As tourism evolves, tourism becomes more and more complex. This is due, on the one hand, to the variety and richness of tourist destinations that has prompted a wider range of tourism development areas.

As travel becomes more individualized, decision-making patterns reflect a growing need for alignment between the traveler's identity and the destination's perceived value. Many tourists now prioritize experiences that resonate with their values, routines, and desired self-image. Destination choice is influenced not only by logistical concerns but also by how a place fulfills emotional needs or aligns with aspirations [3]. This personalized approach to travel planning challenges generic marketing methods and calls for strategies that speak directly to specific motivational drivers. A deeper understanding of how personal meaning is constructed in travel decisions is therefore essential.

According to Cohen et al. [4], Marketing in the tourism sector must respond to these behavioral shifts with strategies grounded in traveler psychology. Modern tourists interact with multiple sources of information, particularly digital content such as social media posts, influencer reviews, travel blogs, and video platforms. The impact of such content depends not just on exposure but on its relevance to the consumer's mindset. Effective marketing strategies are those that echo the traveler's expectations, emotional triggers, and perceived benefits [5]. Understanding how individuals interpret and internalize promotional content becomes crucial in evaluating marketing success.

In addition, tourists' post-travel reflections contribute significantly to their assessment of tourism campaigns. A traveler's perception of whether a marketing effort was accurate, exaggerated, or misleading often depends on the congruence between the advertised message and the actual experience [6-7]. These perceptions influence future travel decisions and can either reinforce or weaken brand trust. Hence, marketing must aim to align not only with the pre-travel mindset but also with the post-travel evaluation process. This highlights the importance of authenticity and consistency in tourism promotion.

The consumer's sense of trust and engagement is increasingly influenced by content that reflects authentic experiences. According to Susanto et al. [8], Travelers tend to favor campaigns that offer relatable narratives, emotional depth, and credible endorsements. Traditional advertising approaches are often less effective when they fail to resonate with the nuanced expectations of the audience [9]. Instead, individuals seek confirmation of personal values, social identity, and cultural compatibility within the promotional material. This preference further underscores the need for tourism marketing to reflect genuine traveler experiences.

Exploring these behaviors through direct engagement with frequent travelers enables a grounded understanding of the relationship between motivation, experience, and marketing interpretation. Gathering first-hand accounts and patterns from travelers offers a practical basis for refining promotional strategies. This study addresses the underexplored intersection of emotional travel motivations, cultural orientation, and digital content interpretation in shaping tourism decisions. While previous studies have examined these

aspects separately, few have integrated them into a single behavioral framework grounded in qualitative data. This paper fills that theoretical gap by introducing a layered behavioral model that aligns emotional needs, identity cues, and media habits offering a new perspective on how digital influence and internal motivation interact in real travel behavior.

2. Literature review

2.1. Marketing initiatives

Marketing initiatives within the tourism sector have moved far beyond print ads and billboards, evolving into complex and responsive strategies that are embedded in consumer psychology, technological engagement, and real-time feedback mechanisms. Tourists typically explore various destinations, savor different cuisines, experience different cultures, and explore numerous attractions and monuments [10]. According Buhalis [11], successful tourism marketing must develop initiatives that communicate emotional benefits, build brand trust, and offer value propositions that go beyond functional travel offerings. These initiatives are no longer one-directional; they are designed to foster interaction, stimulate curiosity, and establish an ongoing conversation between the destination and the traveler. Nuseir et al. [12] emphasized that marketing efforts today must be digitally integrated and context-sensitive, capable of adapting to the behaviors and attitudes of specific market segments. Campaigns that fail to align with travelers' expectations or that rely on outdated promotional models' risk being ignored in favor of more immersive and relevant alternatives [13]. Therefore, marketing initiatives must be personalized, data-informed, and built on an understanding of what travelers genuinely find meaningful in a travel experience.

2.2. Tourism-Seeking behaviors

Tourism-seeking behavior encompasses the complex psychological, social, and emotional processes that guide individuals in deciding when, where, and why to travel. These behaviors are not static; they are shaped by prior experiences, socio-cultural backgrounds, and emerging lifestyle trends. In the Asia-Pacific context, including the Philippines, cultural values such as communal orientation, hospitality, and frugality strongly influence travel motivations and preferences [14, 15]. Filipino travelers often prioritize shared experiences, cost-efficiency, and cultural resonance, favoring destinations that reflect simplicity and authenticity. This regional perspective emphasizes the importance of integrating culturally responsive marketing strategies that align with collective values and local sensibilities.

An earlier review described and critiqued theoretical and conceptual frameworks that emerged in the past half-century of research in tourism motivation [16]. According to Larsen et al. [17], tourists can be classified according to the level of novelty or familiarity they seek, reflecting deeper motivations such as escapism, cultural exploration, or self-actualization. Newman et al. [18] highlighted the emotional aspect of travel-seeking behavior, suggesting that affective triggers such as excitement, longing, or even nostalgia play a substantial role in shaping decisions. As Kuhn [19] asserted, tourism is deeply performative, meaning that the act of seeking travel is itself a socially constructed behavior rooted in desire, identity, and narrative-making.

2.3. Travel motivation

Travel motivation remains one of the most extensively examined constructs in tourism literature due to its direct influence on decision-making, satisfaction, and post-travel behavior. The present findings align with the classic Push-Pull theory [20], where internal psychological desires such as the need for relaxation (push) interact with external features such as beaches or cultural heritage (pull) [21]. Travelers now seek meaningful, co-created, and memory-rich experiences over commoditized tourism products. These

frameworks enrich the interpretation of participants' preferences for authentic, immersive, and emotion-centered travel, confirming the relevance of both traditional and evolving motivation theories in guiding tourism marketing. Agarwal et al. [22] expanded this through the Travel Career Pattern model, which suggested that motivation is not fixed but progresses in stages depending on life experiences, personality development, and social context. Travelers with higher levels of experience or travel sophistication may be driven by self-actualization or intercultural learning, while less experienced tourists may focus more on safety and novelty. Additionally, Marquez et al. [23] argued that motivations can be layered and conflicting, where an individual simultaneously seeks rest and stimulation, anonymity and connection. These insights make it clear that understanding the deeper layers of travel motivation is essential for developing marketing content that resonates on a psychological and emotional level.

2.4. Destination choice

Tourism has grown further and has become a dominant industry globally, which significantly affects a country's economy. It is also affiliated with many other fields, such as advertising, endorsements, product placements, sponsorships, and business organizations [24]. The process of destination choice is often more subjective than rational, involving an intricate blend of image perception, emotional affinity, risk assessment, and lifestyle compatibility. Cortés [25] proposed that tourists select destinations that reflect or enhance their self-image, a phenomenon known as self-congruity. This theory suggests that destinations are not chosen solely for their attractions but for how they affirm the traveler's identity or desired status. Jebbouri et al. [26] added that destination image is constructed from a combination of functional characteristics (such as infrastructure and cost) and psychological impressions (such as friendliness or excitement), both of which contribute to consumer judgment. The influence of past experiences, word-of-mouth, and media exposure further shape these impressions, often before any formal research or booking takes place. Grigoriadis [27] emphasized that perceived safety, political stability, and social norms also significantly affect destination selection, particularly in uncertain economic or geopolitical climates. As such, understanding destination choice involves examining both rational evaluations and subconscious preferences that form during the consumer's information-gathering phase.

2.5. Digital influence

Digital influence has become an indispensable force in modern tourism behavior, affecting not only how travelers discover destinations but also how they make decisions and share experiences. In this study, participants' strong reliance on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram mirrors the theoretical perspective that algorithm-driven exposure significantly shapes travel intent [28]. Their behavior confirms that travelers are not passive recipients of content but active evaluators, responding more to authentic and emotionally relatable storytelling than to corporate-driven visuals. According to Ghaly [29], user-generated content has restructured the way tourists seek and evaluate travel information, shifting power away from official sources and toward peer recommendations and influencer narratives.

Travelers increasingly rely on social media platforms, review sites, and travel vlogs to assess the credibility and appeal of a destination. Solomon et al. [30] highlighted that digital storytelling, when authentic and visually engaging, shapes expectations even before the travel experience begins. The immersive and accessible nature of digital platforms enables travelers to mentally simulate their journey, influencing both intention and behavior [31]. Moreover, the algorithmic personalization of content means that travelers are frequently exposed to options that align with their previous searches, preferences, and browsing history, as noted by Siyao [32]. This phenomenon underscores the need for tourism marketers to develop content strategies that are not only visually compelling but also optimized for digital discovery and user engagement.

2.6. Experience-Based marketing

Experience-based marketing in tourism emphasizes the delivery of meaningful, emotionally charged, and memorable interactions between the traveler and the destination. In tourism, this shift manifests through personalized itineraries, immersive cultural activities, and storytelling that connects travelers with the destination's identity. Jumawan [33] argued that when tourists emotionally engage with their experiences, they are more likely to share their stories, become repeat visitors, and act as informal ambassadors. This kind of marketing relies heavily on authenticity, emotional resonance, and the ability to construct narratives that travelers can internalize and recount. Furthermore, Cavalcante et al. [34] suggested that co-creation where tourists contribute to shaping their experiences fosters a stronger sense of ownership and satisfaction. Experience-based marketing, therefore, is not merely about promoting activities or attractions; it is about crafting journeys that align with personal aspirations and cultural narratives, ensuring that travelers feel seen, valued, and emotionally fulfilled [35].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the motivations and behaviors that influence travelers' destination choices and their responses to tourism marketing strategies. An exploratory approach was deemed appropriate, as it enables the discovery of underlying themes and insights in areas where existing literature is limited or where new trends are emerging [36]. The qualitative nature of the study allowed for the capture of personal narratives, subjective experiences, and individual interpretations, which are essential in analyzing behavioral patterns and emotional responses related to travel. As noted by Castro et al. [37], qualitative frameworks are particularly valuable in contexts where individual and adaptive responses are central to behavioral exploration an approach suited for understanding tourism preferences and marketing receptivity.

3.2. Research instrument

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the study's objectives. The two research questions are clearly defined as: (1) What are the personal motivations and cultural values that influence travelers' destination choices? (2) How do travelers interpret and respond to tourism marketing content? These questions are rooted in the assumption that destination preferences and marketing interpretation are behaviorally and emotionally interconnected. Interviews used semi-structured probing to explore deeper psychological states such as emotional stress, self-renewal, and identity alignment. The interview protocol included open-ended questions, follow-up prompts, and contextual probes to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives freely. The flexibility of the semi-structured format enabled the researcher to pursue relevant themes as they naturally emerged during the conversations [38].

The key idea of the study was to understand how tourists' motivations and behaviors influence their travel decisions and perceptions of marketing. These insights are essential in guiding the development of more targeted and effective tourism marketing initiatives. Accordingly, the interview questions were designed to align with this focus, ensuring that data collected would yield valuable understanding of the behavioral patterns and decision-making processes of frequent travelers.

An overview of the core themes and guiding questions used in the interview guide is presented in **Table 1.**

Table 1. Instrument of the study

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore the underlying motivations and preferences that influence tourists' decisions when choosing travel destinations.	What factors or personal interests usually motivate you to travel or choose a specific destination? How do your cultural background, values, or lifestyle influence your travel preferences? Can you describe a recent travel experience and explain what made you choose that destination over others?
To examine how tourists' behaviors and experiences inform their perceptions of effective tourism marketing strategies.	What types of tourism advertisements or promotions have influenced your decision to visit a place? How do you usually respond to online travel content, such as social media posts, blogs, or travel videos? In your opinion, what makes a tourism campaign or advertisement memorable or convincing?

3.3. Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilized to identify participants who had rich and relevant experiences in travel behavior and marketing exposure. The inclusion criteria required participants to be frequent travelers, defined as individuals who travel at least three times a year for leisure purposes. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling method where researchers select participants based on specific criteria, such as specialist knowledge or experience [39]. In line with Lamorinas et al. [40], participant selection also accounted for generational preferences, particularly among Gen Z and millennial groups, whose travel behaviors and responses to digital marketing have shown distinct patterns. A total of 28 participants were selected, all of whom are travelers or tourists who travel at least three (3) times a year.

3.4. Data gathering procedure

Data was collected through one-on-one, in-depth interviews conducted either face-to-face or virtually, depending on participant availability and logistical considerations. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure transcription accuracy. Prior to each session, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, and verbal and written consent were obtained. Field notes captured non-verbal cues, environmental observations, and immediate reflections. According to Savellon et al. [41], adopting an environment-sensitive and dialogic method in data gathering is crucial in eliciting meaningful insights, especially when participants reflect on personal behaviors in public or social settings like travel.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, a qualitative method that emphasizes the identification, interpretation, and organization of recurring themes within narrative accounts. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed four dominant behavioral patterns. Among the 28 participants, 11 emphasized nature-based and emotionally restorative travel, 16 described work-leisure blended motivations, 20 prioritized practicality, safety, and affordability, and 23 demonstrated high reliance on digital content. Further, generational differences emerged: Gen Z participants (aged 21–30) were more influenced by short-form video content and user-generated reviews. These quantified distributions help validate pattern consistency and strengthen the credibility and practical relevance of the findings.

Reflexivity was maintained throughout the process, with the researcher consistently evaluating personal assumptions and interpretations to avoid bias in theme construction. This method allowed the study to capture the nuanced experiences and emotional tones within participants' accounts, especially as they described motivations for travel and their reactions to tourism marketing. In line with Chavez et al. [42], this analytic process values the contextual depth and subjective meanings that participants attach to their

behaviors, making it suitable for research that explores affective and perceptual dimensions of decision-making. Each theme that emerged from the data was grounded in direct participant input, ensuring that insights were both authentic and meaningfully constructed through careful interpretation.

3.6. Ethical considerations

This study adhered strictly to ethical standards in social research. Ethical clearance was secured from the institutional review board prior to data collection. All participants were informed of their rights, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and withdrawal at any time. Informed consent was obtained via signed forms, and all data was stored securely to protect privacy. In line with Abdurasul et al. [43], the research design incorporated cultural sensitivity and value-respect mechanisms, particularly in framing questions that could touch upon lifestyle and identity-related topics such as language use, travel aspirations, and cultural exposure. The study ensured that no participant was subjected to emotional or psychological discomfort during the interviews.

4. Result

Objective 1. To explore the underlying motivations and preferences that influence tourists' decisions when choosing travel destinations.

Question 1. What factors or personal interests usually motivate you to travel or choose a specific destination?

4.1. Nature and relaxation-oriented travel

Eleven (11) respondents expressed that their primary motivation for traveling stems from the need to relax and escape from daily routines**.** The allure of nature like beaches, mountains, waterfalls, and peaceful places, was a recurring theme. Travelers often seek out environments that offer tranquility, allowing them to breathe, reset, and disconnect from stressful routines. These destinations serve as emotional sanctuaries where travelers can regain clarity and peace of mind.

> "I travel mainly to relax and escape from my routine... I love nature like beaches, mountains, peaceful places."

> "I really love traveling, it's my way of resetting... I prefer places where I can relax, explore nature, or enjoy a new culture."

> "I like white sandy beaches and spectacular landscapes... natural preferably. Man-made is fine, but nature has its own authenticity."

4.2. Work-Driven travel with opportunistic exploration

A notable proportion of sixteen (16) respondents indicated that their travel choices are influenced by professional obligations such as training, seminars, or client visits. In these cases, destinations are not actively chosen but rather assigned. However, this doesn't stop them from maximizing the opportunity to explore nearby attractions. Even with a tight schedule, these travelers squeeze in time for local experiences especially food, sightseeing, or short nature visits. The motivation here lies in turning work trips into micro-escapes**,** making the most out of otherwise routine obligations.

> "Most of my trips actually start because of work... but I try to explore nearby places or try local food."

> "I don't usually get to choose my travel destinations because I travel mostly for work... I look for places with good local food, something relaxing after meetings."

4.3. Personal relevance

Nine (9) respondents reflected on a more introspective motivation travel as a reflection of one's current emotional or life state. These travelers choose destinations based on what they feel they need at the moment**,** whether it's rest, new cultural experiences, or just a break from the familiar. Participants is guided by inner cues and emotional balance**,** often driven by a sense of curiosity, healing, or renewal. Their choices shift based on what their current phase in life demands be it solitude, adventure, or inspiration.

> "What usually motivates me... is a mix of curiosity and what I feel I need now... sometimes I just want to relax, other times I'm excited to explore."

> "Whenever I get stressed or feel burnt out, I start planning trips... I just want to experience the vibe of the place."

4.4. Practical considerations

Twenty (20) respondents pointed to practical elements as vital considerations in choosing travel destinations. These include affordability, ease of access, travel time, accommodation, and especially safety. Destinations that pose safety risks are automatically excluded, regardless of appeal. Cost is also a defining factor; travelers want experiences that don't break the bank but still deliver value and meaning. Group travel decisions are sometimes influenced by peers or social recommendations but ultimately shaped by these logistical filters.

> "I also check if the destination has good food and if it's affordable or within my budget."

> "In choosing places to visit, I consider what is famous in that place, the safety of the travelers, and lastly, it should be budget-friendly."

Question No. 2. How do your cultural background, values, or lifestyle influence your travel preferences?

4.5. Practical and budget-conscious travel influences

Twenty-two (22) respondents revealed that their Filipino upbringing has taught them to value practicality, simplicity, and resourcefulness, which significantly shape how they plan and experience travel. Many shared that they always seek value for money, comparing prices, hunting for deals, and choosing experiences that are meaningful rather than luxurious. Traveling light, avoiding unnecessary expenses, and preferring local over touristy activities were common themes. These habits reflect a lifestyle centered on simplicity, hospitality, and being wise with financial resources values instilled from childhood.

> "As a Filipino, I think we really enjoy family or barkada trips, so I usually travel with a group. I also prefer destinations that feel welcoming and 'maaliwalas'somewhere that reminds you of home but still different. I'm not into super expensive or luxurious places. I prefer simple, meaningful experiences like meeting locals or learning something about the culture or food."

> "I grew up being told to be wise with money, so I compare prices or look for deals even when the company is paying. I also tend to travel light and simple, Idon't need fancy hotels as long as it's clean and safe."

> "I'd rather try a local eatery than eat in a fancy hotel buffet. Also, I tend to avoid unnecessary spending and go for places I can enjoy quietly without stress."

4.6. Purposeful and cultural immersion-oriented travel

Fifteen (15) respondents emphasized that their travel preferences are influenced by their desire to connect more deeply with the culture and people of the places they visit. Rather than focusing on luxury or comfort, they value experiences that educate and enrich their understanding of heritage, local traditions, or the environment. Their lifestyle encourages them to go beyond being a tourist and instead become active learners and participants in local life.

> "I naturally try to maximize any opportunity. Like, if I'm in Cebu for a work event, I'll look for nearby places I haven't been to yet maybe try lechon from a local spot or visit a landmark after the conference."

> "If I'm in Davao for work, I make time to explore, even just for a few hours after my duties are done."

> "I like meaningful experiences more than touristy things."

4.7. Preference for functionality and natural aesthetic

Four (4) respondents expressed that their preference in travel destinations is deeply connected to how functional and aesthetically natural the place is. Rather than being drawn to man-made attractions, they are inspired by spaces that serve a purpose while offering scenic beauty. Raised in an environment where beauty is often integrated with purpose like community parks, simple pathways, and local landscapes these individuals carry those same standards when choosing travel spots.

> "I like rock formations landscapes. I'm in Iloilo right now. I like their esplanade; it's like a pathway with very spectacular plants; floral. It's functional because you can jog on the side, but it really has a nice view because it is overlooking into the lake."

Question No. 3. Can you describe a recent travel experience and explain what made you choose that destination over others?

4.8. Experience-based motivation

A total of seventeen (17) respondents emphasized that immersive and experiential tourism greatly influenced their destination choice. They preferred locations where they could engage directly with nature, culture, or local communities. Activities such as island hopping, hiking near rivers, or exploring markets by water enriched their travel, not just through sights but through real interaction. These travelers were less concerned with the mainstream appeal of the location and more drawn to the "lived" experience. The emphasis on human connection and the multisensory nature of the destination gave deeper value to their trips and shaped their preference for places that offer meaning beyond aesthetics.

> "I like experiential things. If it is not experiential, it's very very expectacular the view… but if you experience swimming, kayaking, buying from local vendors by the river—that's what makes it valuable."

> "I recently went to Iloilo and Guimaras… the Spanish heritage, the well-preserved homes, the beaches… I didn't plan it, but I'm thankful I experienced it."

4.9. Practicality and opportunity

Twelve (12) respondents described how their travel decisions were shaped by practical considerations, such as proximity, budget, work-related events, or the availability of promos. Often, these trips weren't pre-planned vacations but rather opportunistic extensions of business or family trips. These respondents made the

most of being already in the area and chose to explore nearby attractions. This reflects a behavior pattern where spontaneous, cost-effective, and convenient destinations gain preference over more idealized but logistically demanding options.

> "After a business trip in Davao, I extended by a day to visit Eden Nature Park. It wasn't a planned vacation, but I made the most out of being there."

> "I had to go to Davao for work… I stayed one more day to visit Samal Island. If the timing works and it's within budget, I go for it."

4.10. Cultural curiosity and aesthetic appeal

Ten (10) respondents expressed that their travel was driven by a desire to explore culture and aesthetics, such as local food, history, unique scenery, or cooler climates. The destinations they chose such as Baguio, Thailand, and Siargao offered sensory and cultural escapes from routine life. What drew them wasn't only the visuals, but the ambiance. These destinations offered a refreshing sense of familiarity or novelty, motivating travelers to choose them for their emotional resonance and local flavor.

> "Thailand was an easy choice because I've always been drawn to their culture, food, and beautiful temples."

> "We chose Siargao because it was laid-back and not too commercialized. The local food and island vibe really caught our attention."

Objective 2. To examine how tourists' behaviors and experiences inform their perceptions of effective tourism marketing strategies.

Question No. 4. What types of tourism advertisements or promotions have influenced your decision to visit a place?

4.11. Authenticity over perfection

Thirteen (13) respondents emphasized that they are more drawn to realistic and emotionally resonant advertisements over highly polished, scripted campaigns. Ads that show genuine experiences such as locals enjoying street food, tourists laughing during hikes, or families bonding resonated more deeply. These respondents distrust perfection and instead value relatability, emotional appeal, and rawness in visuals.

> "If the ad looks too scripted or perfect, I skip it. But if I see something raw and relatable, like a group enjoying street food or a family by the beach, It sticks with me."

> "Real stories. If it shows people genuinely enjoying, relaxing, or being transformed by the place, that sticks with me more than just pretty photos."

4.12. Promo-driven planning

Eight (8) respondents revealed that budget-friendly deals and promotional offers serve as powerful motivators in travel decisions. These respondents don't always intend to travel, but promotions act as a trigger to explore opportunities. Affordability is a central influence, proving that strategic pricing can convert interest into action, especially among budget-conscious travelers.

> "I usually get influenced by online travel promos, especially those with piso fare or discounted hotel bundles. I get curious and start planning."

> "If I see a flight deal to a place I've been curious about, I usually end up booking it."

4.13. Visual storytelling and social media influence

Twenty-three (23) respondents highlighted the power of visual platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and travel vlogs in shaping their perceptions of destinations. Short-form videos and reels showcasing scenic views, hidden gems, or real-life testimonials attract attention quickly and leave lasting impressions. More than official ads, user-generated content often plays a bigger role in influencing decisions, particularly when it blends beauty with real experience.

> "Short, cinematic reels on Instagram usually get me—especially when they show hidden gems or unique experiences with real emotions."

> "Social media promos, especially those from airlines or travel apps, influence me a lot."

Question No. 5. How do you usually respond to online travel content, such as social media posts, blogs, or travel videos?

4.14. Research-driven engagement

Thirteen (13) respondents shared that their response to online content is highly intentional and research oriented. They actively save, bookmark, or screenshot travel posts for future use, particularly those offering practical information like sample itineraries, budget tips, or transport guides. Travel content becomes a planning tool, not just a source of inspiration. These respondents are not passive viewers; they examine the credibility of the posts, read comments, and even reach out to content creators or friends for advice. This reflects a deliberate and informed approach to travel planning.

> "I save TikToks and reels almost daily. I binge-watch vlogs about destinations—especially the budget breakdowns and sample itineraries."

> "I save posts or videos I find on TikTok or Instagram… I also read comments to check if it's legit or just hyped up."

4.15. Visual-first consumption

Sixteen (16) respondents indicated that they are visual learners and travelers, relying primarily on short-form videos and image-based content to assess a destination's vibe. TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube vlogs are their go-to platforms. Rather than reading long articles, they prefer visual content that simulates the actual experience. These respondents gravitate toward video content that is quick, emotionally engaging, and packed with useful information like directions, costs, or cultural context.

> "I usually search on TikTok or YouTube… I like watching short reels or vlogs that show how to get to places, how much things cost, and if it's doable in just half a day."

> "I'm very visual… when I see tourism videos that capture the vibe of a place, that sticks with me."

> "When I discover a place that is so beautiful, then I look for some blogs. To verify if it's true or not. Personal first, then I go to this advertisement or online content."

4.16. Emotional resonance and connection

Eleven (11) respondents indicated that beyond logistics, they respond to emotional and authentic storytelling in travel content. They are more likely to engage with posts that feel relatable, joyful, and

genuine, especially if they show meaningful human experiences rather than curated perfection. Content that connects emotionally and feels "real" becomes more than just entertainment, it shapes their aspirations.

> "If the content feels authentic and relatable, I save it or share it with friends."

> "Seeing them enjoying their travel made me also happy for them and would also want to try if given the opportunity."

Question No. 6. In your opinion, what makes a tourism campaign or advertisement memorable or convincing?

4.17. Authenticity and emotional connection

Seven (7) respondents highlighted authenticity as the most critical factor that makes a tourism campaign stick. They are drawn to ads that show genuine emotions, real people, and true-to-life experiences. Rather than being persuaded by flawless visuals or scripted narratives, they value content that feels raw, relatable, and emotionally grounded. Campaigns that reflect local culture, food, traditions, and unfiltered travel moments are more likely to create an emotional bond, which in turn drives curiosity and action. These respondents emphasized that feeling something whether it's joy, peace, or excitement is more convincing than just seeing a beautiful place.

> "If it makes me feel something—like excitement, curiosity, or even FOMO— then it works."

> "Real stories… more than just pretty photos, I remember when people are transformed by the experience."

4.18. Practical and relatable messaging

Nineteen (19) respondents are influenced by relatable and realistic portrayals in tourism ads. They value campaigns that speak directly to their lifestyles whether they're business travelers, budget-conscious tourists, or spontaneous planners. What convinces them isn't grandeur, but practicality: real testimonials, sample expenses, transport routes, and honest expectations. Ads that acknowledge challenges like walking distances or weather conditions are even appreciated for their transparency. These respondents want to imagine themselves in the place living the experience, not just admiring it.

> "I remember campaigns that are both informative and relatable. If it feels too staged, I skip it."

> "If they say, 'this place is beautiful but expect some walking,' I appreciate that."

4.19. Storytelling over visual perfection

Twenty (20) respondents emphasized the power of narrative storytelling in making tourism campaigns memorable. While visuals and music catch attention, it is the story of the place, the people, or the traveler's transformation that stays with them. Story-driven campaigns allow the audience to connect on a deeper level. These respondents are more compelled by meaning than by aesthetics and are drawn to destinations that offer more than just a photo opportunity.

> "A campaign becomes convincing when I can picture myself there—not just looking, but actually feeling the experience."

> "For me, a campaign becomes memorable when it tells a story. Something that goes beyond just showing pretty places."

4.20. Testimonial-based endorsement

Fifteen (15) respondents identified testimonials and first-hand influencer content as major drivers of trust. They place more credibility in influencers or vloggers who have genuinely experienced the place and share personal stories, rather than just repeating others' narratives. The shift from being curious to actively purchasing a trip happens when they hear sincere, experience-based accounts.

> "What convinces me is if the advertisement is done naturally by people who have really been there."

> "I appreciate a vlog endorsement that is based on personal experience, not just stories of others."

5. Discussion

The findings reveal a multidimensional pattern in tourism-seeking behaviors, with work-leisure blending and digital content influence emerging as core drivers. These behaviors can be interpreted through Social Identity Theory, which explains how individuals align their travel decisions with aspirational group norms presented by influencers or peer communities. Travelers see themselves in digital narratives, seeking experiences that match the identity they wish to portray. Emotional Contagion Theory further clarifies how emotionally charged content, such as travel vlogs or authentic testimonials, triggers vicarious joy or curiosity, enhancing destination appeal [44]. These theoretical perspectives add depth to the understanding of how modern travelers internalize, respond to, and act upon promotional stimuli. Tourism has the capacity to produce moderate to high well-being effects in tourists [45]. Indeed, nature tourism is characterized by interaction with unaltered or minimally impacted environments, where the primary motivation of visitors is the observation and appreciation of nature and cultural manifestations [46, 47]. The prevailing preference for nature-based and relaxation-oriented destinations underscores the emotional function of travel. These experiences act as mechanisms for mental reset and emotional healing, suggesting that tourism marketing should emphasize serenity, authenticity, and the psychological value of destinations rather than merely their aesthetic or recreational features.

Beyond leisure intent, the intersection of work and opportunistic travel was pronounced. Many travelers leveraged business trips as gateways to mini escapes, revealing a hybrid behavior where professional obligations blend with experiential exploration [48]. This reflects a growing demand for flexibility and spontaneity in tourism planning. According to Yeyen & Dimitrios [49], Marketers must recognize this dual-purpose travel mindset and craft campaigns that integrate business-travel extensions, accessible side-trips, and quick cultural immersions. Offering packages or suggestions that accommodate limited-time schedules can unlock a currently underutilized market segment [50].

Mehmetoglu et al. [51] emphasized that the influence of personal values and cultural orientation also shaped destination choice. The data highlighted a consistent inclination toward practicality, modest spending, and value-for-money experiences particularly resonant among Filipino travelers. This behavioral trait is rooted not only in financial prudence but also in a cultural disposition toward simplicity, adaptability, and communal experience. Consequently, tourism campaigns that emphasize honest pricing, low-cost but high-value offerings, and culturally immersive activities are more likely to gain traction. What started as an added form of communication is now an integral part of tourism branding that affects tourists' decision-making and enables personal interaction [52].

Experience-based decision-making emerged as a decisive factor. Respondents described transformative and interactive engagements kayaking through rivers, trying local delicacies, or mingling with locals as far

more compelling than passive sightseeing. This reinforces the growing relevance of experiential tourism, where emotional and participatory dimensions carry more weight than traditional sightseeing. The goal of tourism service is to provide unforgettable and positive experiences for tourists [53]. This requires destination managers to focus on immersion for tourists [54], as immersive experience can provide a sense of escaping reality [55]. Marketing content must thus shift from showcasing destinations to narrating experiences. Highlighting personal transformation and emotional fulfillment, rather than just attractions, creates a more profound connection with the traveler.

Equally important is the role of digital media, which serves both as a source of inspiration and a decision-making tool. Visual-first consumption through platforms like TikTok and Instagram dominates traveler engagement. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and TripAdvisor have not just transformed the promotion of tourism products and destinations, but also reformed tourists' attitudes and perceptions about traveling [56, 57]. However, it's not just aesthetics that matter, it's the narrative and relatability of the content. Kothari et al. [58] further support that content that conveys rawness, spontaneity, and authenticity commands greater influence than polished, commercialized ads. Transparency in advertising further enhances reliability [59]. This finding aligns with the increasing distrust of scripted marketing and growing preference for peer-generated, emotionally resonant storytelling. Marketers must adopt a digital voice that mirrors real experiences, builds trust, and triggers emotional recognition.

Promotional triggers also strongly affected travel decisions. Flash sales, bundled deals, and promo codes acted as behavioral nudges, often converting passive interest into action. Notably, these promotions are more effective when accompanied by honest, story-driven messaging. This underlines the value of combining affordability with authentic narratives bridging rational cost-sensitivity with emotional appeal. The credibility of testimonial-based content, particularly from influencers who genuinely experienced the location, significantly shaped trust and persuasion [60]. The shift from passive advertising to endorsement rooted in lived experience highlights the importance of co-created marketing [61]. Travelers are no longer just audiences; they are contributors to the destination's brand. This signals the need for collaborative strategies with content creators, where their stories serve as extensions of a destination's value proposition [62].

The results affirm that effective tourism marketing must move beyond traditional frameworks and immerse itself in the psychological, emotional, and digital lives of contemporary travelers. Travel today is not merely about movement, it is about meaning, resonance, and identity. Centering campaigns on real-life motivations, emotional authenticity, cultural sensitivity, and interactive content, tourism stakeholders can create strategies that are not only persuasive but deeply aligned with the lived realities of their target audience.

This study was limited by its purposive sampling and concentration on frequent Filipino travelers within specific age and occupational groups. Researcher subjectivity may have influenced the interpretation of themes despite measures to maintain reflexivity, such as peer consultation. Cultural adaptability also poses a limitation, as the insights while rich in local relevance may not be transferable across culturally diverse travel markets. Future research should involve multi-country comparisons or mixed-method designs that incorporate survey data to validate qualitative patterns. Longitudinal studies may also examine how digital influence and motivational factors evolve across life stages.

6. Conclusion

This study solved the research problem by offering a behaviorally grounded and strategically actionable model for tourism marketing based on the real-world motivations and digital behaviors of frequent Filipino

travelers. Identifying four dominant behavior patterns nature-based emotional travel, work-leisure integration, cultural alignment, and digital content reliance, the study translated abstract motivations into specific marketing design principles. These include the prioritization of authenticity over perfection, emotional storytelling over aesthetic visuals, and strategic use of social media for inspiration and conversion.

The insights respond directly to the research objectives by illuminating how personal, cultural, and digital factors intersect to guide destination choices and content receptivity. Marketers can use these findings to develop emotionally intelligent campaigns, incorporate testimonial-based influencer strategies, and tailor travel offerings that reflect travelers' identity needs and real-life constraints. This shift from traditional mass marketing to personalized and psychologically resonant storytelling addresses the core challenge of making tourism promotions more effective and meaningful in today's saturated digital landscape.

The study not only contributes to tourism theory by expanding motivational frameworks into the digital age, but also provides concrete recommendations for tourism stakeholders seeking to increase campaign relevance, consumer trust, and emotional engagement. By applying the proposed behavioral model, practitioners can better align their marketing strategies with the evolving expectations and behaviors of modern travelers, thereby solving the problem of ineffective, generic marketing approaches in tourism.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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