Take me there! Exploring the intervening effect of consumption vision in the celebrity influencer-infused short destination marketing videos - place image nexus

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ABSTRACT

Social media-based immersive technologies have a significant influence on the ability of the consumer to visualise and vicariously experience tourism as a service offering. Our study explores the transformative influence of celebrity star power via short video destination marketing on tourist cognition (perception and recall via consumption vision) and conation (place image formation) regarding South Africa. A quantitative cross-sectional deductive study was conducted. Data generated from a pre-recruited online panel sample of *n* = 592 American consumers as potential tourists were modelled and analysed via Partial Least-Squares – Structural Equation Modelling. Further gender-based group analysis was conducted via Partial Least Squares - Multi-Group Analysis. Based on the Stimuli-Organism-Response theory, our primary findings indicated that celebrity influence via online short destination marketing video content stimulated the consumption vision of tourists. Subsequently, the influence of celebrity-infused short destination marketing video content, mediated by consumption vision, influenced the place image formation of potential tourists. Moreover, gender differences were established – consumption vision positively moderated the effect of celebrity influence on place image formation in males, whereas it did not influence females. Our findings support academic inquiry into the value of infusing celebrities in short destination marketing communications and their subsequent impact on the psyche of tourists and place image formation, which remains nascent from a Global South perspective.

Keywords: Celebrity influence, short video marketing, consumption vision, gender, place image

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information and communications technology advances have led to the proliferation of virtual, social, and short-video media platforms as sources of tourist information symmetry beyond the conventional literature, film, games, and television advertisements (Alyahya & McLean, 2022; Gan, Shi, Filieri & Leung, 2023; Zhou, Liu, & Sun, 2022). Additionally, as celebrities transcend from traditional media such as movies, television shows, and conventional advertising to online social media-based platforms, their inclusion in online marketing content adds a unique 'star power' influence on the marketing efforts of destinations as tourism places (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Lee & Jeong, 2023). Hence, the limited extant research suggests that digital audio-visual communication media or online content increasingly influences tourists' perceptions and imagination of destinations (Chen, Wu & Zhang, 2023; Gan *et al.*, 2023; Lin, Gao, Lin, & Wang, 2020; Tang *et al.*, 2024).

The complexity of information symmetry in tourism through proactive information searching and media consumption provides impetus for the present study, as the proliferation of short destination marketing videos is buoyed by the evolution of digital multi-media social networking platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram (Gan *et al.*, 2023; Liu, Wang & Chang, 2023; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a). Destination marketing videos designed for online platforms are typically short (usually between 30 seconds and five minutes long), high-quality tourism videos that showcase the major attractions and tourism experiences of a destination (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023). The precedent of successful celebrity infusion in destination marketing, as in the case of the K-pop group BTS for South Korean tourism, has also added a new dimension to content creation, which has witnessed destinations seeking to harness celebrity influence in the promotion of their locations (Lee & Jeong, 2023).

Characterised as "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions individuals have of a place" (Stylidis & Quintero, 2022: 435), place image mitigates the heterogeneity in the overall knowledge and perceptions about a place. In tourism, the place image projects a more simplified and accepted overarching impression of the place, beyond the individual tourist's comprehension of the destination image (Tosun, Dedeoğlu, Çalışkan & Karakuş, 2021). Hence, a positive place image is imperative to the conation of tourists (Zhou *et al.*, 2022). However, place image as an outcome of destination marketing is susceptible to the elements that shape the experiences of tourists as well as the interplay between the marketing message and the underlying psychological mechanisms of the tourist (Tosun *et al.*, 2021). This notion fits the discernible paradigm shift away from the notion of tourists as rational decision-makers towards the need to better understand the impact of experiential determinants as a psychological aspect of tourist behaviour (Le, Scott & Lohmann, 2019; Walters, Sparks & Herington, 2012). For instance, some research (Mou & Brito, 2024; Tercia, Teichert, Sirad & Soehadi, 2020; Walters *et al.*, 2012) suggests that tourists can visualise their future travel and tourism experiences as part of their pre-purchase decision-making process. This phenomenon is referred to as consumption vision, whereby the vivid cognition of the tourism experience forms part of an intrinsic decision support system based on psychological heuristic cues related to either the tourism experiences or the tourism destination as a place (Andersen, 2016; Kim & Kwak, 2024; Lin *et al.*, 2020; Tang, Ruan, Zhang, Li & Zhou, 2024).

Prior research (Tang *et al.*, 2024; Tercia *et al.*, 2020) highlights the intricacy of information symmetry in tourism consumptive decision-making, more so in a hyper-competitive digital marketing environment. Although there is a discernible growth in academic inquiry into the role of short videos in the destination image formation process of tourists (Zhou *et al.*, 2022), the extant literature (Alamäki, Rhee, Suomala, Kaski & Kauttonen, 2023; Gan *et al.*, 2023) acknowledges the complexity of the mental processes involved in triggering consumers' mental imagery and observes that limited studies have determined the nature and effect of specific content on the creation of image perceptions emanating from marketing videos. Further, while there is evidence of the effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) and in its more contemporary form, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), on tourist behaviour and image formation (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024b; Stylidis & Quintero, 2022; Wang, Udomwong, Fu & Onpium, 2023), academic inquiry into the influence of celebrity-based e-WOM via short destination video marketing content shared on social media channels remains nascent (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a; Zhou *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, a critical question is whether infusing celebrity star power in destination marketing videos is an effective stimulus for the ability of the tourist to mentally simulate the tourism experience being marketed and subsequently influence place image formation.

Utilising the Stimuli-Organism-Response Model (SOR), the purpose of the study was to extend our understanding of the power of celebrity-induced visual experiences via destination video marketing in influencing the psychological mechanisms of tourists by considering the role of the tourist's self-imagination (consumption vision) as a mnemonic strategy, and ultimately tourists' image perceptions of a place. Moreover, this study explored the potential effect of gender in the effect of celebrity-induced destination marketing content on place image as well as the efficacy of consumption vision in place image formation. Within the scope and limitations of the research, the study sought to contribute to the growing academic inquiry into consumer behavioural research in tourism by modelling the aforementioned effects. Hence, a normative conceptual model representing the stimuli (celebrity video), organism (consumption vision) and response outcome (place image) was developed and tested, while taking into account and carefully considering the potential dual intervening effect (mediation and moderation) of consumption vision.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study is guided by Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory which posits that, when making consumptive decisions, individuals are subject to a three-stage process involving exogenous stimulus (S) which triggers cognitive and affective psychological mechanisms in individuals as organisms (O) that elicit responsive (R) behaviour. Acknowledging the SOR as an explanatory framework for the cognitive learning processes of tourists in decision-making, prior tourism studies (Huimin & Albattat, 2024; Jiang, Hong, Li & Li, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2023; Loureiro, Roschk, Ali & Friedmann, 2022; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024b) have adapted the SOR framework and established that technological innovation-driven celebrity-oriented short destination marketing videos effectively endorse and promote destinations by influencing the psyche of the tourist (for example, consumption vision) and subsequently their conation. This study considers how celebrity influence via short destination marketing video media content (S) stimulates tourist behaviour (Gan *et al.*, 2023; Tang *et al.*, 2024; Zhou *et al.*, 2022) and impacts the consumption vision (O) of tourists as part of their heuristic cue formation (Li *et al.*, 2023; Loureiro *et al.*, 2022; Tercia *et al.*, 2020; Walters *et al.*, 2012). Subsequently, place image (R) is interpreted as responsive conation of the tourist (Mou & Brito, 2024; Tosun *et al.*, 2021). Distinctively, within the SOR framework, this study explores the mediating and moderating effect of consumption vision in the interplay between a celebrity-infused short destination marketing video and place image perceptions of the tourist.

2.2 SHORT DESTINATION MARKETING VIDEOS AND CELEBRITIES

The intangible and experiential nature of tourism products implies that consumers rely heavily on pre-purchase information to make consumptive decisions (Pop, Săplăcan, Dabija & Alt, 2022). The extant literature (Hussain *et al.*, 2025; Leung *et al.*, 2013; Magno & Cassia, 2018) has established the proliferation of destination marketing via influencers and their influence on consumer behaviour, primarily online follower attitudes and decision-making. Critical information symmetry touch points in tourism include co-created content by other consumers, online reviews of previous tourist experiences, and more pertinently, destination marketing videos – which destinations are increasingly adopting to convey their marketing messages, to preview and showcase tourism experiences, and to shape their images amongst tourists (Liu *et al.*, 2023; Zhou *et al.*, 2022). To generate more interest in a destination as well as enhance the influence, appeal and memorability of place-oriented short marketing videos, destinations include celebrities as influencer co-creators (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a). Celebrity-infused short destination marketing videos are, however, not a particularly new phenomenon as prior studies (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Zhu, Fong, Li, Buhalis & Chen, 2024; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a) have established the value that celebrity protagonists add to short destination marketing videos. Further, it is well established that celebrity endorsement creates trust between the consumer and the product or brand, with recognisable (in)famous faces aiding human recollection and information processing (Pop *et al.*, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2024). Thus, celebrities in short destination marketing videos enhance the impact of destination marketing messages and how they influence the memorability of destinations and potentially the formation of place images.

2.3 DESTINATION MARKETING AND PLACE IMAGE IN TOURISM

The purpose of destination marketing is to shape tourist perception by crafting a positive image of a destination based on its value proposition (Wang *et al.*, 2023). Tourism destination image is a subset of place image, whereby destination image is how tourists perceive a location based specifically on tourism elements (safety, amenities, attractions) specifically as a tourism product, and place image is the broader overall perception of a place beyond tourism aspects (Kim & Kwak, 2024). Therefore, place image is a summative construct related to the broader conceptualisation of the tourism destination, encompassing atmosphere and image as subjective elements susceptible to the influence of the experiences of an individual (Kim & Kwak, 2024; Le *et al.*, 2019). Prior studies (Qian, Zheng, Wang, Pérez Sánchez, Parra López & Li, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2023) exhibit the bi-directional relationship between destination image and place image formation. However, the place image construct ventures beyond the conventional tourism destination image, which is predicated on cultural associations and marketing (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023). In this study, place image examines the aesthetic aspects of a place, for example, beautiful cultural assets, perceptions of the people as well as the beautiful scenery and preserved nature of the place (Buhmann, 2016).

2.4 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.4.1 Celebrity-infused short destination marketing videos and place image

Online short destination marketing video media is designed to trigger tourist cognition (consumption vision) and conation (place image) behaviour towards tourism destinations (Liu *et al.*, 2023; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a). This conation extends to place image perception. Prior studies (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Lee & Jeong, 2023; Zhou *et al.*, 2022) have determined that place images can be derived from short destination marketing videos, which exert a significant but often heterogeneous effect on tourist conation towards a place, depending on the type of content consumed. The literature (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023) also observes that short video content can reshape the images of tourism attractions and mitigate the effects of psychological distance in image formation. Further celebrity endorsement via destination short video marketing media has been found to enhance the appeal and image of the destination as a place amongst their intended audiences (Lee & Jeong, 2023; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a).

Tourist conation as a responsive behaviour to destination short video marketing, may include the desire of a tourist to experience a place they have yet to visit (Foubert, 2018; Pop *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, abstracted images generated by short destination video marketing content may be heuristic cues for places where place image is a "way of expressing visual characteristics that are affected by external factors to which an individual is exposed, based on the memory of the perceived environment" (Kim & Kwak, 2024:2). To this end, extant literature (Stylidis & Quintero, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2024; Tosun *et al.*, 2021) acknowledges the complexity of place image formation and its susceptibility to various extrinsic stimuli. In this study, such stimuli include marketing videos on social media platforms; therefore, the impact of celebrity-infused short destination marketing on place image is hypothesised as follows:

H_1: Celebrity-infused destination short video marketing influences place image.

2.4.2 Celebrity-infused short destination video marketing and consumption vision

Studies (Andersen, 2016; Qi, Zhang & Zhang, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2022) have observed that tourists are susceptible to the attitudes of their social references when adapting information about destinations, thus establishing a link between celebrity endorsement and tourists' assimilation of information about and perceptions toward a specific destination. Further, the relationship between celebrity influence and the stimulation of the tourists' interest, a place's appeal and memorability via their paid and non-paid marketing messages is well established in the burgeoning literature (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a). Given the vivid nature of short video marketing content, it is an effective conduit for projecting the uniqueness of places, mitigating the effect of distance and time to provide tourists with an 'immersive experience' (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Andersen, 2016; Chen *et al.*, 2023; Tang *et al.*, 2024) that is reinforced by celebrity endorsement (Zhu *et al.*, 2024).

Short marketing videos on digital social media platforms constitute an important component of virtual tourism that focuses on providing visual experiences (Gan *et al.*, 2023). From an experiential marketing perspective, celebrity-infused short destination video marketing utilises "sensory and symbolic stimuli to evoke imaginative and emotional responses during the decision-making processes" (Le *et al.*, 2019:220), allowing the consumer to vicariously experience the tourism product. In tourism, this phenomenon may be referred to as consumption vision and this study explores consumption vision as a formative construct that manifests as "the visual images that consumers create in their minds when considering the purchase or use of a product" (Walters *et al.*, 2012:367). Hence, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_2: Celebrity-infused destination short video marketing influences consumption vision.

2.4.3 Consumption vision and the image of places

Elaborate consumption vision allows tourists to vicariously experience the destination and its offerings, thus providing instant cognitive feedback that influences responsive behaviour (Andersen, 2016; Mou & Brito, 2024; Tercia *et al.*, 2020; Walters *et al.*, 2012). Place perception as a phenomenon is an outcome of consumers' sensory experiences; therefore, Kim and Kwak (2024:1) ascribe the unique value proposition of places via their images to the "reciprocal relationship between humans and their experiences and memories." To this end, Lin *et al.* (2020) observe the importance of imagination (memory without real existence) as a critical subjective consciousness that influences tourist behaviour. Thus, as a dynamic explanatory structure of how an individual may perceive the broader 'touristic components of a destination', aesthetic aspects of place image may be susceptible to the subjective consumption vision of tourists (Mou & Brito, 2024; Stylidis & Quintero, 2022; Tosun *et al.*, 2021). As a result, the present study tests the following hypothesis:

H_3: Consumption vision influences place image.

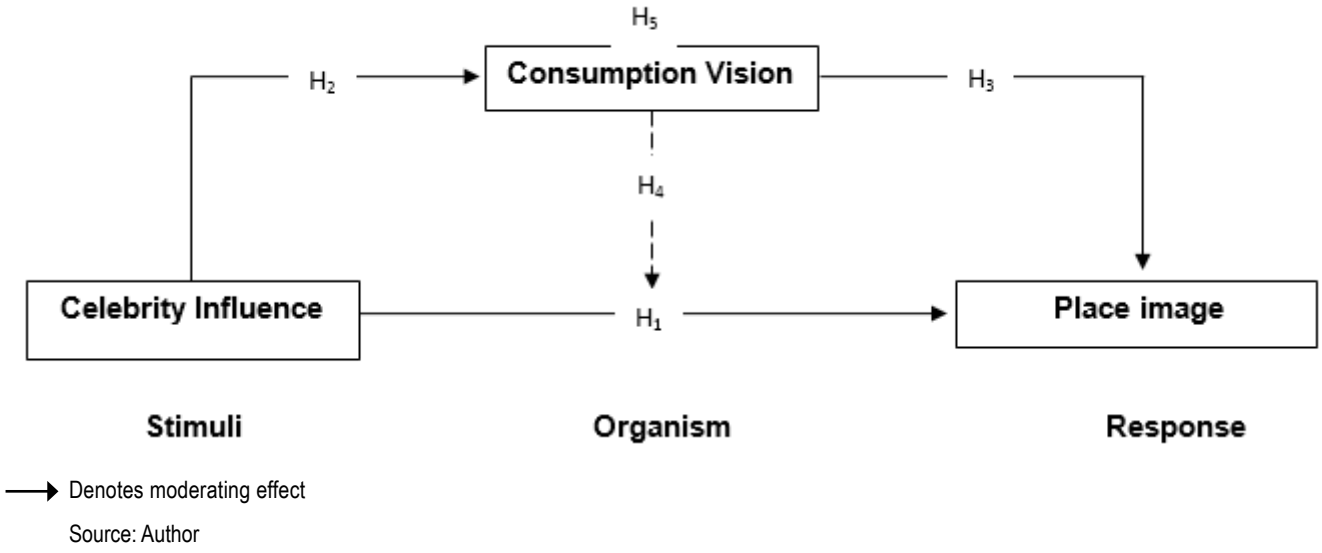
2.4.4 The indirect effect of consumption vision on tourist conation

Prior studies (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Zhou *et al.*, 2022) have established that video content and celebrity-infused content in particular influence the perceptions and behaviour of tourists. Moreover, tourism studies (Tercia *et al.*, 2020; Walters *et al.*, 2012) have also determined the effect of consumption vision tourist conation. As previously noted, the subjective immersion associated with virtual experiences suggests that consumers' interaction with celebrities via short destination video marketing content enhances the psychological and behavioural aspects of tourists and can "powerfully evoke users' mental imagery" or consumption vision (Tang *et al.*, 2024:2). Mental simulation is a critical aspect of responsive behaviour related to experiential products and destinations as places (Tercia *et al.*, 2020; Walters *et al.*, 2012). It follows that consumption vision would form part of the place image formation process of tourists as an outcome of celebrity influence via destination marketing (mediation) or it would be a 'condition' that affects the celebrity influence – place image nexus (moderation). Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_4: Consumption vision moderates the effect of celebrity-infused destination short video marketing on place image.

H_5: Consumption vision mediates the relationship between celebrity-infused destination short video marketing and place image.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study.



Source: Author

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.5 THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF GENDER

Within the broader marketing communications context, research has found that gender differences influence the behaviour and perceptions of consumers (Šerić & Vernuccio, 2020). The effect of tourist imagery processing such as consumption vision is susceptible to consumer characteristics (Le *et al.*, 2019; Mou & Brito, 2024). To this end, some authors (Huang & van der Veen, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2013) intimate that while the role of gender in tourist conation has generally been overlooked in tourism research, the extant limited evidence (Mou & Brito, 2024) suggests that gender is a viable antecedent of tourist behaviour, including being a basis for heterogeneity in destination image perceptions. Moreover, gender in tourism is also susceptible to socio-cultural constructs such as gender norms (Alshammari *et al.*, 2019; Huang & van der Veen, 2019; Weisberg, DeYoung & Hirsh, 2011). For instance, the literature (Alshammari, Whaley, Hur & Kim, 2019; Meyers-Levy & Sternthal, 1991; Mou & Brito, 2024; Šerić & Vernuccio, 2020) generally views females as being more comprehensive in their information search and interpretation when compared with males who tend to focus on readily available information and their judgement. Additionally, the extant literature acknowledges that, while females process information more in-depth, they tend to focus on underlying affect cues when compared with males that rely on more overt cues for decision-making.

A study conducted by Wang *et al.* (2016) confirmed the moderating effect of gender in the affective image-tourist expectations nexus, finding that females were more susceptible to the effect of affective image on tourist expectations than males. Huang and van der Veen (2019) established that males were more inclined towards the influence of functional image aspects such as services and tourism provisions than females were, whereas the attitudes of females were more susceptible to more aesthetic image aspects such as natural environment. Notwithstanding the heterogeneity in the current literature, no study has yet to explore the role of gender in the interplay of the triad of variables examined in this study; therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_6: There is a significant gender-based difference between males and females in the influence of celebrity-infused destination short video marketing on [H_{6a}] consumption vision and [H_{6b}] place image.

H_7: There is a significant gender-based difference in the mediating effect of consumption vision in the relationship between celebrity-infused destination short video marketing and place image.

H_8: There is a significant gender-based difference in the moderating effect of consumption vision in the effect of celebrity-infused destination short video marketing on place image.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 STUDY CONTEXT

With nearly 4 million YouTube subscribers, and 9 million and 12 million followers on Instagram and X respectively, Trevor Noah is a mega 'celebrity' online influencer (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a). As a global celebrity comedian, Trevor Noah harnesses humour to address stereotypes about Africa while providing an endorsement for South Africa as a tourism destination through narration and e-WOM (see Figure 2). This combined with cinematography of South African tourism experiences created an award-winning (Pinnacle Award at the International Tourism Film Festival Africa: https://itff.africa/2024-finalists/.) short destination marketing video that created a vivid and memorable tourism promotion campaign (https://youtu.be/3ok9OhybB4Y?si=DSWILa1KXJrpk-GO) for South Africa (Hes, 2024). The campaign reached over 231 million consumers across nine monitored tourism source markets, and 485 million 'hit' impressions on social media (Hes, 2024).

Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=trevor+noah+tourism+video

FIGURE 2: VIDEO CONTENT SCREENSHOT

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURING INSTRUMENT

A cross-sectional deductive quantitative online survey was conducted in December 2023. The United States of America (USA), one of South Africa's most valuable tourism source markets, ranked first in 2023 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Therefore, the study utilised a pre-recruited online panel of American consumers as potential tourists to South Africa from the global insights platform Cint (https://www.cint.com/). A screening question ensured that only respondents that had travelled internationally within two years prior to the survey participated in the study. The respondents were then prompted to watch a one-minute forty-five-second online destination marketing video featuring the celebrity influencer Trevor Noah. Upon completion, the respondents were then prompted to complete a self-administered online survey related to aspects of the promotional video and its effect on them. A total of 592 usable survey questionnaires were collated and analysed for the study and, based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling heuristics, any unknown sample of over 1 million requires a minimum representative sample of n = 384. Hence, the final sample was suitable for statistical and practical significance.

A composite scale was developed for the study. The study and instrument were subjected to a comprehensive scientific and ethics committee review process at a South African university. The study was conducted under ethics number: NWU-01972-23-A4. Data analysed within the scope of the present paper were generated from specific sections as follows. The independent stimuli variable celebrity influence via a short destination marketing video was

measured by five statements adapted from the scales advanced by Jiang *et al.* (2022) and Zhu *et al.* (2024). The intervening organism variable consumption vision (measured as the moderator and mediator) was measured based on six items adapted from a scale formulated by Walters et al. (2007). The dependent or response variable, place image, was measured based on five aesthetics-oriented items adapted from Buhmann (2016). The responses for all the variables were recorded on a five-point Likert agreement scale where 1 was "strongly disagree", and 5 was "strongly agree".

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was particularly suitable for exploring complex relationships modelled by this study as they required multiple equations to simultaneously test consumption vision's mediation and moderation effect in the direct relationship between celebrity influence and place image (Tosun *et al.*, 2021). Compared to covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), partial least-squares SEM (PLS-SEM) is deemed most suitable for testing explanatory and predictive models that are reflective in nature and the analysing of ordinal scale data drawn from the responses to Likert scales (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). As a result, the bootstrap resampling technique with 10,000 subsamples - bias-corrected, was used to test the PLS-SEM model in SmartPLS4 (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2024; Tosun *et al.*, 2021). Measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) and Partial Least Squares - Multi-group Analysis (PLS-MGA) were applied to stratify the data for more in-depth gender-based analyses (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016).

4. RESULTS

4.1 RESPONDENT SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As shown in Appendix 1, most of the respondents were male (57.24%) and were aged between 35 and 44 years of age (34.94%) at the time of the survey. The typical respondent possessed a high school diploma (32.95%), was married (43.26%), was employed in the private sector (56.57%), and earned the same as the average income in the USA (35.27%). The respondents indicated that they travelled mainly with their partner (32.45%) and had travelled internationally more than once (55.91%). The internet (32.95%) and social media (25.62%) were the respondents' most influential media channels for tourism decisions. Most respondents indicated that they would consider visiting South Africa as a tourist some day in the future (49.92%) and knew South Africa by name but had not yet been there (31.28%).

4.2 MEASUREMENT INVARIANCE OF COMPOSITE MODELS (MICOM)

Measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) was calculated to assess whether potential differences between the established groups could not be attributed to differences in the meaning of the same construct. A three-step MICOM procedure recommended by Henseler *et al.* (2016) was followed. SmartPLS 4 assumes configural invariance (Ringle *et al.*, 2024), and as summarised in Appendix 2, Step 2 confirmed compositional invariance, Step 3a indicated the equality of composite mean values and variances, while Step 3b established partial measurement invariance. As a result, the standardised path coefficient could be compared across the groups via group-specific model estimations (Gao *et al.*, 2024; Huang & van der Veen, 2019; Henseler *et al.*, 2016), as follows: the Complete sample (n = 592), Male sample group (n=344) and Female sample group (n = 248).

4.3 MEASUREMENT MODEL

Data collection using a single instrument to measure both endogenous and exogenous variables raises concerns about common method bias (CMB). According to Harman's single-factor test, the CMB (<50%) was 54.74%; however, based on Tosun *et al.*'s. (2021) approach, CMB was controlled for by also examining the variance inflation factor VIF. All VIF statistics were below the established 3.3 threshold; hence, CMB was not considered to be a concern in the study. The measurement model (Appendix 3) was assessed for internal consistency and convergent and discriminant

validity for celebrity influence (CEL), consumption vision (COV) and place image (PLI) (Table 1). The excess kurtosis (between − 10 to + 10) and skewness (between − 3 and + 3) of the data for the latent variables assessed the normality of the data (Griffin & Steinbrecher, 2013). For the Complete sample were (CEL: Kurtosis = 1.954 and Skewness = -1.312; COV: Kurtosis = 2.337 and Skewness = -1.229; PLI: Kurtosis = 1.881and Skewness = -1.068). For the Male sample excess kurtosis and skewness (CEL: Kurtosis = 2.195 and Skewness = -1.449; COV: Kurtosis = 3.030 and Skewness = -1.416; PLI: Kurtosis = 1.445 and Skewness = -0.951), while for the Female sample excess kurtosis and skewness (CEL: Kurtosis = 1.513 and Skewness = -1.071; COV: Kurtosis = 1.554 and Skewness = -0.981; PLI: Kurtosis = 1.691 and Skewness = -1.054).

TABLE 1: MEASUREMENT MODEL SUMMARY

Item	Males			Females			Complete		
	(*α)*	CR	AVE	(α)	CR	AVE	(α)	CR	AVE
CEL	0.902	0.931	0.773	0.903	0.933	0.776	0.905	0.934	0.779
COV	0.912	0.931	0.694	0.917	0.935	0.706	0.915	0.934	0.702
PLI	0.853	0.895	0.630	0.873	0.908	0.664	0.867	0.904	0.653

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place image; OL = Outer Loading; VIF = Variance inflation factor; α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

As shown in Table 1, The Outer Loadings (OL > 0.70), Cronbach alpha (α > 0.70) and Composite Reliability (CR > 0.70) statistics of the variables across the three sample groups were above the established thresholds (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50) statistics across all three sample groups were also above the recommended threshold for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Appendix 4 summarises the correlation and discriminant validity matrices. Based on the criterion Cohen (1988) outlined, the Pearson-product correlations between the variables were moderate to high positive, ranging between r = 0.645 and r = 0.807 for the Complete sample. Similarly, correlations were moderate to high positive, ranging between r = 0.668 and r = 0.812, and r = 0.656 and r = 0.789 for the male sample and Female sample groups, respectively. The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was below the 0.90 threshold (Henseler et al., 2016), while based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square roots of the AVEs by each construct were greater than the correlation between the constructs and any other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, discriminant validity was affirmed across all the sample groups.

4.4 STRUCTURAL MODEL

The predictive power of the structural models was assessed based on the R^2 statistics, which were moderate to substantial (PLI and COV) across the groups. The Q^2 statistics indicated that the predictive relevance of the exogenous variables (PLI and COV) for the models were also significant as they were above zero and indicated large predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2014). As shown in Table 3, the f^2 statistics for the groups ranged between small to large effects (Tosun *et al.*, 2021).

TABLE 2: STRUCTURAL MODEL EXPLANATORY POWER

Variable	Male		Female		Complete	
	R^2	Q^2	R^2	Q^2	R^2	Q^2
PLI	0.553	0.444	0.521	0.412	0.516	0.418
COV	0.658	0.654	0.621	0.620	0.651	0.650

Key: PLI = Place image; DSD= Distance Desire; TRV = Travel Intention; R^2 – Coefficient of 0.19 = Weak; 0.23 = Medium; 0.67 = Substantial; Q^2 - Predictive power of >.000

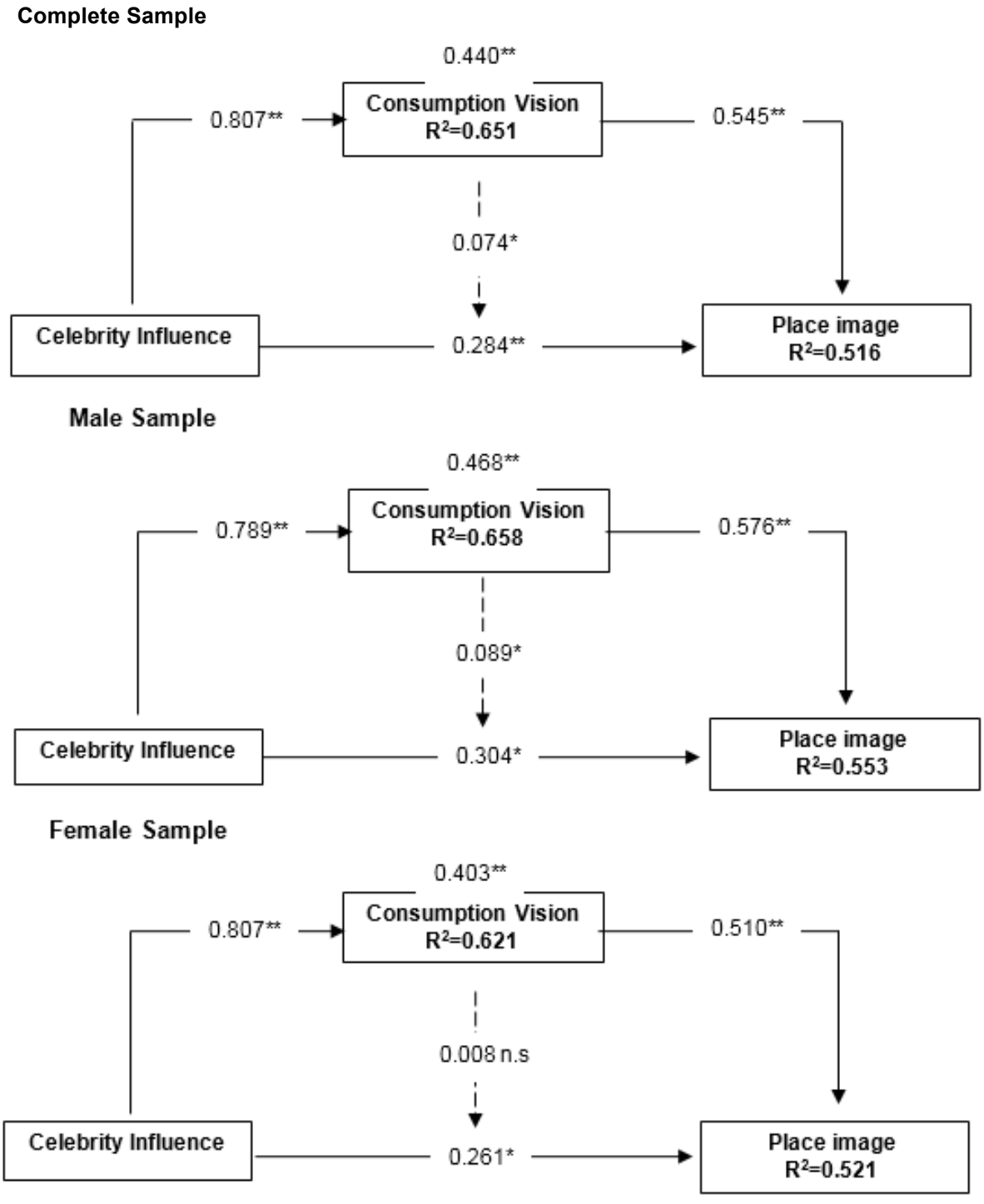
The hypotheses testing results (Table 3 and Figure 3) indicate that all hypothesised direct, indirect and moderation relationships were statistically significant except for the moderation effect of COV in the CEL-PLI nexus amongst females. The CEL had a direct positive influence on both PLI and COV across all the groups: Complete (PLI: $\beta = 0.284$, $t = 4.608$, $p < .001$) and (COV: $\beta = 0.807$, $t = 36.320$, $p < .001$); Male (PLI: $\beta = 0.304$, $t = 3.336$, $p < .05$) and (COV: $\beta = 0.812$, $t = 28.854$, $p < .001$); and Female (PLI: $\beta = 0.261$, $t = 3.058$, $p < .05$) and (COV: $\beta = 0.789$, $t = 21.481$, $p < .001$). Hence, hypotheses H_1 and H_2 were accepted across the groups.

TABLE 3: HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypotheses		Male					Female					Complete			
		β	t	p-value	Outcome	f^2	β	t	p-value	Outcome	f^2	β	t	p-value	Outcome
H1	CEL -> PLI	0.066	0.304	3.336	0.001*	Accept	0.052	0.261	3.058	0.002*	Accept	0.055	0.284	4.608	0.000**	Accept
H2	CEL -> COV	1.935	0.812	28.854	0.000**	Accept	1.651	0.789	21.481	0.000**	Accept	1.867	0.807	36.320	0.000**	Accept
H3	COV -> PLI	0.242	0.576	6.233	0.000**	Accept	0.203	0.510	6.228	0.000**	Accept	0.207	0.545	8.663	0.000**	Accept
H4	COV x CEL -> PLI	0.041	0.089	1.974	0.048*	Accept	0.000	0.008	0.169	0.865	Reject	0.027	0.074	2.104	0.035*	Accept
H5	CEL -> COV -> APLI	-	0.468	5.757	0.000**	Accept	-	0.403	5.497	0.000**	Accept	-	0.440	7.883	0.000**	Accept

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Aesthetic Place image
Relationships are significant at: * p < .05; ** p < .001; = Beta Coefficient; t-value = t – Statistics; p-value = Probability (P) value

Table 3 and Figure 3 also show that COV has a direct positive influence on PLI as follows: Complete (PLI: β = 0.545, t = 8.663, p < 0.05); Male (PLI: β = 0.576, t = 6.233, p < 0.001); and Female (PLI: β = 0.510, t = 6.228, p < 0.001) thus, hypothesis H_3 was accepted across all groups.



→ Denotes moderating effect

Relationships are significant at: * p < .05; ** p < .001; n.s = Not significant

FIGURE 3: STRUCTURAL MODELS

Further, COV had a positive moderating effect on the relationship between CEL and PLI in the Complete (β = 0.074, t = 2.104, p < 0.001) and Male (β = 0.089, t = 1.974, p < 0.05) samples respectively. Therefore, hypothesis H_4 was accepted for the Complete sample and amongst Male respondents. Figures 4a and 4b illustrate the simple slopes of the moderation effect for the Complete and Male samples.

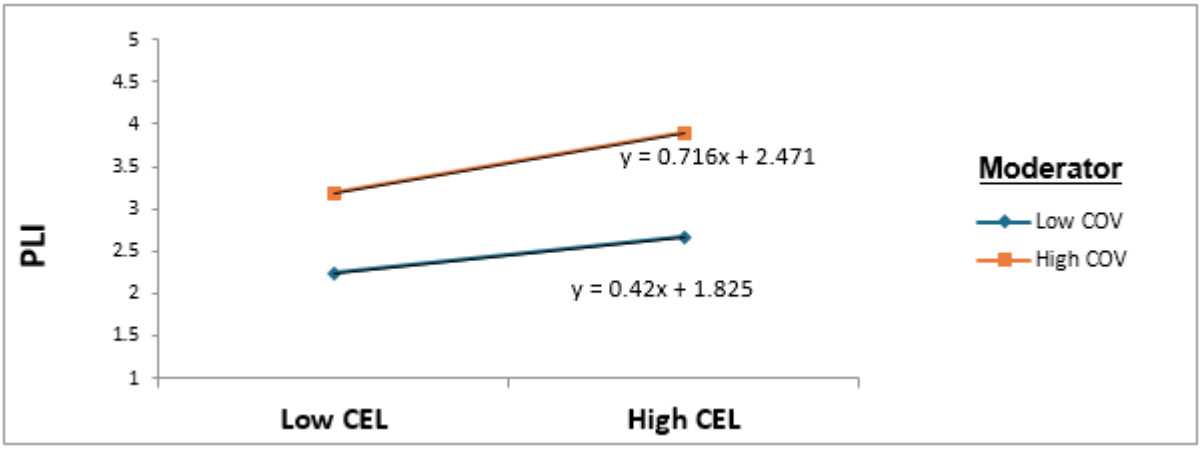


FIGURE 4A: MODERATION SIMPLE SLOPES – COMPLETE SAMPLE

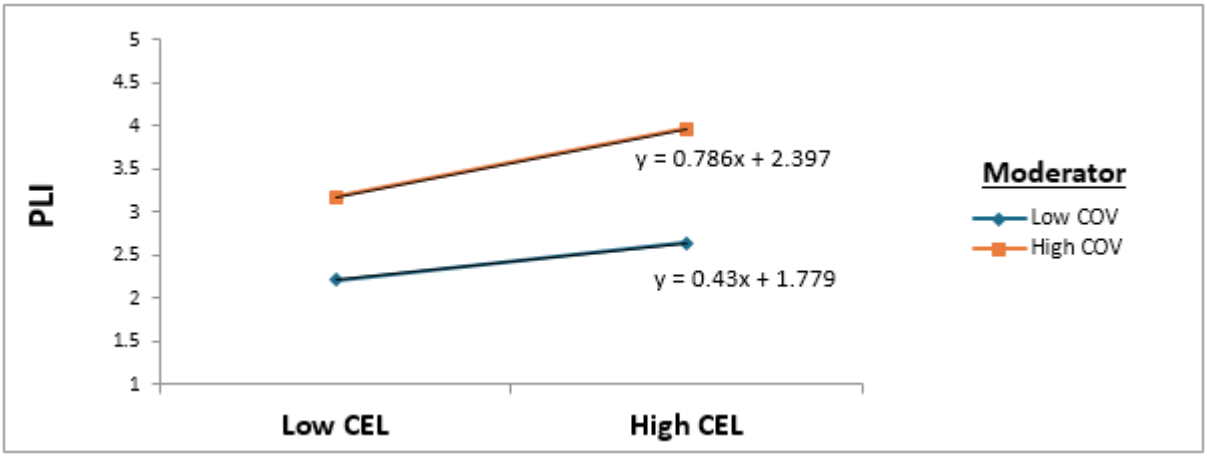


FIGURE 4B: MODERATION SIMPLE SLOPES – MALE SAMPLE

As illustrated in Figures 4a and 4b, COV strengthened the positive effect of CEL on PLI. While for the Female sample group COV did not moderate the effect of CEL on PLI, thus H_5 was rejected amongst female respondents. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, COV mediated the relationship between CEL and PLI across all groups as follows: Complete (β = 0.440, t = 7.883, p < 0.001); Males (β = 0.468, t = 5.757, p < 0.001); and Females (β = 0.403, t = 5.497, p < 0.001). The mediated relationship's (Appendix 5) bootstrap confidence intervals for the Complete (BootCI: Lower Limit = 0.333, Upper Limit = 0.550); Males (BootCI: Lower Limit = 0.309, Upper Limit = 0.621); and Females (BootCI: Lower Limit = 0.273, Upper Limit = 0.558) samples did not include zero; therefore, the respective null hypotheses could be rejected. Therefore, hypothesis H_5 was accepted across all the sample groups. The variance accounted for (VAF > 0.20) for all sample groups was above the recommended threshold of 20% (Hadi *et al.*, 2016), each reporting VAF = 61%, implying partial mediation that was of practical significance.

4.5 MULTI-GROUP ANALYSIS

Bootstrapping results from the Partial Least Squares - Multi-group Analysis (PLS-MGA) are summarised in Table 4. There was discernable invariance between males and females across all the hypothesised relationships except for the statistically significant difference between males and females that emerged in the moderation effect of COV on the relationship between CEL and PLI. Therefore, hypotheses H_{6a}, H_{6b} and H_7 were rejected.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF MULTI-GROUP ANALYSIS TEST

Relationship	Original (Males)	p-value (Males)	Original (Females)	p-value (Females)	Invariant
CEL -> PLI	0.304	0.001	0.261	0.002	YES
CEL -> COV	0.812	0.000	0.789	0.000	YES
COV -> PLI	0.576	0.000	0.510	0.000	YES
COV x CEL -> PLI	0.089	0.048	0.008	0.865	NO
CEL -> COV -> PLI	0.468	0.000	0.403	0.000	YES

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place image

As shown in Table 4, the effect of COV as a moderator was stronger amongst males (β = 0.089, p < 0.05) than females (β = 0.008, p < 0.05). Therefore, hypothesis H_8 was accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

Existing studies have explored and established the combined role of short destination marketing videos (Gan *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2023; Tang *et al.*, 2024; Zhou *et al.*, 2022) and celebrity influence (Matiza & Slabbert, 2024a; Pop *et al.*, 2022) in tourist conation. Moreover, in line with previous research (Mou & Brito, 2024; Šerić & Vernuccio, 2020; Tercia *et al.*, 2020), our findings corroborate the notion that experiential marketing communications provide sufficient stimuli to 'evoke' consumption vision in tourists Further, our findings verify the conclusions of some authors (Tang *et al.*, 2024) who have also correlated destination short video marketing with positive image formation. The influence of consumption vision on place image is supported by Tercia *et al.* (2020) who ascertain that consumption vision can be aesthetic; hence, confirming the consumption vision - place image nexus based on aesthetic attributes including beautiful cultural assets as well as beautiful scenery and nature (Buhmann, 2016).

The empirical evidence also affirms the causal effect of celebrity-infused short destination video marketing on consumption vision and subsequently place image. Hence, accounting for the intervening partial mediation effect of consumption vision in the celebrity-infused short destination video marketing - place image nexus. Anecdotal evidence (Tang *et al.*, 2024; Zhu *et al.*, 2024) indicates that consumption vision may be induced by short destination marketing videos which, in turn, stimulate the mental imagery processing mechanisms of individuals, thus enabling the simulation of the tourism experiences. The knock-on effect of celebrity-infused short destination video marketing on place image formation via consumption vision is buoyed by Andersen's (2016) study, which established the dual effect of conventional motion pictures and consumption vision on the image of a destination. Further, Le *et al.* (2019) and Zhu *et al.* (2024) observed that elements such as celebrity in experiential marketing content tend to reduce psychological distance (enabled by consumption vision) while enhancing image formation.

Certain studies (Šerić & Vernuccio, 2020; Weisberg *et al.*, 2011) observe no significant gender-based differences related to the processing of complex stimuli; hence supporting our finding of the homogeneity between males and females in the effect of celebrity short destination marketing videos on consumption vision and place image, as well as the partial mediation effect of consumption vision on the nexus. Our findings, however, show that there are statistically significant nuances between males and females related to the moderating effect of consumption vision. As it emerged, the positive moderating effect of consumption vision was evident in males, and insignificant in females; hence, contradicting the findings of Mou and Brito (2024) that females were more susceptible to the effects of consumption vision due to their propensity for being more visual oriented, and prone to fantasies more than males. Thus, our study contributes additional insights into the current limited understanding of how gender functions in differentiating tourist behaviour, beyond the conventional application of gender to segmentation.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The research makes three contributions to destination marketing and place image theory in tourism. First, the results derived from the USA panel support the conceptual celebrity-infused short destination video marketing – consumption vision – place image framework, thus contributing to the knowledge and building in studies (Alamäki *et al.*, 2023; Pop *et al.*, 2022; Tang *et al.*, 2024; Zhu *et al.*, 2024) on how celebrities influence the underlying psychological mechanisms of tourists in place image formation via tourism destination marketing content. Second, consumption vision is an intrinsic mechanism of the organism, mediating (positive-partial) and moderating (strengthening effect) the short destination marketing video catalysed celebrity influence – place image nexus. Third, although Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) SOR model is well-established in tourism research, our study builds on the work of Loureiro *et al.* (2022) related to adapting SOR theory to modelling the causal effects of the tourist's propensity for visualising stimuli via psychological mechanisms such as consumption vision. Furthermore, the findings establish gender-based heterogeneity in the intervening moderating effect of consumption vision, thus making a novel contribution to the burgeoning consumption vision theory by highlighting some new socio-demographic implications related to mental simulation in tourism.

5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings offer key consumer insights that may be significant to tourism destination marketing practice and the associated activities of destination and place image management practitioners. Although the utility and effectiveness of celebrity influence in short destination marketing videos as part of concerted online destination marketing for place image management is still a growing phenomenon in the Global South, our study has some important practical implications. First, the findings imply that a "more-fit-to-task" approach aimed at harnessing 'Indigenous' celebrity star power and influence via interactive immersive marketing communications such as short destination marketing videos offers emerging tourism destinations like South Africa a cost-effective conduit for place image development. The mass market appeal and influence of celebrities combined with the reach of often low-cost digital social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok offer tourism practitioners an opportunity to stimulate the consumption vision of consumers and manage the images of their countries as tourist places.

Second, a multi-pronged longitudinal campaign must be developed for fans of celebrities to be converted into potential tourists via enhanced parasocial interaction between consumers as a captive audience and the celebrity. The success of BTS in the case of South Korea (see Lee & Jeong, 2023) illustrates how celebrities can become cultural ambassadors and 'endorsers' for place image management by enhancing the stimulating effect of short destination marketing video content. For instance, a multi-country promotional comedy tour featuring Trevor Noah could have coincided with the launch of the online short video campaign, with embassies or consulates in specific tourist target markets hosting 1-night-only comedy shows to create media hype around Trevor Noah and South Africa as a place for tourism. Third, notwithstanding the widely accepted heterogeneity in males and females, the potential gender difference identified by the study suggests the need for a concerted multi-country post-campaign assessment to validate and verify the effect of the current campaign. Once these effects have been established, a more bespoke follow-up campaign can be developed to build on the momentum created by the current destination marketing promotion video, while incorporating more effective content-based stimuli that appeal to females and would aid in their simulation of the tourism and place experience.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite providing some key insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying place image formation, considering celebrity influence via destination marketing communications, some limitations may be noted. The cross-sectional nature and scope of the study (a US sample and the South African context) imply that while key insights may be gleaned from the study, the findings are generalisable to a specific market and must be interpreted with this in mind. Additionally, the study focused on the single media format; hence, the findings are relevant only to the social media-based short destination video marketing context. Our study did not test the effect of celebrity traits on consumption

vision or place image; hence, the feelings the respondent towards the celebrity (Trevor Noah) were not considered in the modelling. Overall, it is, therefore, recommended that a longitudinal, experiment-based, multi-country follow-up study be designed and conducted to both further validate the model and generate generalisable data to support our critical findings, including the potential gender differences in the effect of celebrity influence-induced consumption vision on consumers. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the tourism destination marketing landscape (see Seo *et al.*, 2025), and the influence of AI-generated video content represents a contemporary research avenue for future studies. Therefore, the study recommends comparative studies that explore the potential differences in potential influence between human and AI influencers.

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APPENDIX 1: RESPONDENT SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Variable	*Profile (N = 592)
Gender	• Male (57.24%) • Female (41.26%)
Age	• 35-44 (34.94%) • 25-34 (32.11%)
Highest Qualification	• High School Diploma (32.95%) • College Diploma (22.46%)
Matrital Status	• Married (43.26%) • Single (never married) (38.77%)
Employment Status	• Employed in the private sector (56.57%) • Employed in the public sector (21.96%)
Travel Companions	• With my partner (32.45%) • Family (Adults & children) (25.46%)
Average income	• Same as average income (35.27%) • Above average income (30.95%)
International travel	• More than once (55.91%) • Once (23.29%)
Most influential media channel	• The internet (32.95%) • Social media (Facebook, X, Instagram) (25.62%)
Prior travel and tourism to South Africa	• I would consider visiting South Africa as a tourist some day in the future (49.92%) • I have travelled to South Africa before (business or leisure) (35.77%)
Prior knowledge of South Africa	• I know South Africa by name but have not yet been there (31.28%) • I know South Africa from one personal visit (professional or private) (28.29%) • I know South Africa from several personal visits (professional or private) (25.46%) • I don't know South Africa at all – have never heard of it (14.98%)

* top two frequencies

APPENDIX 2 – MICOM SUMMARY

STEP 2	Original correlation	Correlation permutation mean	5.0%	Permutation p-value
PLI	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.406
CEL	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.089
COV	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.289

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place Image

STEP 3a: Mean	Original difference	Permutation mean difference	2.5%	97.5%	Permutation p-value
PLI	-0.034	-0.001	-0.157	0.153	0.669
CEL	0.023	-0.005	-0.165	0.155	0.774
COV	-0.019	-0.004	-0.170	0.169	0.816
STEP 3b: Variance					
PLI	0.097	-0.000	-0.298	0.304	0.538
CEL	-0.210	-0.000	-0.346	0.330	0.217
COV	0.014	0.005	-0.347	0.350	0.932

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place Image

	Variable	Complete				Male				Female			
		OL	VIF	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness	OL	VIF	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness	OL	VIF	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
	Celebrity Influence (CEL)												
CEL1	Through the video, Trevor Noah inspired me to travel to South Africa someday	0.896	3.032	2.700	-0.101	0.888	2.951	2.734	0.112	0.905	3.089	2.361	-0.469
CEL2	Trevor Noah's message about South Africa motivates me to travel to South Africa	0.900	3.155	3.182	0.210	0.902	3.252	1.306	0.053	0.889	2.802	6.329	0.464
CEL3	Through the video, Trevor Noah made me interested in finding out more about South Africa	0.883	2.684	4.815	-0.008	0.878	2.591	4.666	0.159	0.886	2.751	4.752	-0.269
CEL4	It was enjoyable to watch the official promotion short video	0.849	2.117	2.122	0.050	0.848	2.057	2.145	-0.077	0.843	2.109	1.925	0.243
	Consumption Vision (COV)												
COV1	This video made me fantasize about having the opportunity to experience South Africa	0.811	2.175	2.765	-0.271	0.823	2.214	3.332	-0.296	0.790	2.172	2.291	-0.141
COV2	It was easy for me to imagine being in South Africa	0.846	2.545	2.831	0.123	0.818	2.211	2.983	0.131	0.872	3.305	1.125	0.081
COV3	Whilst viewing the video, many images about South Africa came to mind	0.862	2.708	1.590	-0.323	0.846	2.510	1.073	-0.313	0.875	3.107	2.453	-0.328
COV4	The mental images that came to mind about South Africa were very clear and specific	0.829	2.346	1.746	-0.266	0.821	2.273	0.647	-0.348	0.835	2.426	3.813	-0.152
COV5	I could see myself in some of the scenarios shown in the video	0.846	2.532	2.555	-0.274	0.858	2.705	0.988	-0.508	0.836	2.518	3.554	-0.436
COV6	The images that came to mind acted as a source of information about South Africa	0.831	2.361	2.749	-0.308	0.831	2.384	1.428	-0.231	0.833	2.571	4.371	-0.274
	Place Image (PLI)												
PLI1	Is home to beautiful cultural assets (arts, architecture, music, film)	0.832	2.118	2.878	-0.344	0.830	2.027	2.987	-0.750	0.828	2.155	1.893	0.248
PLI2	Has delicious food and a wonderful cuisine	0.805	1.979	2.515	-0.250	0.800	2.009	2.079	-0.383	0.793	1.924	3.147	-0.168
PLI3	Has lots of charismatic people (in politics, sports, media)	0.788	1.802	1.562	-0.501	0.777	1.733	2.369	-0.382	0.788	1.840	0.484	-0.623
PLI4	Has beautiful scenery	0.806	2.180	3.183	-0.139	0.769	1.993	2.903	-0.022	0.842	2.617	3.369	-0.142
PLI5	Has a lot of preserved nature.	0.808	2.176	3.026	-0.260	0.793	2.102	1.799	0.320	0.823	2.403	4.287	-1.013

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place Image

APPENDIX 4: COMPLETE SAMPLE CORRELATION AND VALIDITY MATRIX

	Complete			Male			Female		
Pearson-product correlation	**PLI**	**CEL**	**COV**	**PLI**	**CEL**	**COV**	**PLI**	**CEL**	**COV**
PLI	1.000			1.000			1.000		
CEL	0.645	1.000		0.668	1.000		0.656	1.000	
COV	0.697	0.807	1.000	0.720	0.812	1.000	0.709	0.789	1.000
Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations									
PLI	-						-		
CEL	0.725			0.753			0.737		
COV	0.781	0.886	-	0.813	0.893	-	0.792	0.866	-
Fornell-Larcker criterion									
PLI	0.808			0.794			0.815		
CEL	0.645	0.882		0.668	0.879		0.656	0.881	
COV	0.697	0.807	0.838	0.720	0.812	0.833	0.709	0.789	0.841

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place Image

Hypotheses		Complete						Male						Female					
		β	t	p-value	BootCI Lower Limit (2.5%)	BootCI Upper Limit (97.5%)	VAF	β	t	p-value	BootCI Lower Limit (2.5%)	BootCI Upper Limit (97.5%)	VAF	β	t	p-value	BootCI Lower Limit (2.5%)	BootCI Upper Limit (97.5%)	VAF
H_5	CEL -> COV -> ACI																		
	Total Effect	0.724	18.149	0.000**	0.643	0.800	-	0.772	13.288	0.000**	0.659	0.886	-	0.664	13.245	0.000**	0.562	0.757	-
	Indirect Effect	0.440	7.883	0.000**	0.333	0.550	61%	0.468	5.757	0.000**	0.309	0.621	61%	0.403	5.497	0.000**	0.273	0.558	61%

Key: CEL = Celebrity Influence; COV = Consumption Vision; PLI = Place Image

Relationships are significant at: *p < .05; ** p < .001, β = Beta Coefficient; t-value = t – Statistics; p-value = Probability (P) value; CI = Confidence Index; Variance Accounted For (VAF) = (IE/TE x 100)