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The Power of Connection: How Travel Vlogs Foster Emotional Engagement Leading to Increased Interest in Sri Lankan Heritage Tourism

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Abstract

Purpose – This study analyzes how travel vlogs (TV) influence the intention to travel (IT) for historical tourism in Sri Lanka, with an emphasis on the mediating effect of emotional connection (EC). It aims to address gaps in understanding the unique processes through which TV effects travel decisions in cultural contexts, notably within Sri Lanka's rich heritage tourism environment.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative study approach was adopted, employing an online survey delivered to 384 prospective historical visitors, as per Morgan's sample table. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) evaluated the links between TV, EC, and IT. Structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items assessed variables, assuring reliability and validity through rigorous pilot testing and statistical validation.

Findings – The results indicated a large direct association between travel vlogs and intention to visit heritage places, plus a partial mediation impact of emotional connection. Emotional involvement produced by travel vlogs evolved as a fundamental method through which virtual experiences convert into physical travel motives.

Conclusion – Travel vlogs dramatically improve interest in Sri Lanka's historical tourism by encouraging emotional involvement. The immersive storyline and cultural authenticity represented in TV shows provoke feelings like amazement and curiosity, which drive travel decisions.

Implications – Tourism authorities and heritage site managers could cooperate with travel vloggers to co-create real, emotionally evocative material. Strategies include educating vloggers in cultural storytelling, incorporating interactive virtual tours, and utilizing social media for targeted advertising. Such activities can increase Sri Lanka's cultural attractiveness and attract experience visitors.

Originality/value – This study pioneers the examination of TV's influence on historic tourism in Sri Lanka, stressing emotional connection as a mediator is an underexplored topic in previous literature. By contextualizing findings inside a nation famous for cultural legacy, it gives concrete insights for destination marketing and improves theoretical frameworks on media-driven travel motivation.

Keywords – Cultural experiences, Emotional connection, Heritage tourism, Intention to travel, Travel vlogs

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1. Introduction

Travel inspired by historical, cultural, and archaeological experiences has become known as heritage tourism, and it has grown significantly in the last few years (Timothy, 2011). The reason for this increase is the desire to connect with the past, visit significant places, and to become more engaged in cultural authenticity. According to Kim and Youn (2017), storytelling is an essential tool for marketing heritage tourism sites because it allows potential visitors to witness themselves completely immersed in the context of history and culture. Travel communication has undergone a revolution with the emergence of social media platforms, especially those that permit users to share videos, like YouTube (Gretzel, 2017). The tourism sector has found that travel vlogs, a kind of video blogging that records vacation experiences, are effective storytelling techniques. Travel vlogs provide viewers with a virtual trip experience through immersive imagery, narration, and personal experiences, which could have an impact on their desire to travel (Silaban et al., 2022).

While prior studies have explored the broader impact of social media on travel decisions, there is a limited knowledge about the precise effect of travel vlogs on the intention of travelling for heritage tourism, especially in the context of Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2016). Research currently in existence indicates that emotions are a major factor in determining travel choices. According to Hosany et al. (2020), the need to feel a variety of feelings, including exhilaration, relaxation, nostalgia, and cultural connection, drives tourists. Travel vlogs have the power to arouse these feelings in viewers because of their captivating imagery, narrative components, and first-person accounts. According to Cheng et al. (2020), viewers who emotionally connect with the places featured in travel vlogs are more likely to have positive perceptions of such places and a higher desire to visit those locations in reality. For example, a trip vlog with breathtaking images of Sri Lanka's ancient ruins combined with an enthusiastic narrator explaining their significance in history could make viewers feel marveled and interested. A desire to visit these ruins personally and fully immerse oneself in the rich cultural legacy they represent could arise from this emotional connection (Godamunne, 2023). While a lot of studies have been conducted regarding the elements that affect tourists' motivation in general, insufficient is understood about the particular motivations behind heritage tourism in Sri Lanka. This study aims to contribute to this gap by focusing on the Sri Lankan context, a nation rich in cultural and historical heritage sites. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research questions. The first one is "What is the relationship between Travel Vlogs (TV) and Intention to Travel (IT) for Heritage Tourism in Sri Lanka?" and, the second one is "How does Emotional Connection (EC) mediate the relationship between Travel Vlogs and Intention to Travel for Heritage Tourism in Sri Lanka?"

This study addresses the knowledge gap by investigating the precise influence of travel vlogs on the desire to travel for heritage tourism in Sri Lanka. It also looks at the possible mediating effect of emotional connection, offering a more complex explanation of how travel vlogs affect the decisions individuals make to travel. Moreover, this research provides significant perspectives for Sri Lankan tourist authorities and heritage site management. Heritage locations may create effective marketing strategies targeted towards internet audiences by comprehending the impact of travel vlogs on emotional connection and desire to visit. Additionally, by focusing on the Sri Lankan context, this study advances a more thorough understanding of the motivating factors behind heritage tourism. Examining how travel vlogs affect a particular location with a strong cultural legacy might reveal certain driving forces behind this kind of travel. The results of this study can guide future investigations into the motivation of tourists, heritage tourism, and travel vlogs.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Travel Vlogs and Transformation in Tourism

This section addresses the revolutionary potential of travel vlogs within the tourism industry and it studies how these online video diaries could alter how people view and interact in areas, especially those rich in history. Therefore, scholars emphasize on the notion of “transformation” in tourism, especially how travel vlogs may develop a deeper connection with a destination’s cultural and historical legacy, eventually leading to a more meaningful travel experience (Motahar et al., 2021). The development of the internet and social media has radically changed the tourist environment. Travel vlogs, a significant kind of user-generated video, provide immersive and real descriptions of locations, beyond the constraints of standard travel brochures and documentaries. This immersive quality enables viewers to digitally experience a destination’s cultural and historical attractions, promoting a feeling of connection and possible change (Cheng et al., 2020). Moreover, research shows that travel vlogs might affect travel decision-making by inspiring viewers’ interest and desire to discover a region firsthand (Du, 2019). This is especially pertinent for heritage tourism, since vlogs may exhibit historical locations, local traditions, and cultural experiences in a manner that conventional media sometimes fail to portray (Mesana et al., 2024).

Sri Lanka, with its rich fabric of ancient ruins, colorful festivals, and diversified cultural traditions, provides a better example of a country where travel vlogs may play a transforming role. By displaying the firsthand experiences of vloggers traversing historical landmarks and connecting with local populations, viewers may get a greater knowledge and respect for Sri Lanka’s distinct cultural character (Nguyen et al., 2024). The rising popularity of travel vlogs in Sri Lanka, especially among young people corresponds with the larger move towards experiential travel, where travelers desire to engage with locations and their history on a deeper level (Tzanelli & Jayathilaka, 2021). This trend is further backed by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority’s (SLTDA) strategic emphasis on boosting historic tourism experiences. The SLTDA sees the potential of travel vlogs to reach a broader audience and exhibit the distinct cultural offers of the nation (Fernando et al., 2016). This shift in the components that are expanding the popularity of travel vlogs, the trend towards meaningful travel, and the strategic emphasis of tourism authorities, underscores the potential of travel vlogs to play a transformative role in Sri Lanka’s heritage tourism industry. It is essential to understand the potential of travel vlogs to provide an idealized or unreliable perspective on a region. However, critical viewers can use the interactive nature of the platform to examine and verify the material, ultimately building their own unique travel experiences (Manojprasath et al., 2025). Moreover, minimal study addresses the precise ways in which travel vlogs might develop emotional ties with locales, especially those rich in history (Gan et al., 2023). Understanding the emotional connection produced by travel vlogs is vital for heritage tourism in Sri Lanka (Tzanelli & Jayathilaka, 2021). This insight may influence tactics for vloggers and tourist boards to develop material that connects with viewers, eventually leading to greater interest in heritage travel. This could emphasize how viewers’ curiosity and desire to explore a place. A prime example of this possibility is the situation of Sri Lanka, where vlogs exhibiting cultural diversity might boost interest in traveling there. Therefore, on the basis of the support and evidenced stated from the above argument, we can hypothesize;

Hypothesis (H1): Travel Vlogs have a positive effect on intention to travel for heritage tourism.

Travel Vlogs and Emotional Connection/Engagement

Understanding how travel vlogs build emotional connection is vital for tourism, especially heritage tourism, where developing a feeling of place and cultural appreciation is key. Therefore,

academics concentrate on travel vlogs and their propensity to form emotional links with locations, especially those rich in cultural history (Sugathapala, 2024). We study the precise emotional reactions evoked by travel vlogs and how these feelings could impact a viewer's propensity to visit a historic place. Travel vlogs, a kind of user-generated material, give a more intimate and realistic picture of locations compared to standard travel media. This immersive aspect helps viewers to engage with a place on an emotional level, encouraging emotions of surprise, curiosity, and excitement (Duffy, 2015). Studies reveal that trip vlogs might elicit sentiments of nostalgia, desire, and a sense of belonging, encouraging viewers to explore duplicating the events represented (Adams, 2023). This emotional connection is especially essential for heritage tourism. Travel vlogs may display the cultural depth of a location, helping viewers to engage with historical tales and customs in a manner that static photographs or brochures typically fail to do (Motahar et al., 2021). Emotional reactions like wonder and inspiration, caused by observing historical places and cultural customs, may create a desire to experience these components personally.

Sri Lanka, with its ancient ruins, vibrant festivals, and rich cultural heritage, presents a location where travel vlogs may develop emotional relationships. Viewers viewing travel vlogs exhibiting Sri Lanka's cultural tapestry may experience a sense of interest towards the country's history and customs. These feelings could change into a desire to visit Sri Lanka and immerse oneself in the cultural experiences presented (Prabuddha et al., 2023). Furthermore, research suggests a rising propensity towards experiential travel, when people aim to visit beyond tourism and participate in meaningful interactions with local cultures. This change in travel tastes correlates with the increased popularity of travel vlogs, especially among young individuals seeking real travel experiences (Kanagasapapathy, 2017). Research by Sugathapala (2024) emphasizes this trend in Sri Lanka, where travel vlogs are widely watched by young people eager to transcend beyond standard tourist packages and build deeper relationships with locations. It is vital to notice the possibility for travel vlogs to develop an idealized impression of an area. However, critical viewers may leverage the platform's interactive component to analyze and verify material, possibly leading to a more nuanced awareness of the location and its complexity. Furthermore, limited study investigates the unique mechanisms by which travel vlogs develop emotional ties with viewers, especially in the setting of historic locales (Bosangit et al., 2012). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for Sri Lanka's historic tourist sector. By detecting the emotional triggers within travel vlogs, video producers and tourism boards may adapt their content to connect with viewers and eventually increase interest in historic travel experiences. On the basis of these statements, we hypothesize;

Hypothesis (H2): Travel Vlogs have a positive effect on emotional connection to travel for heritage tourism.

Emotional Connection and Intention to Travel for Heritage Tourism

This section analyzes the relationship between emotional attachment and the desire to travel for heritage tourism. Therefore, researchers concentrate on the emotional connection established by heritage tourism experiences and how these feelings translate into a desire to visit certain sites. We study how travel media, especially travel vlogs, might nurture this emotional connection and eventually impact travel intention. Heritage tourism relies on building emotional ties with the past and the cultures it symbolizes. Positive feelings like amazement, wonder, and a sense of belonging might come from meeting historical places and cultural traditions (Kanagasapapathy, 2017). These feelings might be further heightened by travel media like films and travel blogs. Travel vlogs, with their immersive and customized structure, provide a unique opportunity to engage with historical locations. Viewers may experience historical landmarks and cultural traditions virtually via the vlogs, possibly developing a feeling of emotional connection (Katsoni & Spyriadis, 2020). Studies reveal that feelings like nostalgia and

desire, produced by trip vlogs, might encourage viewers to contemplate repeating the events represented. Furthermore, Sri Lanka's cultural legacy gives a unique chance to connect with the past and create a feeling of wonder. Travel vlogs exhibiting Sri Lanka's cultural pearls may transport viewers to busy marketplaces, calm temples, and compelling archaeological sites, generating a desire to experience these traditions firsthand. The growth of experiential travel, where travelers seek deeper involvement with locations and their cultures, correlates with the rising popularity of travel vlogs (He et al., 2022). This tendency is further reinforced by research by Akilani and Wanniarachchi (2023) in Sri Lanka, which demonstrates the increased usage of travel vlogs among young people seeking genuine heritage tourism experiences. Furthermore, Travel vlogs have the capacity to portray the complex spirit of Sri Lanka's history, taking viewers beyond the physical beauty of landscapes to experience the rich tapestry of Sri Lanka's heritage tourism attractions. For instance, vlogs can showcase visits to ancient ruins, traditional handicraft demonstrations, and historical festivals, allowing viewers to virtually connect with the destination's heritage and fostering a sense of wanderlust that can translate into a desire to visit Sri Lanka and experience its heritage firsthand. However, it is crucial to realize the possibility for emotional manipulation in travel media (Mantra, 2024). However, viewers may exploit the participatory element of travel vlogs to study and verify facts, possibly leading to a better educated choice about visiting the place. Limited study addresses the exact feelings elicited by travel vlogs presenting historic places and how these emotions translate into a desire to visit. Emotional bond is formed by historical tourism encounters and these emotions become a desire to visit particular location. Thus, travel vlogs are recognized as a useful technique for fostering this emotional bond, and eventually influencing travel intention. More study is required to understand the emotional pathways leading from travel vlog consumption to the inclination to visit historic sites (Cheng et al., 2024). On the basis of the statement given, we hypothesize;

Hypothesis (H3): Emotional connection has a positive effect on intention to travel for heritage tourism.

Mediating Role of Emotional Connection/Engagement

Examining how travel vlogs inspire emotional reactions in viewers and how these feelings impact choices to travel is an important topic of interest for tourism scholars and destination marketing experts (Yu, 2021). Engagement fosters assurance and people tend to encourage to give additional effort or desire when they feel that they will be benefitted in some way from a particular object (Shilpakar et al., 2024). So, researchers study the potential that emotional engagement functions as an intermediate variable, sitting between exposure to travel vlogs (independent variable) and affecting viewers' desire to visit for heritage tourism (dependent variable) in the case of Sri Lanka. Travel vlogs, with their immersive and personalized structure, provide viewers a more emotionally charged experience compared to conventional travel media (Cheng et al., 2020). This emotional involvement may considerably impact travel choices (Gan et al., 2023). Studies reveal that travel vlogs may generate a variety of feelings, including amazement, enthusiasm, and nostalgia, which can eventually convert into a desire to visit the highlighted place (Mesana et al., 2024). This emotional connection is especially essential for heritage tourism. Travel vlogs may bring historical locations and cultural traditions to life, promoting a feeling of connection to the past and a desire to experience these features personally (Chandralal et al., 2015). Emotions like amazement and inspiration, induced by experiencing cultural heritage via travel vlogs, might operate as a bridge between virtual exploration and the genuine urge to travel.

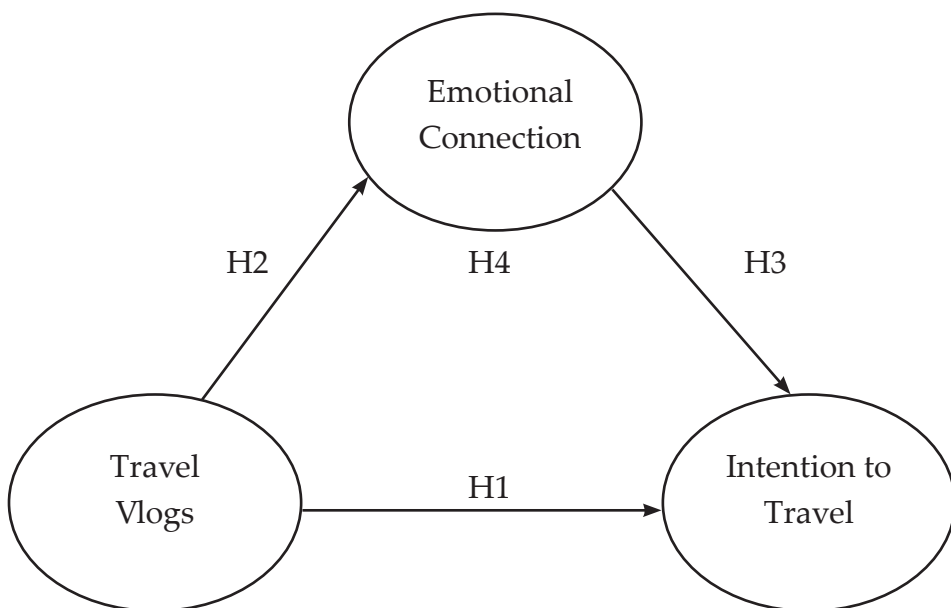
Travel vlogs showing Sri Lanka's legacy may generate emotions of amazement and a sense of cultural immersion, perhaps inspiring viewers to contemplate visiting the nation. The increased popularity of travel vlogs correlates with a move towards experiential travel, where visitors

value immersive and emotionally engaging events that visit beyond sightseeing (Neuhofer et al., 2014). This trend corresponds with in Sri Lanka, which shows the rising usage of travel vlogs among young people seeking genuine cultural experiences. Young people, a critical audience for tourist boards, are attracted to the genuineness and relatability that travel vlogs provide compared to conventional, polished marketing materials (Prabuddha et al, 2024; Sugathapala, 2024). Travel vlogs may display the cultural subtleties of a place in a manner that connects with this target demographic, establishing a feeling of emotional connection and a desire to emulate the experiences represented in the vlogs. It is vital to understand that emotional reactions to travel vlogs might be subjective. However, the interactive aspect of the site enables viewers to connect with artists and other viewers, possibly promoting a more nuanced knowledge of the place and its cultural intricacies. Limited studies to addresses the particular processes by which emotional connection influences the association between travel vlogs and desire to travel for heritage tourism. While prior research recognizes the emotional effect of travel vlogs, a vacuum remains in determining how these feelings transfer into tangible travel choices (Du, 2019). Understanding the mediating effect of emotional connection is vital for Sri Lanka's historic tourist economy. By recognizing the emotions elicited by travel vlogs and their effect on travel choices, stakeholders can build content and marketing tactics that engage with viewers and eventually increase tourism to historic sites. In keeping with the study approach, this section specifically discusses the function of emotional connection as a mediator. Thus, it is hypothesized as;

Hypothesis (H4): Emotional connection mediates the relationship between travel vlogs and intention to travel for heritage tourism.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Source: Developed by Authors based on Literature (2025)

3. Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research technique to explore the influence of travel vlogs on travellers' inclinations to visit Sri Lanka for heritage tourism, using emotional connection as a mediating variable. A quantitative technique was adopted to statistically evaluate numerical data and test established assumptions regarding the relationships between variables, enabling the identification of causal linkages and generalizable patterns (Creswell, 2014). The unit of analysis consisted of individual prospective visitors interested in Sri Lankan heritage sites. A survey-based technique was employed to collect data effectively from a large sample, coinciding with quantitative aims to analyze trends in travel intentions (Jayasinghe et al., 2015). The sample size was established using the Morgan table to assure statistical power and representativeness, with purposive sampling utilized to recruit individuals. Data collection employed an online survey as the major approach, chosen for its cost-effectiveness, geographic reach, and ability to assure participant anonymity (Minnaar & Heystek, 2013). The research method focusses on three variables: Travel Vlogs (independent variable), Emotional Connection (mediator), and Intention to Travel (dependent variable). Structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items were devised to test these variables. To preserve rigor, the survey instrument underwent pilot testing and made improvement prior to deployment.

Sampling and Data Collection

A sample of 384 participants was recruited using a Morgan table sampling technique and an online survey tool. Purposive sampling technique was used. There were two primary components of the survey. Five questions on the participants' basic demographics were collected in the first segment. A five-point Likert scale was used in the second segment (60 questions) to gauge the three main study variables: Intention to Travel (IT), Emotional Connection (EC), and Travel Vlogs (TV). Moreover, Google Form was used to conduct the online survey (Nurmahmudah & Nuryuniarti, 2020). The survey URL was shared on social media groups, travel forums, and heritage tourism websites in order to reach prospective heritage both local and foreign visitors. The quality of the data was ensured by taking action. Small-group pilot testing was used to improve the phrasing and flow of the questions. Using embedded attention checks, inattentive replies were marked for removal. Lastly, the introduction included clear instructions on the Likert scale, the goal of the survey, and the significance of accurate responses (Ryan et al., 2012; Abbey & Meloy, 2017).

Data Analysis

Following the data collection, many processes were taken to assure data correctness and integrity for later analysis. First, the data were reviewed for outliers and discrepancies. Outliers with extreme values that considerably differed from the general distribution have been identified and examined. According to Huxley (2016), in cases where a valid reason for their presence could not be identified, outliers were either eliminated or reduced to a less extreme figure. Minor missing values can be imputed using mean or median replacement whereas more major missing data patterns might need case elimination strategies to limit bias (Newman, 2014). The particular strategy for managing missing values would be selected depending on the amount and distribution of missing data in the gathered dataset. Furthermore, this study adopted PLS-SEM as the major data analysis approach. PLS-SEM is especially well-suited for this research because to its features like, concentrate on prediction, accommodates lower sample sizes and handles non-normal data. Using SmartPLS software, the research model was constructed with Travel Vlogs (TV) as the independent variable, Emotional Connection (EC) as the mediator, and Intention to Travel (IT) as the dependent variable. Path coefficients were computed to analyze the direct and indirect impacts of travel vlogs on intention to travel, mediated by emotional

attachment. Bootstrapping was applied to examine the importance of the correlations between the variables (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, to assure data analysis validity and reliability, convergent validity, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability were tested. The convergent validity test checks whether the measurements mirror their constructs ($AVE > 0.5$). Internal consistency (CR and Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7) is reflected in composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. SmartPLS approaches ensured rigorous outcomes (Hamid et al., 2017; Siswaningsih et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Ensuring informed permission, confidentiality, and participant privacy throughout the study prioritizes the ethical behavior. The goal of the study, participant anonymity, and voluntary nature were all made evident in the introduction of an online survey. Before beginning the survey, participants read and signed informed consent and its declaration. All information gathered were anonymous and safely kept on password-protected servers, to which only authorized researchers have access. Survey respondents were free to discontinue participation at any point (Connelly, 2014).

4. Results

Demographic factors of respondents

The sample included 384 individuals who have already visited Sri Lanka's historic attractions as visitors. Sixty-one percent were men, and over half were in the 26–35 age range. In terms of geography, the Southern Province had the most participation (23%), followed by the Western Province (17%) and the Central Province (10%). The majority of participants (28%) had either an internal or external degree, 26% had a diploma or vocational degree, and 25% had earned a G.C.E. A/L certificate. This distribution, which covers a variety of demographics and professional backgrounds, offers a thorough picture of the people who might visit Sri Lanka's historic sites as visitors.

Descriptive Analysis for Variables

According to the pre-established criteria ($1 \leq X < 2.5$ for Almost Not Accepted, $1 \leq X < 3.5$ for Average, and $3.5 \leq X \leq 5$ for Almost Accepted), descriptive analyses showed that the average scores for majority variables were within the "Almost Accepted" range (Allen & Seaman, 2007). This indicates that the individuals who are prospective tourists visiting Sri Lanka's historic sites, on average, did not score particularly high or low on measures of Travel Vlogs (TV), Emotional Connection (EC), and Intention to Travel (IT). There was only little participant response variability, as shown by majority standard deviations falling within acceptable bounds. Furthermore, majority the values for kurtosis and skewness were within the permissible range (± 2), indicating that the data distributions were mostly bell-shaped and symmetrical. These results provide an initial summary of the data, showing the participant answers' distribution and central tendency within the predetermined parameters (George & Mallery, 1999)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

This confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) evaluated a measurement model for travel vlogs (TV), emotional connection (EC), and intention to travel (IT). The analysis assessed internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and path coefficients (Ehido, 2022). In other words, the CFA examined how well the measures used in the study capture the intended constructs and how these constructs relate to each other. The results showed that all three constructs demonstrated high convergent validity, indicating that the measures effectively capture their respective concepts.

Convergent Validity

Table 1

Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
TV	0.80	0.85	0.67
EC	0.86	0.89	0.73
IT	0.83	0.87	0.70

Source: Smart PLS Output

Table 1 demonstrates that for every construct, Cronbach's alpha values were higher than 0.7, suggesting strong internal consistency and reliability of the measuring items. The internal consistency and coherence of each construct were further confirmed by composite reliability (CR) values that were higher than 0.7. Additionally, all constructs had average variance extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.5, indicating that a significant amount of the variation in the observed items could be attributed to the intended latent structures. These results provide strong proof that the study's measures sufficiently captured the desired constructs, which increases trust in the analyses that followed (Hamid et al., 2017; Siswaningsih et al., 2017).

Discriminant Validity

The findings of discriminant validity tests verified that the measures for Travel Vlogs (TV), Emotional Connection (EC), and Intention to Travel (IT) were unique and did not assess the same item. This demonstrates that the study's constructs are independent (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022).

Table 2

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	TV	EC	IT
TV			
EC	0.73		
IT	0.69	0.66	

Source: Smart PLS Output

As can be seen in Table 2, every HTMT value was less than 0.9, meaning that the variation common to any two constructs was much less than the variance unique to each construct. This demonstrates that the conceptions measure different underlying phenomena and are sufficiently separate (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3

Fornell-Larcker criterion

	TV	EC	IT
TV	0.80		
EC	0.64	0.83	
IT	0.67	0.69	0.82

Source: Smart PLS Output

The Fornell-Larcker criteria is shown in Table 3, where each construct's square root of AVE is greater than its correlation with any other construct. This provides further evidence for the constructs' uniqueness since, according to Hamid et al. (2017), the bulk of the variation collected by each measure represents its own idea rather than overlapping with others.

Hypothesis testing

Table 4 displays the important links that hypothesis testing uncovered between the model's major elements.

Table 4

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	T-Value>2	P- Value	Decision
H1	TV → IT	0.41	3.86	0	Accepted
H2	TV → EC	0.19	2.94	0	Accepted
H3	EC→ IT	0.32	4.11	0	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output

Initial three hypotheses received strong statistical support from the study's findings. The fact that the p-values in every instance are substantially less than the generally recognized cut-off of 0.05 (Kennedy-Shaffer, 2019) indicates this. Put another way, these p-values show that there is extremely little likelihood that the observed connections between the variables are the result of random variation. This statistical significance supports the claim that travel vlogs have a significant impact on tourists' plans to visit Sri Lanka for heritage tourism. The outcomes are consistent with the basic hypothesis expectations of this study.

Mediation Analysis

The probable mechanism behind the association between Travel Vlogs (TV) and Intention to Travel for Heritage Tourism as H4 was investigated using mediation analysis.

Table 5

Specific Indirect Effect

Hypothesis		Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H4	TV → EC→ IT →	0.155	0.151	0.046	3.35	0

Source: Smart PLS Output

Strong evidence for the mediating function of emotional connection (EC) in the link between travel vlogs (TV) and intention to travel (IT) for heritage tourism in Sri Lanka (H4) can be seen in Table 5's results. This suggests that watching travel vlogs can positively impact visitors' desire to visit these places. But the table indicates that emotional connection may operate as a partly mediating factor for this influence.

5. Discussion

This section explores the main findings of our study on how travel vlogs affect travellers' intentions to visit Sri Lanka for heritage tourism. A deeper examination of the proposed connections between travel vlogs, emotional connection, and travel intention is made possible by the data analysis. Researchers provide insight into the relevance of these findings for individuals involved in Sri Lanka's heritage tourism sector by interpreting findings. The study's findings validated each of the three assumptions. First of all, a strong positive correlation was found between travel vlogs (TV) and intention to travel (IT) (H1), indicating that vlogs could influence travellers' desire to visit Sri Lanka's historical places. This finding is consistent with other studies that have shown the persuasive value of narrative and images in tourism marketing (Gun et al., 2023). Furthermore, it was shown that travel vlogs had a positive effect on emotional connection (EC) (H2), indicating that they could stir up emotions and create a stronger connection with potential travellers (Hutchinson et al., 2024). Lastly, it was shown that emotional connection positively influenced travel intention (H3), emphasizing the crucial role that emotions play in influencing decisions about where to travel (Malone, 2012). The mediation study also provided further evidence that the association between travel vlogs and the desire for travel can be partially mediated by an emotional connection.

For individuals involved in promoting heritage tourist attractions in Sri Lanka, in particular, this research provides insightful information. Travel vloggers have the potential to be strategic partners due to their beneficial impact on both emotional connection and travel intention. Tourism boards and destination management organizations (DMOs) could collaborate with travel vloggers who connect with their target audience to take advantage of this potential. As part of this partnership, video production workshops may be held to provide travel vloggers inclusive understanding of Sri Lanka's historical importance, cultural events, and heritage locations. Travel vloggers may develop stronger relationships and produce more authentic content by accepting them on promotional trips and familiarization tours. Finally, to increase reach and attract in a larger audience, co-branded marketing campaigns might be created. Travel vloggers may become influential advocates by producing interesting and educational material that highlights the emotional connection potential of Sri Lanka's historic sites and influences the choices of viewers regarding where to visit. This research further emphasizes how crucial emotional ties are when making travel decisions. By adding components that arouse better feelings and foster a feeling of connection with prospective visitors, DMOs may improve their destination marketing campaigns. This may be accomplished by using stunning images that perfectly express the enchantment and spirit of historic places, narrative that combines local history, culture, and experiences, and interactive elements on websites and social media that let potential visitors virtually tour heritage sites. By putting these strategies into practice, Sri Lanka's tourism sector can highlight the unique experiences provided by its rich historical places and attract more tourists by using the power of travel vlogs and emotional connection.

6. Conclusion

This research provides an extensive examination of how tourism vlogs influence Sri Lankan heritage tourists' intentions, with an emphasis on the mediating function of emotional connection. As a result, this study employs a quantitative research methodology and distributes a survey to a target group of prospective heritage tourists. The findings indicate a strong positive correlation between watching travel vlogs and intending visiting for heritage tourism, which is mediated by the travelers' emotional connection with the content. This implies that travel vlogs are not only helpful in promoting historical sites but also have a significant impact on

developing potential travelers' emotional connection, which influences what attractions they decide to visit. The research has significant implications for Sri Lankan cultural site management and travel agencies. Through leveraging the narrative potential of travel vlogs to arouse feelings like awe, longing, and cultural affinity, marketers may craft focused promotional approaches that effectively connect with consumers' need for genuine and engaging travel occasions. These results also support a cooperative strategy between travel bloggers and tourist boards to produce material that accurately captures Sri Lanka's rich cultural legacy, drawing in a larger audience and fostering a greater awareness for the nation's historical landmarks. Although the study offers insightful information, it also highlights certain limitations, including the use of self-reported data and the possibility of bias related to social desirability. Such recognition opens up new research directions by examining how real travel behaviors shift after watching travel vlogs. Overall, this study emphasizes the vital part that emotional connection plays in influencing visitor behavior and advances our knowledge of the intricate factors affecting heritage tourism in Sri Lanka.

7. Limitations and Direction for Future Research

Though this research provides insightful information, there are several limitations to take into account. First of all, the research used a self-reported survey approach, which is susceptible to social desirability bias, in which participants provide answers based on what they believe to be acceptable in society. Second, the research concentrated on prospective travellers rather than on the real travel habits of those who watched travel vlogs. To further establish the connection between intention and action, future studies should examine real-world travel planning trends. Furthermore, the research sample may not be generalizable to other cultural settings due to its limitation to Sri Lanka. The influence of travel vlogs on a variety of audiences may be clarified with further study conducted in various areas.

Further research may examine the particular content features of travel vlogs that inspire sentimental responses and impact the inclination to travel for various heritage experiences (Xu et al., 2023). For instance, research could investigate how the use of music, narration style, visuals, and editing techniques evoke emotions such as nostalgia, wonder, or cultural connection. Furthermore, studies may look at how travel vlogs accommodate various cultural values and interests related to heritage. A specific travel vlog that appeals to certain tourist groups interested in heritage travel may be developed with an understanding of these complexities.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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