

# Engineering the Travel Vlog: A Comparative Study of Travel and Adventure Content on TikTok in West and Douyin in China

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the differences in travel videos on China's new media platform Douyin and Western new media platform TikTok across multiple aspects. By analyzing a sample of 100 popular travel videos from each platform, the study identifies differences in thematic focus, production techniques, user interaction, and cultural and technological influences. Douyin emphasizes natural scenery and cultural heritage, reflecting Chinese cultural values, whereas TikTok focuses on urban exploration and modern attractions, aligning more with Western preferences for individualism and adventure. In terms of production techniques, Douyin travel influencers prefer using drones and stabilizers for high-quality footage, while TikTok travel influencers favor dynamic, fast-cut editing styles. User interaction on Douyin is community-driven and detailed, whereas on TikTok it is concise and trend-oriented. These findings highlight the roles of culture and technology in shaping content creation and consumption on both platforms, providing insights for content creators and marketers aiming to effectively promote travel on these platforms.

## 1 Introduction

TikTok, and its Chinese counterpart Douyin, are two of the most popular social media apps that allow users to upload and share short videos. Initially developed by ByteDance in 2016 as Douyin, TikTok followed suit and went live in 2017, the latter TikTok quickly morphed into the world's top social media platform. TikTok's global monthly active users have surpassed 1 billion. The average daily time spent on TikTok has nearly doubled, increasing from 27 minutes and 24 seconds in 2019 to 58 minutes and 24 seconds in 2024 [1]. Meanwhile, Douyin users reached 763 million active users per month in March 2024, with an average daily usage market of 1.92 hours [2]. Their algorithm-driven content recommendation system, convenient video editing features, and numerous interactive features have made the two platforms a favorite among users and creators. The significant influence of TikTok in the West has already made it an important cultural phenomenon of interest for exploring further the cultural and social dynamics of the digital age. As Douyin's influence in China is profound too, shaping digital culture with its integrated e-commerce,

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emphasis on local traditions, and regional dialects, providing a uniquely immersive user experience for its users.

Travel vlogs have become one of the most popular content types on both TikTok and Douyin. Several factors, including global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted international travel, and regional events like China's introduction of the 144-hour visa-free transit policy, have spurred significant interest from Western explorers. Consequently, travel content on TikTok, Douyin, and other short video platforms has experienced a surge in views. According to official TikTok statistics, travel-related videos have amassed over 30 billion views since 2022, accounting for approximately 15% of all views on the platform. On Douyin, travel-related videos have held the second-highest position since 2023, attracting over 4 billion users interested in travel content [3].

Despite the similarities in functionality and popular topics between TikTok and Douyin, there are notable cultural differences in content presentation and user interaction. However, comparative studies of travel video content between TikTok and Douyin remain scarce. Investigating these differences can reveal insights into user behaviors and preferences across different cultural contexts and provide valuable recommendations for content creators seeking to enhance the appeal of their work to diverse audiences.

This study aims to compare the differences in travel vlogs from TikTok and Douyin and analyze the differences in themes, user interaction, and production technical choices behind. Specifically, this study will focus on answering the following questions:

1. What are the differences in themes and production techniques between travel videos on TikTok and Douyin?
2. What are the differences in user interaction behaviors on these two platforms?

## **2 Literature review**

The rapid development of various social media and their pervasiveness in daily life have attracted tremendous attention, and researchers have conducted much research into the effect of short videos on tourism and their effectiveness in influencing travel behavior and decisions. Poh and Abidin conducted a systematic review of TikTok and Douyin, finding that Douyin's research often focuses on e-commerce and community practices, whereas TikTok studies typically explore platform governance, fame, and virality [4]. Sun et al. analyzed the cultural differences between TikTok and Douyin, highlighting significant variations in content styles and user interactions reflective of broader cultural norms [5]. Jung and Seo investigated how TikTok promotes cultural understanding and tourism during the COVID-19 era, showing that travel vlogs can foster cultural exchange and increase tourism interest [6].

Liu examined the impact of TikTok content on international perceptions of Chinese culture, noting significant differences in content presentation between TikTok and Douyin [7]. Feldkamp explored the influence of TikTok on destination development and tourist experiences, emphasizing the role of user-generated travel posts in shaping travel decisions and promoting lesser-known destinations [8]. Xiang and Gretzel discussed the broader impact of social media on travel decision-making, highlighting the powerful influence of user-generated content in the tourism industry [9].

Wang examined TikTok's rapid expansion and its economic implications, focusing on content monetization and influencer marketing strategies [10]. Sheng and Yang investigated the characteristics of influencers on TikTok and their impact on consumer behavior, particularly in the context of live commerce [11].

Various studies, including those by Poh and Abidin, employed content analysis, thematic analysis, and network analysis to explore different aspects of TikTok and Douyin usage, such as cultural representation, platform mechanics, and user interaction patterns [4]. Wang further explored the economic impact of TikTok's growth, highlighting content monetization and

influencer marketing strategies as key drivers of economic activity and brand engagement [10]. Liu and Feldkamp elaborated on the economic implications of TikTok and Douyin content, particularly in the tourism sector [7,8].

### **3 Methodology**

The methodology for this study uses a mixed-methods approach, this study systematically explores travel video content and the cultural differences behind it on two platforms, TikTok and Douyin, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. involved three parts, data collection, data processing and analysis, reliability and validity.

In the data collection phase, this study employed a comprehensive content analysis methodology to examine travel short videos on Douyin and TikTok. The research aimed to identify key themes within travel videos, discern differences in production techniques, and analyze variations in user interactions across the two platforms. A total of 100 popular travel vlogs from each platform were selected. The selection process utilized the platforms' search and sorting functions, focusing on keywords such as "travel" and "adventure," and metrics including views, likes, favorites, and comments. All selected videos were uploaded in 2024 to ensure both the timeliness and representativeness of the sample.

#### **3.1 Quantitative analysis**

In quantitative analysis, this study recorded each video's raw data and user interaction data. Raw data included title, video blogger, and date; User interaction data included the number of comments, likes, and favorites. Through the statistical software SPSS, this study did descriptive statistical analysis, and a t-test was used to test the differences between TikTok and Douyin to confirm the difference was statistically significant. The t-test was used to test the differences between TikTok and Douyin to confirm the difference was statistically significant.

#### **3.2 Qualitative analysis**

In qualitative analysis, users' comments were deeply analyzed to study how the internal mechanisms of user interaction in TikTok and Douyin were operated. This study used open coding techniques to encode the platform's comment content. Within the larger theme of travel videos, different sub-themes are broken down, "travel advice", "personal experience sharing", and "cultural experience". This study used NVivo software to code and analyze all comments to ensure systematic and accurate coding.

This study has reduced the possibility of subjective bias and analytical errors as much as possible through multiple verifications and cross-validation of data. These self-verification methods provide support for the credibility of the results of this study, so that the results can provide a solid foundation for future related research.

### **4 Result**

This study analyses user interaction data on two platforms, TikTok and Douyin, revealing significant differences in the number of likes, comments, and favorites, which reflect the different characteristics of the platforms' content consumption habits and user behavior (see Table 1, 2).

**Table 1.** TikTok statistics

		Likes	Comments	Favorites
N	Valid	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		375129.16	1233.69	29971.94
Median		48200.00	188.00	2267.00
Std. Deviation		81174.860	2935.627	66764.686

**Table 2.** Douyin statistics

		Likes	Comments	Favorites
N	Valid	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		271498.44	4195.30	5213.19
Median		57495.00	970.00	1123.00
Std. Deviation		57753.509	7988.413	31454.113

#### 4.1 Liking behaviour

On TikTok, the average number of likes for a video is 375,129.16, but the median is only 482,000 with a large standard deviation, indicating that the liking behavior is highly concentrated on a few explosive videos. This phenomenon reflects TikTok users' preference for highly stimulating and creative content, with users tending to quickly like content that is visually striking or creative. In Douyin, on the other hand, the mean of the number of likes is 271,498.44 and the median is 57,495, with a relatively small standard deviation, showing greater consistency in users' liking behaviors, and a more consistent performance of content, reflecting a general recognition of the cultural content on the platform.

#### 4.2 Commenting and favoriting behaviour

TikTok's commenting and favoriting behaviors show a clear imbalance. The mean number of comments is 1,233.69 with a median of only 188, and the mean number of favourites is 29,971.94, but the median is only 2,267. This suggests that the majority of videos have relatively low numbers of comments and favourites, with only a handful of videos triggering a significant amount of user interaction. This pattern may be related to the content consumption habits of TikTok users, who are more inclined to consume content quickly, and only those with strong appeal or uniqueness are able to gain deep engagement and favorites from users.

In contrast, Douyin has a more balanced commenting and favoriting behavior. The average number of comments is 4,195.30 with a median of 970, and the average number of favorites is 5,213.19 with a median of 1,123. Users are more likely to take the time to share their insights in comments and are more selective in their favorites, favoring videos that have cultural value or personal emotional significance. This reflects a deeper approach to content engagement among Douyin users, who not only consume content, but also connect more closely with it through comments and favorites.

### **4.3 Data summaries**

TikTok users' interactive behaviors are focused on a small number of high-impact videos, demonstrating a preference for fast, stimulating content, while Douyin users' interactions are more balanced, particularly in terms of commenting and favoriting, demonstrating a deeper engagement with cultural and emotional content. These behavioral differences reveal the different interaction patterns and content consumption habits of users on social media in two different cultural contexts.

This study analyzed the content of popular travel videos on TikTok and Douyin, revealing significant differences in video themes, production techniques, and user interactions. Although TikTok and Douyin have similarities in functions, there are deep cultural background differences hidden behind their content creation and user interactions. These differences are particularly evident in some following details.

### **4.4 Technical analysis of video production**

In terms of video production technology, TikTok and Douyin showed their obvious differences in some key details. For example, creators on the Douyin platform often use Drone Shots to capture very large-scale natural landscapes, which are often accompanied by Long Takes, and ambient soundtracks to better demonstrate the continuity and expanse of the natural landscapes and convey this mood to the user. In addition, Douyin's travel videos often use Cool Tone Colour Grading when photographing mountain peaks and waterfalls, which not only highlights the serenity of the natural scenery but also conveys a visual style in line with traditional Chinese aesthetics, making the content more harmonious and regionally specific.

In contrast, videos on TikTok are faster-paced, many are shot from the first viewpoint of a handheld camera, and many creators choose to appear in person. Creators also tend to use Fast Cuts and Mixed Frame Rates to increase visual impact. For example, having the same video constantly switch between 30fps and 120fps creates a unique visual rhythm and keeps viewers more attentive to the content. Additionally, TikTok users often utilize techniques such as Creative Props and Seamless Jump Cuts, where the technique used in the video itself is very creative and makes the video more visually original and engaging.

### **4.5 User interaction pattern analysis**

In terms of user interaction patterns, the differences between Douyin and TikTok are much more subtle and show the profound influence of cultural context. On Douyin, user interactions tend to show a higher level of engagement and cultural identity. With a similar number of views or likes, Douyin users make more comments than TikTok, and these users like to share their personal experiences and emotions by writing lengthy comments, which sometimes quote classic Chinese poems or idioms. This form of interaction can reflect some of the importance placed on language arts in Chinese culture and the users' identification with their collective identity. The comments section is often a place for users to reply to each other repeatedly and engage in more in-depth exchanges, with many users analyzing and discussing the content of the videos in detail, a sense of community that is particularly strong on Douyin.

In contrast, user interactions on TikTok have a more relaxed, upbeat, and fragmented atmosphere, with TikTok users preferring to express their immediate reactions through short comments or humorous emoticons. These comments are usually very short, but creative and fun, and they often include the latest popular online phrases or trending hashtags. For example, TikTok users often use sarcasm or ridicule to comment on video content, and this

can reflect the preference for ironic humor in Western culture. This fast and frequent mode of communication is relatively devoid of in-depth discussion and emotional exchange.

An in-depth analysis of the different technical details involved in video production and the very different ways that users think about interaction patterns between these platforms can provide content creators and marketers with more practical strategic guidance when it comes to specific practices. On Douyin, creators can continue to leverage high-quality filming techniques and in-depth interactions to build stronger community relationships and increase fan stickiness. On TikTok, on the other hand, creators should focus more on the creativity and fun of their content, appealing to a wide range of users through fast-paced and light-hearted interactions.

Overall, this study not only deepens the understanding of how TikTok and Douyin can be used for more engaging content creation and more appropriate user interactions in different contexts, but also provides more concrete operational recommendations for future practical applications. These findings provide valuable empirical support for content creation and marketing strategies, as well as new perspectives for cross-cultural communication research.

## **5 Discussion**

In this study, we delve into the significant differences between the two platforms, TikTok and Douyin, in terms of content creation, video production techniques, and user interaction patterns, and analyze the deep-seated reasons behind these differences. The results not only reveal the impact of different cultural contexts on social media platforms, but also provide valuable practical guidance for content creators and marketers.

### **5.1 Depth and breadth of content consumption**

The study shows that Douyin users' interactive behaviors tend to show in-depth consumption, and they are willing to spend more time composing lengthy comments after watching videos. This phenomenon is closely related to Chinese culture's emphasis on "immersive" experiences, where users are not just passive consumers of content, but active participants who engage in a deep dialogue with the content through comments. This deeper interaction is also influenced by the design of Douyin, whose recommendation algorithm favors videos with longer dwell times and deeper interactions, encouraging users to comment in detail to increase the visibility of the content.

In contrast, TikTok's user interactions favor breadth over depth, with TikTok's algorithms prioritizing content that will garner a high number of interactions in the short term, and user comments tend to be short and to the point, aimed at quickly expressing an opinion or engaging with a popular trend. This pattern of rapid consumption is in line with Western culture's emphasis on efficiency and immediate feedback. The short video format also prompts users to engage through trends and hashtags rather than spending time composing lengthy comments.

### **5.2 Social pressure and group identity**

On the Douyin platform, users' interactive behavior is also influenced by social pressure. Users often demonstrate their cultural literacy and aesthetic ability in their comments, and this behavior creates an "unspoken rule" on the platform that in-depth, culturally relevant comments are considered high-quality interactions. This community norm reinforces the

depth of communication between users, and makes them feel invisible pressure to write more detailed comments when interacting in order to gain acceptance and respect from the group.

On TikTok, the main drivers of interaction are engagement and the "immediacy" of social media; TikTok users are more likely to express themselves by participating in trending topics and hashtags, which is quick and easy to do, in line with the Western social media culture's emphasis on efficiency and individual expression. In this environment, long comments seem out of place, and users prefer short comments and hashtags to gain social recognition and a sense of belonging to a group.

### **5.3 Content types and user expectations**

Douyin users expect to gain cultural and emotional satisfaction through video content, so they are more inclined to express their deep thoughts and feelings about the content in their comments. This mode of interaction not only strengthens the connection between users and content, but also creates a collective cultural experience where users share their stories and experiences in the comment section, forming a community based on cultural identity.

On the TikTok platform, on the other hand, users are more focused on an immediate entertainment experience, and content on the platform tends to be short and concise, aiming to quickly capture viewers' attention. Users are more likely to express immediate reactions through hashtags and short comments after watching a video, an interaction pattern that is in line with the fast-consumption nature of the content. TikTok users' interactions are usually done in a short period of time, and they expect to get quick social feedback by engaging with popular trends, rather than through long, in-depth exchanges.

### **5.4 Practical applications**

These findings have important practical applications for content creators, marketers, and travel industry professionals. Specifically, content creators should adapt their content strategy to the characteristics of the platform to maximize engagement with their target user base.

For creators on Douyin, it is recommended to inject more cultural connotations into their content and produce in-depth content that resonates with users. For example, produce detailed travel guides or culturally-explanatory videos that incorporate local culture and traditions, and encourage users to share their stories and experiences in the comments section. This not only increases user interaction but also enhances the cultural value and impact of the content.

On the TikTok platform, creators should focus on the creativity and pacing of their content, and quickly increase the exposure of their content by utilizing trending hashtags and challenge campaigns. In addition, creators can try to combine multiple popular trends in a single video to enhance the content's spread ability and prompt users to engage with it through brief comments and shares.

Marketers should also develop strategies based on platform characteristics. On Douyin, brands can build deep connections with users through culturally relevant content marketing, such as partnering with local tourism bureaus or cultural organizations to promote travel itineraries with deep cultural backgrounds and encourage users to share their cultural experiences. And on TikTok, brands should capitalize on the platform's entertaining and trending nature by quickly launching content that is in line with current trends, and by combining it with trending hashtags and challenge campaigns to quickly gain users' attention.

Travel industry professionals are also using the two platforms differently. On Douyin, tourism professionals can attract users who are interested in cultural experiences by showcasing the cultural heritage and natural beauty of the destination, while on TikTok, tourism professionals should focus on showcasing the modern and unique experiences of the

destination, and attracting a younger user base through creative short videos and trending hashtags.

With these strategies, content creators, marketers and tour operators can better leverage the unique strengths of the Douyin and TikTok platforms to maximize engagement and influence with their target user groups. This not only improves the interactivity and distribution of content, but also enhances the emotional connection and cultural identity between brands and users.

## 6 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the differences and similarities in travel short video content on Douyin and TikTok, focusing on thematic differences, production techniques, and user interactions. The core findings revealed distinct patterns in content themes, production quality, and engagement strategies on these platforms.

The analysis showed that Douyin's travel videos predominantly feature natural landscapes and cultural heritage, reflecting deep-rooted cultural values and audience preferences for traditional and historical elements. In contrast, TikTok travel videos focus more on urban exploration and modern attractions, aligning with Western cultural values that prioritize individualism and adventure. These thematic differences highlight how cultural context shapes content creation and audience engagement on these platforms.

In terms of video production techniques, Douyin creators extensively use drones and stabilizers to produce smooth, visually appealing footage, emphasizing high production quality. This approach meets the audience's expectations for polished, professional content. On the other hand, TikTok creators favor dynamic, action-packed shots with advanced editing tools for fast cuts and creative transitions, catering to the platform's preference for engaging, fast-paced content. These differences illustrate how technological advancements and platform culture influence video production styles.

User interactions also varied significantly between the two platforms. Douyin videos typically receive detailed comments and high levels of engagement, fostering a community-driven atmosphere where users share personal experiences and travel tips. TikTok interactions tend to be more concise, focusing on expressions of excitement and curiosity, with hashtags and challenges driving engagement and content virality. These interaction styles reflect the distinct user behaviors and engagement strategies encouraged by each platform.

In summary, this study underscores the significant cultural and stylistic differences in travel short videos on Douyin and TikTok. Douyin's emphasis on cultural preservation and high production quality contrasts with TikTok's focus on modern attractions and dynamic content. User interactions further differentiate these platforms, with Douyin fostering detailed community engagement and TikTok promoting quick, trend-driven interactions. These insights can inform content creators, marketers, and tourism professionals in tailoring their strategies to leverage the unique strengths of each platform, enhancing their effectiveness in promoting tourism.

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