

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

THE EFFECT OF ONLINE REVIEWS ON TRAVEL INTENTION AND TOURIST EXPENDITURE ON WEIZHOU ISLAND: A DEMAND-SIDE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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—Abstract—

Online reviews constitute a decisive informational input shaping tourists' behavioural and financial decisions, particularly by influencing perceived trust, destination image, and spending levels. Understanding how review valence and review volume affect travel intention and expenditure is therefore essential for explaining demand-side dynamics in island tourism economies. This study advances demand-side tourism economics by empirically connecting online review attributes with tourists' spending behaviour and expenditure outcomes. Focusing on Weizhou Island, the study investigates the effects of review valence and review volume on travel intention and tourist expenditure, while examining the mediating function of travel intention through the Stimulus–Organism–Response and Information Integration frameworks. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was administered to 150 individuals who had either visited Weizhou Island or planned to do so. Data was analysed using SPSS 26 with a validated Likert-scale instrument, and correlation and mediation analyses were conducted via the PROCESS Macro to evaluate both direct and indirect relationships. The findings demonstrate that both review valence and review volume exert significant positive effects on travel intention and tourist expenditure, with travel intention acting as a mechanism mediating in these relationships. Positive and

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abundant online reviews were shown to directly enhance spending behaviour, providing empirical support for the role of cognitive and affective processes in tourists' economic decision-making. Overall, the results confirm the applicability of the SOR and IIT models, indicating that psychological intention functions as a key bridge between digital perceptions and economic actions, with important theoretical and managerial implications for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Online Reviews, Travel Intention, Tourist Expenditure, Weizhou Island, Tourism Economics.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of online reviews has substantially reshaped tourism decision-making by providing travellers with immediate, user-generated information that influences destination selection, perceived value, and expenditure levels. Platforms such as TripAdvisor, Ctrip, and Xiaohongshu have become influential digital environments that shape tourist perceptions and function as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) mechanisms, thereby affecting both travel intention and spending behaviour (Anubha et al., 2025). Existing literature consistently identifies two review-related dimensions as particularly influential in shaping tourists' behavioural intentions, namely review valence, referring to the positivity or negativity of reviews, and review volume, indicating the quantity of available evaluations. Empirical evidence demonstrates that favourable review valence enhances destination image, trust, and perceived quality, which subsequently stimulates travel motivation (Anubha et al., 2025). Similarly, a higher volume of reviews increases informational certainty, reducing perceived risk and uncertainty when selecting destinations or accommodation options (Yadav et al., 2024).

Online reviews also function as critical indicators of market demand, especially in island destinations such as Weizhou Island, where tourism represents a primary driver of the local economy. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework offers a robust theoretical lens for explaining how online reviews act as external stimuli that influence tourists' internal evaluations and subsequent behavioural responses. Within this context, tourist expenditure represents a key economic outcome, linking psychological processes to local economic sustainability. Prior studies applying the SOR framework confirm that online reviews positively influence trust and emotional attachment, which in turn shape travel intentions and spending levels (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2023). Furthermore, review credibility and review volume have been shown to mediate the relationship between information exposure and decision-making, reflecting tourists' preference for information that is perceived as authentic and socially endorsed (Kaur & Kaur, 2023).

Tourist expenditure remains a central economic indicator, as it reflects how

behavioural psychology translates into tangible economic value for destinations. Psychological and informational cues such as trust, satisfaction, and perceived credibility of reviews have been found to significantly affect not only destination choice but also the magnitude of spending during visits (Štefko et al., 2022). Consequently, online reviews have gained prominence as both informational and economic determinants of demand-side behaviour, particularly as tourists increasingly rely on peer-generated content rather than traditional marketing communications (Nan, 2023). For destinations such as Weizhou Island, understanding how online reviews shape travel intentions and tourist expenditure provides practical insights for policymakers and tourism operators. The interaction between digital information, behavioural intention, and economic outcomes underpins the optimisation of marketing strategies, destination competitiveness, and sustainable tourism development (Trușescu & Nicolaiu, 2024).

Although prior research has extensively examined the influence of online reviews on tourists' behavioural intentions, limited attention has been given to the economic implications of online reviews, particularly in relation to spending behaviour in small island economies. For instance, Lebrun et al. (2022) demonstrate that digital information and perceived risk affect travel intentions but do not link these psychological factors to actual expenditure patterns. Similarly, Florido-Benítez (2024) highlights the effectiveness of marketing investments in stimulating tourism demand without addressing the micro-level behavioural effects of online review dynamics on spending. As a result, demand-side empirical evidence connecting review valence and review volume with tourists' expenditure decisions remains scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining how online review characteristics influence travel intention and economic performance in the context of Weizhou Island.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate how online review valence influences tourists' behavioural intention to visit Weizhou Island
- To examine the effect of online review volume on tourists' behavioural intention to visit Weizhou Island
- To determine the mediating function of travel intention in the relationship between online reviews and tourist expenditure on Weizhou Island
- To analyse both the direct and indirect impacts of online review characteristics, namely valence and volume, on tourists' total expenditure per visit from a demand-side perspective

The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to tourism economics. It extends the application of the SOR and Information Integration models by linking online review dynamics to behavioural intentions and financial outcomes, thereby clarifying the connection between psychological motivation and economic behaviour.

Supporting this perspective, [Golets et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrate that perceived risk and uncertainty influence travel intentions during periods of crisis, highlighting the central role of digital trust and informational cues within behavioural modelling. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide valuable insights for destination marketers and policymakers seeking to optimise the management of online reviews, strengthen tourist confidence, and anticipate spending patterns. As noted by [Jovičić Vuković et al. \(2023\)](#), behavioural adjustments by travellers in uncertain environments can serve as evidence-based indicators for tourism planning, which is critical for sustaining demand and income generation in island-based economies such as Weizhou Island.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Review Valence on Tourists' Behavioural Intention to Visit Weizhou Island

The positivity or negativity of online reviews exerts a significant influence on tourists' behavioural intentions. Recent empirical evidence emphasises that positive review valence enhances both affective responses and perceived destination reputation, thereby increasing the intention to visit a location ([Zhao et al., 2024](#)). Drawing on the emotional-as-social-information theory, [Zhao et al. \(2024\)](#) found that positive reviews elicit emotional engagement, which strengthens attitudes and travel intentions, whereas negative reviews diminish these outcomes by undermining perceived destination reputation. Similarly, [Golets et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that the interplay between review valence, emotional intensity, and perceived trustworthiness affects destination trust and travel intention. Their findings underscore that both credibility and review tone jointly shape tourists' confidence in making travel decisions, with trust acting as a mediating psychological factor.

The interaction between review valence and contextual moderators has also attracted scholarly attention. [Salsabila et al. \(2025\)](#) revealed that the relationship between review valence and booking intention in online hotel reservations is moderated by brand image and price sensitivity. Positive reviews exert a stronger effect on consumers with high brand trust, whereas negative reviews deter price-sensitive travellers. These results align with [Mariani et al. \(2020\)](#), who found that cultural and linguistic factors significantly influence travellers' perception of review valence, indicating that the effects of review sentiment are context-dependent rather than universal. Further extending this discourse, [Shin et al. \(2020\)](#) associated review valence with consumer empowerment in the value co-creation process, showing that positive reviews enhance users' perceived control and involvement, which, in turn, encourages engagement with destinations and services. Conversely, negative reviews prompt service recovery actions but reduce consumers' willingness to co-create or revisit. [El-Said et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted the interactive effect of visual content, such as photos and videos, with review valence, demonstrating that the combination of

positive textual reviews and appealing visuals amplifies behavioural intentions and mitigates the impact of favourable reviews alone. Finally, [Hien et al. \(2024\)](#) applied the valence model to examine online travel agency usage, finding that perceived benefits derived from positively valenced information directly enhance purchase and travel intentions, whereas perceived risk diminishes these effects.

Online Review Volume on Tourists' Behavioural Intention to Visit Weizhou Island

The quantity of online reviews, including user-generated comments and ratings for a product, service, or destination, has emerged as a significant determinant of tourists' behavioural intentions. Information richness theory posits that a greater number of reviews provides a more robust and reliable informational foundation, thereby reducing perceived risk and uncertainty in tourism decision-making ([Yuan & Xu, 2024](#)). Empirical evidence consistently shows that review volume positively influences purchase confidence and booking intention, as it signals both popularity and social endorsement. For instance, [Zeng et al. \(2020\)](#) found that a higher number of reviews enhances tourists' hotel booking intentions by increasing information reliability, particularly when combined with immersive technologies such as virtual reality. Their study indicates that abundant review information strengthens perceptions of authenticity, thereby promoting visitation and purchase decisions.

From a social perspective, [Wang et al. \(2021\)](#) demonstrated that larger review volumes in online travel communities enhance knowledge dissemination, directly stimulating product sales and indirectly influencing behavioural intentions. This occurs through the social propagation of information, which increases perceived credibility of destinations or accommodations. Similarly, [KAKIRALA and Singh \(2020\)](#) highlight review volume as a critical aspect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), linking online interactions with the development of destination image. They further note that high levels of user interaction serve as collective endorsement, shaping favourable attitudes and fostering planned visit intentions among tourists.

Review volume also affects the operational performance of tourism providers. [Kamble et al. \(2020\)](#) observed that increased review volumes not only enhance hotel performance but also elevate booking intentions by influencing consumers' perceptions of quality and popularity, supporting the notion of volume as a social proof mechanism in online decision-making. In the context of post-COVID-19 tourism in Vietnam, [Caldicott and Kamal \(2023\)](#) report that frequent and extensive eWOM contributes to higher travel intentions by mitigating post-crisis uncertainty. They note that when reviewers themselves are active, potential travellers perceive greater informational security and reliability regarding the destination. Moreover, [Goyal and Taneja \(2023\)](#) emphasise that review volume significantly affects destination image and intention formation, particularly during crises in wellness

tourism. High review volumes reduce perceived pandemic-related risk and foster trust, thereby sustaining travel intentions despite uncertainty. Collectively, these findings underscore that the number of online reviews functions as a vital heuristic, guiding tourists' behavioural intentions through social validation, informational assurance, and perceptions of popularity on digital tourism platforms.

Mediating Role of Travel Intention in the Relationship Between Online Reviews and Tourist Expenditure on Weizhou Island

Online review-based studies underscore that perceived value and perceived risk are pivotal determinants of travel intentions, which subsequently influence tourists' expenditure behaviour (Cao & Sigdel, 2025). These findings align with the SOR framework, where the attributes of online reviews (stimuli) shape psychological processes, such as travel intention (organism), ultimately guiding economic actions (response). In a similar vein, D.T.H. My (2023) argues that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) exerts attitudinal and motivational effects that strengthen travel intentions and enhance tourists' willingness to allocate greater resources to travel, illustrating the persuasive and informational power of digital communication in shaping spending behaviour.

The credibility and quality of online reviews are critical in determining both behavioural and economic outcomes. Alsheikh et al. (2021) contend that the argumentative strength and trustworthiness of reviews significantly influence travel intentions, mediating the effect of digital word-of-mouth on destination selection. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model, their study demonstrates that tourists exposed to high-quality and credible online reviews exhibit stronger travel intentions and a higher propensity for expenditure. Complementing this perspective, Geng et al. (2022) find that emotional engagement and the desire to travel are stimulated by digital stimuli, including virtual reality and immersive online content, thereby linking online exposure to actual travel spending. Additional evidence confirms that travel intention functions as a key mediator between online engagement and expenditure. Rahmawati et al. (2021) show that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the relationship between perceived risk and travel decisions was mediated by behavioural intention, highlighting its central role in predicting tourism expenditure. Similarly, Gosal et al. (2020) demonstrate that eWOM shapes city image and attitudes, which in turn influence travel decisions and spending patterns. Extending this understanding, Dileep et al. (2022) illustrate that digital interactions induce behavioural changes among tourism stakeholders, which translate into modifications in spending behaviour driven by evolving intentions and perceptions.

Online Reviews (Valence and Volume) on Tourists' Total Expenditure Per Visit from a Demand-Side Perspective

Azer and Alexander (2020) highlight that negatively framed reviews exert a dual

influence, affecting not only immediate perceptions but also producing indirect behavioural consequences by shaping the engagement and purchasing responses of other consumers. These findings indicate that review sentiment impacts spending behaviour both directly and indirectly through mechanisms such as emotional contagion and social influence. Similarly, [Almutairi \(2024\)](#) demonstrates that the positivity of online consumer reviews is a crucial determinant of the extent to which travellers are willing to invest in accommodation, with trust serving as a mediating factor between review positivity and increased hotel booking expenditure.

The quantity of reviews also functions as an important signal of popularity and credibility, influencing demand-side expenditure patterns. [Han and Kim \(2021\)](#) show that review volume indirectly affects purchase intention by enhancing perceived credibility, thereby reinforcing tourists' confidence in spending decisions. This relationship underscores how the number of reviews and perceived reliability create an indirect pathway linking online information to economic action. In the same vein, [Kordrostami et al. \(2021\)](#) find that consumers' regulatory focus—whether promotion- or prevention-oriented—mediates the impact of review valence and volume on purchasing behaviour. Promotion-focused consumers respond more strongly to review valence, whereas prevention-focused consumers are more sensitive to review volume, indicating that psychological orientation moderates the effect of online reviews on expenditure.

Review valence further contributes to trust and perceived authenticity, which are central to destination-related spending. [Veerasingam et al. \(2023\)](#) report that credible, positive reviews on TripAdvisor enhance perceived destination quality, translating into higher expenditure via strengthened brand equity. Similarly, [Bigne et al. \(2023\)](#) apply deep learning techniques to demonstrate that both sentiment valence and star ratings are strongly associated with tourists' perceptions of value and actual spending. Their findings suggest that alignment between emotional tone and quantitative ratings reinforces economic responses by validating tourists' expectations. In addition, [Vena-Oya et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasise that information richness, reflected in review volume, indirectly affects spending through activity selection and perceived experience value, while review valence exerts a direct effect on expenditure levels.

LITERATURE GAP

Despite extensive research on the influence of online reviews on tourist behaviour, several gaps persist regarding their economic implications, particularly within island tourism contexts such as Weizhou Island. Prior studies (e.g., [Su et al., 2022](#); [Mariani et al., 2020](#); [Han and Kim, 2021](#)) have largely overlooked both the direct and indirect effects of review valence and volume on tourist expenditure. Furthermore, although theoretical frameworks such as the SOR model and the Elaboration Likelihood Model have examined the link between review characteristics and travel intention ([Alsheikh](#)

et al., 2021; Cao & Sigdel, 2025), few studies have explicitly connected these features to demand-side financial behaviour. Additionally, empirical research frequently considers review valence and volume in isolation, rather than exploring their combined or interactive effects on spending patterns. Finally, the existing literature predominantly focuses on major destinations, leaving a contextual and spatial gap in understanding how online reviews drive spending behaviour in small, developing island economies, where tourism constitutes a critical component of local economic activity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study adopts the SOR model in conjunction with Information Integration Theory (IIT) to examine how online reviews shape tourists' behavioural and economic decisions. Within the SOR framework, environmental stimuli, such as online reviews, trigger internal psychological processes—the organism—including emotions, trust, and travel intention, which in turn produce behavioural outcomes, such as tourist expenditure (Figure 1) (Donovan & Rossiter, 2002). Review valence and review volume, representing the positivity or negativity of reviews and the total number of reviews respectively, function as informational stimuli that affect perceptions of reliability, popularity, and destination image (Kaur & Kaur, 2023). IIT postulates that individuals integrate multiple pieces of information to form an overall judgment that guides decision-making (Anderson, 1981). In this context, tourists synthesise RV and RVol to assess perceived value and risk, which subsequently shape their TI and spending behaviour (Cao & Sigdel, 2025). Together, these frameworks provide a structured and logical basis for evaluating how online reviews influence tourist expenditure, specifically considering TI as a demand-side mediator.

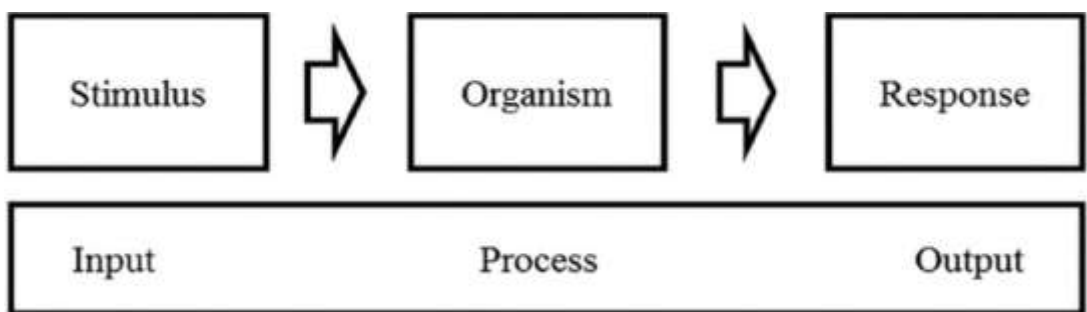


Figure 1: Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Model

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The framework demonstrates that online reviews, via their RV and RVol, exert both direct and indirect effects on tourist expenditure, with TI acting as the mediating mechanism connecting digital perceptions to economic behaviour (Figure 2).

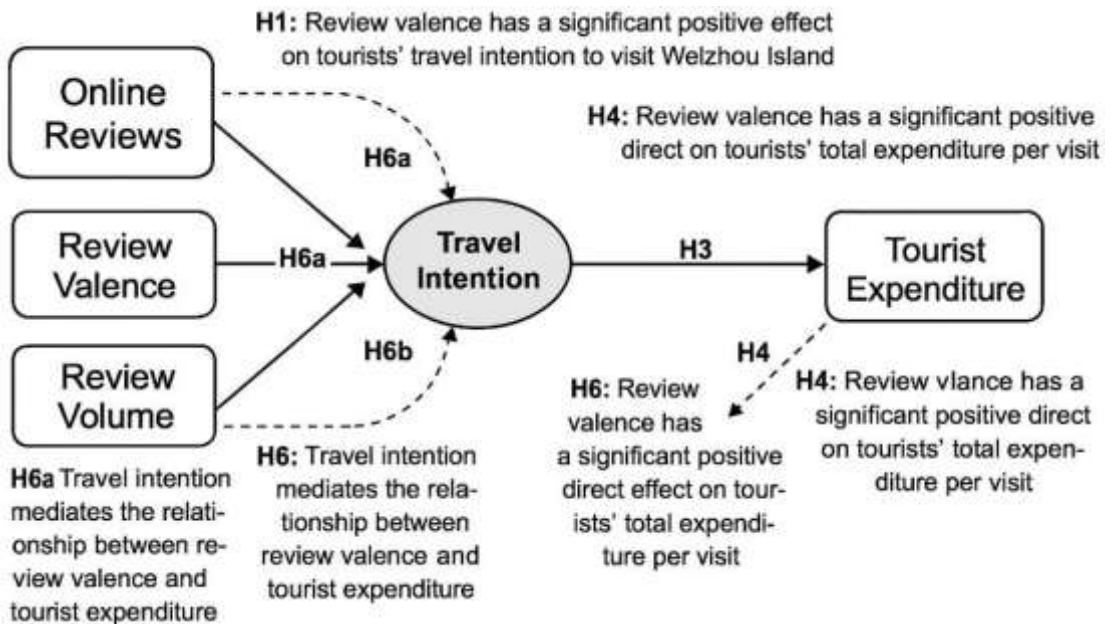


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

- **H1:** Review valence has a significant positive effect on tourists' travel intention to visit Weizhou Island.
- **H2:** Review volume has a significant positive effect on tourists' travel intention to visit Weizhou Island.
- **H3:** Travel intention has a significant positive effect on tourists' total expenditure per visit to Weizhou Island.
- **H4:** Review valence has a significant positive direct effect on tourists' total expenditure per visit.
- **H5:** Review volume has a significant positive direct effect on tourists' total expenditure per visit.
- **H6a:** Travel intention mediates the relationship between review valence and tourist expenditure.
- **H6b:** Travel intention mediates the relationship between review volume and tourist expenditure.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods and Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to empirically examine the effects of online reviews (RV and RVol) on tourists' TI and expenditure on Weizhou Island. A quantitative approach was selected as it allows for the objective measurement of

relationships between variables and the statistical testing of hypotheses. The research followed a cross-sectional survey design, collecting numerical data at a single point in time to assess tourists' perceptions, behaviour, intentions, and expenditure patterns. The model included one independent variable (online reviews, comprising RV and RVol), one mediating variable (TI), and one dependent variable (tourist expenditure). Tourist expenditure per visit reflects individual monetary spending behaviour, representing microeconomic demand responses that contribute to overall tourism demand and local income generation.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire survey, which was administered to tourists who had either visited or planned to visit Weizhou Island. The questionnaire was constructed using validated scales drawn from previous studies in tourism and digital behaviour research. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic information, perceptions of RV, perceptions of RVol, TI, and expenditure behaviour. Data collection was conducted online over a four-week period to ensure diversity and representativeness of the responses.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling method, targeting tourists with prior experience using online tourism platforms such as TripAdvisor, Ctrip, or Xiaohongshu. This non-probability sampling approach ensured that participants had relevant experience in reading and interpreting online reviews before making travel decisions. Purposive sampling was selected to focus specifically on informed tourists, rather than randomly selecting individuals who may lack digital experience related to travel.

Samples

The sample comprised 150 respondents, including both domestic and international tourists who had either visited or planned to visit Weizhou Island. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60 years and represented diverse educational and occupational backgrounds. This sample size was considered adequate for conducting statistical analyses, aligning with recommendations for examining correlation and mediation models in behavioural research.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise demographic characteristics and central tendency measures. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal

consistency of the measurement items. Correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationships among RV, RVol, TI, and tourist expenditure. Finally, mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro to test the hypothesis that online reviews exert an indirect effect on expenditure through TI, thereby validating the proposed model.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles. Participants were informed of the research objectives and their right to withdraw at any time. Data collection was carried out with full transparency, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of all responses. No personally identifiable information was recorded, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. The research adhered to the Ethical Guidelines for Human Research and complied with institutional standards for data protection and participant welfare.

Results

This section presents the statistical findings examining the relationships among RV, RVol, TI, and tourist expenditure on Weizhou Island. It highlights the results of descriptive, reliability, correlation, and mediation analyses, providing evidence to support the proposed research hypotheses.

Frequency Distribution

This section presents the frequency distribution of respondents' demographic and behavioural variables, providing an overview of the sample characteristics. This overview is essential for assessing the representativeness and validity of the collected data. All variables, including gender, age, education level, visitation intention, and online review frequency, were fully completed by all respondents (N = 150), with no missing data, indicating a complete and reliable dataset for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents

		Statistics				
		Gender	Age	Education Level	Have you visited or planned to visit Weizhou Island?	How often do you read online travel reviews before choosing a destination?
N	Valid	150	150	150	150	150
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

Demographics

The sample included 59 males (39.3%), 48 females (32%), and 43 participants (28.7%) who chose not to disclose their gender, indicating a balanced representation

across respondents (Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Gender

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	48	32.0	32.0	32.0
	Male	59	39.3	39.3	71.3
	Prefer not to Say	43	28.7	28.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Moreover, the majority of respondents were aged 18–25 (30%), followed by 46–55 (24%), 36–45 (23.3%), and 26–35 (22.7%), reflecting a diverse age distribution with a slight predominance of younger participants (Table 3).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Age

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18–25	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	26–35	34	22.7	22.7	52.7
	36–45	35	23.3	23.3	76.0
	46–55	36	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Respondents demonstrated a high level of education, with 30% holding bachelor's degrees, 25.3% doctorates, 22% master's degrees, and 22.7% secondary education, indicating that participants had considerable academic and analytical capability (Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Education Level

Education Level					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor's	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Doctorate	38	25.3	25.3	55.3
	Master's	33	22.0	22.0	77.3
	Secondary	34	22.7	22.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Among the respondents, 33.3% had visited Weizhou Island, 35.3% had not, and 31.3% were potential visitors, reflecting a balanced mix of actual and prospective tourists (Table 5).

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Visited Weizhou Island

Have you visited or planned to visit Weizhou Island?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maybe	47	31.3	31.3	31.3
	No	53	35.3	35.3	66.7
	Yes	50	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Most participants regularly consulted online reviews, with 30.7% always, 23.3% often, and 23.3% sometimes reading them, while 22.7% never did, highlighting the influence of online reviews on travel decisions (Table 6).

Table 6: Frequency Distribution of Online Travel Reviews

How often do you read online travel reviews before choosing a destination?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	46	30.7	30.7	30.7
	Never	34	22.7	22.7	53.3
	Often	35	23.3	23.3	76.7
	Sometimes	35	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Reliability Test

This section presents the reliability analysis, assessing the internal consistency of the measurement scales using Cronbach's Alpha, ensuring that the questionnaire reliably and consistently measures the intended research constructs. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.792 across 16 items, indicating good internal consistency. This confirms that the questionnaire items reliably and consistently measured the intended constructs (Table 7).

Table 7: Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.792	16

Correlation Analysis

This section examines the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables, specifically assessing the associations of RV and RVol with TI and tourist expenditure using Pearson correlation coefficients. The correlation analysis indicates moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationships among all variables at the 0.01 level. Both RVol and RV are positively correlated with TI and tourist

expenditure, suggesting that higher review quantity and more positive reviews are associated with stronger travel intentions and increased spending by tourists on Weizhou Island (Table 8).

Table 8: Correlation Analysis

Variables		Review Volume	Review Valence	Travel Intention	Tourist Expenditure
Review Volume	Pearson Correlation	1	.482	.396	.354
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Review Valence	Pearson Correlation	.482	1	.417	.368
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Travel Intention	Pearson Correlation	.396	.417	1	.451
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Tourist Expenditure	Pearson Correlation	.354	.368	.451	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

Mediation Analysis

This section examines the mediating role of TI between online review variables and tourist expenditure, assessing both direct and indirect effects using regression and bootstrapping techniques to test the hypothesized relationships.

Analysis 1

The model summary indicates a significant positive relationship between RVol and TI ($R = 0.462$, $p = 0.000$). RVol accounts for 21.4% of the variance, suggesting it moderately strengthens tourists' intention to visit Weizhou Island (Table 9).

Table 9: Model Summary for Mediator (Travel Intention)

Model	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	Sig. (p)
Travel Intention Regressed on Review Volume	0.462	0.214	0.482	40.25	1	148	0.000

The results show that RVol significantly predicts TI ($B = 0.416$, $t = 6.34$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a higher review volume enhances tourists' behavioural intention, confirming that the quantity of reviews reinforces travel decision-making confidence and motivation (Table 10).

Table 10: Coefficients for the Mediator Model of Travel Intention

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.865	0.214	13.39	0.000	2.442	3.288
Review Volume	0.416	0.065	6.34	0.000	0.287	0.545

The regression model is significant ($R = 0.538$, $R^2 = 0.289$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that RVol and TI together account for 28.9% of the variance in tourist expenditure, demonstrating a moderate and meaningful effect on spending behaviour (Table 11).

Table 11: Model Summary for Tourist Expenditure

Model	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	Sig. (p)
Tourist Expenditure Regressed on Review Volume and Travel Intention	0.538	0.289	0.377	29.91	2	147	0.000

Both RVol ($B = 0.238$, $p = 0.001$) and TI ($B = 0.312$, $p = 0.000$) significantly predict tourist expenditure, indicating that tourists with greater exposure to reviews and stronger travel intentions tend to spend more during their visits (Table 12).

Table 12: Coefficients of the Tourist Expenditure

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.124	0.298	7.13	0.000	1.534	2.714
Review Volume (Direct Effect)	0.238	0.072	3.30	0.001	0.095	0.381
Travel Intention (Mediator)	0.312	0.082	3.80	0.000	0.150	0.474

The direct effect of RVol on expenditure ($B = 0.238$, $p = 0.001$) and the indirect effect via TI ($B = 0.130$, BootCI [0.054, 0.228]) are both significant, confirming that TI partially mediates the relationship between RVol and tourists' spending behaviour (Table 13).

Table 13: Direct and Indirect Effects of Review Volume on Tourist Expenditure

Effect Type	Effect	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effect (X → Y)	0.238	0.072	3.30	0.001	0.095	0.381
Indirect Effect (X → M → Y)	0.130	0.045*	—	—	0.054	0.228

Analysis 2

The model demonstrates a strong and significant relationship between RV and TI ($R = 0.731$, $p = 0.000$). RV accounts for 53.4% of the variance, indicating that positive reviews substantially strengthen tourists' behavioural intentions to visit Weizhou Island (Table 14). Moreover, the results indicate that RV significantly predicts TI ($B = 0.629$, $t = 13.00$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 14: Model Summary for Mediator Travel Intention

Model	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	Sig. (p)
Travel Intention Regressed on Review Valence	0.731	0.534	0.372	169.13	1	148	0.000

Greater positivity in online reviews markedly strengthens tourists' travel intentions, confirming a strong and meaningful predictive relationship (Table 15).

Table 15: Coefficients for the Mediator Model DV = Travel Intention

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.476	0.165	15.01	0.000	2.150	2.802
Review Valence	0.629	0.048	13.00	0.000	0.535	0.723

The regression model indicates that RV and TI significantly predict tourist expenditure ($R = 0.751$, $R^2 = 0.564$, $p = 0.000$). Collectively, these variables account for 56.4% of the variance in expenditure, demonstrating a strong model fit (Table 16).

Table 16: Model Summary of Tourist Expenditure

Model	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	Sig. (p)
Tourist Expenditure Regressed on Review Valence and Travel Intention	0.751	0.564	0.349	94.81	2	147	0.000

Both RV ($B = 0.284$, $p = 0.000$) and TI ($B = 0.426$, $p = 0.000$) significantly influence tourist expenditure, indicating that positive reviews and stronger travel intentions drive higher spending behaviour among tourists (Table 17).

Table 17: Coefficients of Tourist Expenditure

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.018	0.231	8.74	0.000	1.562	2.474
Review Valence (Direct Effect)	0.284	0.059	4.81	0.000	0.167	0.401
Travel Intention (Mediator)	0.426	0.067	6.36	0.000	0.294	0.558

Moreover, the direct effect ($B = 0.284$, $p = 0.000$) and the indirect effect via TI ($B = 0.268$, BootCI [0.171, 0.380]) are both significant, confirming partial mediation. TI partially mediates the relationship between RV and tourist expenditure, strengthening the overall predictive effect (Table 18).

Table 18: Direct and Indirect Effects of Review Valence on Tourist Expenditure

Effect Type	Effect	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effect ($X \rightarrow Y$)	0.284	0.059	4.81	0.000	0.167	0.401
Indirect Effect ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)	0.268	0.052*	—	—	0.171	0.380

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all hypotheses were supported, demonstrating significant direct and indirect relationships among the variables. Both RV and RVol positively influence TI and tourist expenditure, with TI mediating these

effects. This highlights that positive and abundant online reviews substantially enhance tourists' motivation and spending behaviour on Weizhou Island ([Table 19](#)).

Table 19: Hypothesis Accepted\Rejected

Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis (H ₀)	Alternative Hypothesis (H ₁)	Decision
H1	Review valence has no significant effect on tourists' travel intention.	Review valence has a significant positive effect on tourists' travel intention.	Accepted
H2	Review volume has no significant effect on tourists' travel intention.	Review volume has a significant positive effect on tourists' travel intention.	Accepted
H3	Travel intention has no significant effect on tourists' expenditure per visit.	Travel intention has a significant positive effect on tourists' expenditure per visit.	Accepted
H4	Review valence has no significant direct effect on tourists' expenditure.	Review valence has a significant direct positive effect on tourists' expenditure.	Accepted
H5	Review volume has no significant direct effect on tourists' expenditure.	Review volume has a significant direct positive effect on tourists' expenditure.	Accepted
H6a	Travel intention does not mediate the relationship between review valence and tourist expenditure.	Travel intention mediates the relationship between review valence and tourist expenditure.	Accepted
H6b	Travel intention does not mediate the relationship between review volume and tourist expenditure.	Travel intention mediates the relationship between review volume and tourist expenditure.	Accepted

Interpretation of the Findings

These findings align closely with the objectives of the study, demonstrating that online reviews significantly influence both travel intentions and spending behaviour among visitors to Weizhou Island. The results confirm that RV (positivity) and RVol (quantity) exert a strong positive effect on TI ($R = 0.731$, $p < 0.001$; $R = 0.462$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with prior research highlighting emotional and informational cues as key drivers of behaviour (Zhao et al., 2024). Furthermore, TI is a robust predictor of tourist expenditure ($B = 0.312$ – 0.426 , $p < 0.001$), representing the psychological link between online perceptions and economic behaviour (Cao & Sigdel, 2025). The direct positive effects of RV and RVol ($B = 0.238$ – 0.284 , $p < 0.001$) support the notion that tourists exposed to credible and abundant reviews are more likely to increase their spending. Mediation analysis revealed partial mediation by TI, indicating that motivation shaped by online reviews also indirectly influences expenditure patterns. Overall, these results substantiate the SOR and IIT frameworks, illustrating how cognitive evaluations prompted by digital stimuli are translated into economic behaviour (Anderson, 1981; Donovan & Rossiter, 2002).

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that both the perceived positivity (RV) and quantity (RVol) of online reviews play a critical role in predicting TI and tourist expenditure, with TI serving as a mediating variable. This aligns with prior research emphasising the dual cognitive and affective influence of online reviews on tourist decision-making (Su et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2024). However, the present study extends earlier work by empirically linking these perceptual constructs to actual tourist spending, an area that has received limited attention in destination-focused research. While previous studies (Anubha et al., 2025; Yadav et al., 2024) demonstrated that positive reviews shape attitudes and enhance perceived quality and trust, the current results indicate that such attitudes directly translate into economic behaviour, bridging the gap between attitudinal formation and spending.

The positive association between RV and TI supports prior findings (Su et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2024) highlighting emotional engagement and trust as key mediators of behavioural intention. Unlike Salsabila et al. (2025), who reported that contextual factors such as brand image and price sensitivity modulate the effect of valence, this study found no significant demographic or socioeconomic moderators. This suggests that in a relatively homogeneous island tourism market, RV functions as a more universal predictor of intention, reflecting the cultural and contextual stability of Weizhou Island, unlike the cross-cultural contexts examined by Mariani et al. (2020). Similarly, the significant direct and indirect effects of RVol on TI and expenditure support previous claims regarding the role of informational assurance as a psychological mechanism (Wang et al., 2021); Yuan and Xu (2024). However, unlike Zeng et al. (2020), who suggested that technological immersion amplifies the influence of review volume, the present study shows significant behavioural effects even in the absence of immersive technologies. This can be attributed to the limited reliance on traditional marketing in island destinations, making review volume a more salient heuristic cue.

The mediation analysis corroborates the SOR framework, as earlier studies (Alsheikh et al., 2021; Cao & Sigdel, 2025) highlighted perceived value and credibility as central mediators between online stimuli and behavioural outcomes. This study advances empirical validation by quantifying the mediating effect of TI on expenditure. Partial mediation indicates that while cognitive motivation is a primary channel for review effects, review valence and volume also exert direct impacts on spending, consistent with IIT (Anderson, 1981). This contrasts with Rahmawati et al. (2021), who reported full mediation, implying that tourists on Weizhou Island base spending decisions not only on intention but also on direct perceptions of trustworthiness and authenticity. The relationship between RV and expenditure aligns with findings from Almutairi (2024) and Veerasamy et al. (2023), which demonstrated that positive and credible reviews enhance willingness to pay. The observed effect

size ($B = 0.284$, $p < 0.001$) is larger than that typically reported in hospitality settings, suggesting that destination-level expenditure may be more responsive to affective evaluations, reflecting the experiential nature of tourism. Conversely, the mediation of RVol on expenditure differs slightly from Han and Kim (2021), who identified effects primarily through review credibility; in the current context, both direct and indirect effects were significant, indicating that informational richness and social validation jointly influence tourists' confidence and economic commitment.

The observed RV–RVol interactions are consistent with prior studies highlighting the moderating role of consumer regulatory focus (Kordrostami et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the positive effects were sustained across respondents, suggesting that situational factors such as destination dependency and collective digital norms can reduce individual motivational disparities. This contextual specificity indicates that in small-island tourism settings, social validation embedded in review volume may have a stronger influence than individual regulatory orientation. Finally, the study provides micro-level evidence linking online review characteristics to actual spending behaviour, extending prior research that primarily examined macro-level determinants of tourism demand (Lebrun et al., 2022). Empirical validation of the predictive value of both RV and RVol for real expenditure adds a demand-side perspective to supply-oriented marketing studies, emphasising that destination competitiveness in digitally mediated environments relies not only on traditional promotion but also on effective management of online reputation.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The study extends the SOR and IIT frameworks, integrating online review dynamics with financial outcomes to examine how psychological intentions translate into economic behaviour (Anderson, 1981; Donovan & Rossiter, 2002). The robust mediating role of TI supports the dual-pathway model proposed by Cao and Sigdel (2025), indicating that both cognitive and affective processes influence expenditure. In doing so, the research advances behavioural tourism theory by quantifying the interaction between psychological motivation and economic decision-making within digital contexts.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest that online reviews function as both trust-building and expenditure-stimulating tools and should be strategically managed by tourism authorities. Effectively regulating review quality and encouraging greater review volume can enhance tourist trust and willingness to spend. Platforms such as TripAdvisor and Ctrip should prioritise authenticity to reinforce perceived credibility (Kaur & Kaur, 2023). Policymakers are advised to implement digital sentiment

management within destination management strategies to promote sustainable economic growth (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2023). These results offer practical guidance for destination managers to optimise revenue, improve demand management, and support sustainable economic planning for Weizhou Island's tourism sector.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that online review valence and volume significantly influence the travel intentions and spending behaviour of tourists visiting Weizhou Island. The findings provide empirical support for the SOR and IIT frameworks, indicating that TI partially mediates these effects. The results highlight that positive and abundant reviews enhance tourist confidence, perceived loyalty, and willingness to spend. This research contributes to existing literature by linking the emotional and informational dimensions of online reviews with tangible economic outcomes, offering a comprehensive understanding of how digital word-of-mouth shapes tourism demand at both behavioural and financial levels.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has several limitations. Its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. The sample is confined to tourists visiting Weizhou Island, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or geographical contexts. Additionally, only two review dimensions—valence and volume—were examined, excluding other potentially influential characteristics such as credibility, recency, or visual content, which could further clarify psychological and economic decision-making in tourism.

FUTURE WORK

Future research could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships between online review characteristics and tourist spending. Expanding the study across multiple destinations and diverse cultural contexts would enhance generalizability. Theoretical insights could be deepened by including moderating factors such as destination image, digital literacy, or visual media. Subsequent studies could also explore the interplay of digital trust, motivation, and economic behaviour using advanced analytical techniques, including sentiment analysis and structural equation modelling.

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APPENDIX

- Online Reviews (IV): 1. Review Valence 2. Review Volume
- Travel Intention (MV): 1. Behavioral Intention
- Tourist Expenditure (DV): 1. Total Expenditure per Visit (Economics)

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Male Female Prefer Not to Say
2. Age: 18–25 26–35 36–45 46–55
3. Education Level: Secondary Bachelor's Master's Doctorate
4. Have you visited or planned to visit Weizhou Island? Yes No
5. How often do you read online travel reviews before choosing a destination?
 Never Sometimes Often Always

Section B: Online Reviews (Independent Variable)

1. Review Valence (Positive or Negative Tone)

1. Positive online reviews increase my trust in the destination.
2. Favorable reviews make me more confident about visiting Weizhou Island.
3. Negative reviews reduce my interest in visiting a destination.
4. When online reviews are positive, I am more likely to choose that destination.

2. Review Volume (Number of Reviews)

1. I am more likely to visit a destination that has many online reviews.
2. A large number of reviews makes the information seem more reliable.
3. I believe destinations with higher review volume are more popular.
4. The number of reviews influences my final travel decision.

Section C: Travel Intention (Mediating Variable – Behavioral Intention)

1. I intend to visit Weizhou Island in the near future.
2. I would recommend Weizhou Island to others as a travel destination.
3. I am willing to spend time planning a trip to Weizhou Island.
4. I am likely to choose Weizhou Island for my next vacation.

Section D: Tourist Expenditure (Dependent Variable – Total Expenditure per Visit)

1. I am willing to spend more money on accommodation and food during my visit.
2. I plan to purchase local products or souvenirs while visiting.
3. I would allocate a higher travel budget if online reviews are positive.
4. I am willing to spend more if the destination offers high-quality experiences based on reviews.