NEGOTIATING TRAVEL, CREATIVITY, AND COMMERCIALISATION: MOTIVATIONAL DRIVERS AND DUAL-ROLE INTEGRATION OF TRAVEL VLOGGERS

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Abstract

Travel vloggers influence travel intentions by creating and sharing content across social media platforms. This study analyses their motivational drivers and dual-role integration. Using a qualitative approach, 17 online in-depth interviews were conducted with established Bangladeshi travel vloggers, and 40 travel videos were analysed. Guided by self-determination theory, the findings show that passion for documentation and storytelling are the intrinsic motivations, while career transition and income opportunities are the extrinsic motivations for initiating travel vlogging. These motivations are reinforced by audience validation, financial rewards, and self-satisfaction. Travel vloggers operate within a hybrid tourism-digital environment where personal travel experience, creative expression, audience expectations, and commercial obligations intersect. Their dual roles as tourists and content creators require negotiation between experiential travel and professionalised content production, while sponsors may constrain autonomy. The study contributes to tourism and influencer literature by explaining how motivations evolve through platform visibility, economic dependency, and audience engagement within the creator economy.

Keywords : *Travel Vlogging, Self-Determination Theory, Autonomy, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Creator Economy.*

JEL Classification : *Z31, Z33, L82, M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel vlogs have become increasingly influential in shaping travel intentions, promoting tourism destinations, and encouraging tourists to visit them (Cheng et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023; Wang & Huang, 2025). A travel vlog refers to the creation and dissemination of travel videos through online social media that contain creators' travel experiences (Xu et al., 2021). Travel vloggers have emerged as internet celebrities who endorse tourist destinations, and their endorsement has been increasingly recognised as a marketing strategy that is gaining popularity in

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the tourism sector (Pop et al., 2021; Xu & Pratt, 2018). Previously, travel blogs were utilised to share narratives and photographs of destinations (Wenger, 2008). In contrast, travel vlogging offers a more exciting and captivating storytelling technique than usual blogging or static social media posts because of its video-based structure (Rybaczewska et al., 2020).

Existing studies have primarily focused on travel vlogging and its impact on the audience and destination image from the destination marketers' perspective (Xu & Pratt, 2018; Zhou et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2025). Recent studies on travel vloggers, the individuals behind the travel video production, have examined source credibility and image (Cheng et al., 2020; He et al., 2021), attractiveness and trustworthiness (Le & Hancer, 2021), and sincerity and professional attitudes (Nguyen et al., 2023). Dewantara et al.'s (2022) narrative literature review identified gaining popularity, income generation, and celebrity status as key motivational drivers. Furthermore, He et al.'s (2021) and Gholamhosseinzadeh's (2023) studies identified personal advocacy, travel guiding, and destination representation as factors that drive vloggers to engage in vlogging. However, travel vloggers are primarily considered either tourism promoters or digital influencers. Limited attention has been paid to how they manage the overlapping demands of creative expression, audience expectations, commercial dependence, and personal travel experiences. In addition, existing studies fail to explain the motivational dynamics of travel vloggers throughout their career trajectories. Hence, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by focusing on two aspects: (i) the motivations that drive travel vloggers to choose travel vlogging as a career, and (ii) factors that reinforce the continuation of the travel vlogging career.

Aquino and Cabalquinto (2025) identified the multiple roles of travel vloggers, such as tourists, locals, and entrepreneurs. These roles are also entangled with the practices of exoticizing, assimilating, sanitising, and monetising. The present study critically examines the intersection of the tourist and vlogger roles among Bangladeshi travel vloggers, which remains a relatively under-researched area. This study argues that travel vloggers operate within a hybrid tourism-digital environment where travelling becomes not only an experiential activity, but also a performative and commercialised practice shaped by platform visibility, audience engagement, and sponsorship obligations. Guided by self-determination theory, this study analyses the dynamics of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the autonomy of travel vloggers. The study further contributes to the tourism and influencer literature by explaining how travel vloggers negotiate authenticity, autonomy, and professional obligations while performing the roles of tourists and digital creators. While previous studies have identified individual motivations or the multiple roles of travel vloggers, this study brings these two areas together by examining how motivations change across the vlogging career and how they connect with the negotiation of traveller and content creator roles. In doing so, the study moves beyond a static view of motivation by explaining how audience engagement, commercial dependence, and professionalisation shape both motivational development and role integration over time. The study addresses the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of travel vloggers that drive them to initiate and continue content creation, and how do these motivations evolve across their vlogging career trajectories?

RQ2: How much autonomy do travel vloggers have in integrating their dual roles as tourists and travel vloggers, and how do vloggers maintain both roles simultaneously?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Travel Vloggers' Motivation, Roles, and Practices

Travel vloggers and influencers are becoming more prevalent in travel advertising as promoters of hospitality and tourism attractions (Nguyen et al., 2025). Through engaging and entertaining content, travel vloggers develop emotional connections with audiences and influence their travel-related decisions (Silaban et al., 2022; Abad & Borbon, 2021). Moreover, the vloggers' parasocial interactions and audio-visual features positively influence emotional resonance and subsequently shape the behavioural intention of tourists to travel (Chen et al., 2025; Dewantara et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). However, the driving forces of travel vloggers themselves remain underexplored. Consequently, travel vloggers are frequently approached as marketing agents or destination endorsers, while less attention has been paid to their own experiences, motivations, and role negotiation within the creator economy.

Travel vloggers also need to adapt their content strategies, including narrative construction, storytelling, video openings, and audience engagement techniques, according to changing circumstances to retain viewership (Chakravarty et al., 2021). According to Aquino and Cabalquinto (2025), travel vloggers' practices are intertwined with their roles, contexts, and consequences; their practices of exoticizing, assimilating, sanitising, and monetising are linked to their roles as tourists, locals, and entrepreneurs. Travel vlogging integrates both tourism and vlogging practices in which travel vloggers act as tourists and play shifting roles to incorporate artistic and financial rewards (Aquino & Cabalquinto, 2025). Their entrepreneurial role is shaped by market logic, within which they need to show skills of content production to attract audiences, tourists, and potential sponsors (Dewantara et al., 2025). Although many travel vloggers depend on sponsors to finance their trips, others are self-financed or receive audience donations and affiliate income (Gholamhosseinzadeh, 2023). Even though the entrepreneurial and performative aspects of travel vlogging are present in these studies, they fail to explain how travel vloggers balance their experiential travel and professionalised content production as they navigate the tension between commercial obligations and personal authenticity.

2.2 Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan (2015, p. 486) defined self-determination theory as "a motivational theory of personality, development, and social processes that examines how social contexts and individual differences facilitate different types of motivation". The theory further explains how social contexts can enhance motivation by satisfying

basic psychological needs or undermine performance and intrinsic aspirations when these needs are constrained (Manninen et al., 2022). The theory proposes three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are necessary for effective functioning and wellness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2012; 2015). Autonomy is a sense of initiative and ownership in one's actions, where experiences of interest and value support autonomy, and experiences of being subject to external control undermine it (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Competence refers to a sense of mastery, while relatedness concerns the feeling of being connected with others (Legault, 2017).

Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities that provide inherent satisfaction rather than focusing on a discrete outcome. Extrinsic motivation contrasts with intrinsic motivation in the sense that an activity is performed to attain some separable outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b). Self-determination theory has also categorised extrinsic motivation into four subtypes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). First, externally regulated behaviours are determined by externally imposed rewards and punishments (Legault, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2002). The second type is introjected regulation, where motivation has been partially internalised, though internal regulation remains controlling because of the pursuit of success or the avoidance of anxiety, shame, or guilt associated with failure (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; 2000a). The third form of extrinsic motivation is where individuals consciously endorse the value of activities; this is termed as identified regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Finally, integrated regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation in which the person absorbs the identified regulation (Manninen et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2002).

The theory has been applied to some extent in the social media and influencer domain (Le, 2023), particularly in research focused on influencers' autonomy and restriction, and consumers' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for user-generated content (Poch & Martin, 2014; Sundet et al., 2025). In travel vlogging, Leite et al. (2024) studied how travel influencers satisfy the competence needs of followers through information and entertainment. However, less attention has been paid to the motivational dynamics and autonomy negotiation of travel vloggers themselves, particularly within commercialised tourism-content environments. Self-determination theory therefore provides an appropriate conceptual basis for examining how travel vloggers' motivations develop and the extent to which their autonomy is supported or constrained within different social and commercial contexts. Although self-determination theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as three basic psychological needs, the present study does not aim to examine all three needs systematically. Instead, it focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to address the motivational dynamics examined in RQ1 and on autonomy to examine the negotiation of traveller and content creator roles in RQ2. Competence and relatedness therefore provide part of the broader theoretical foundation rather than the main analytical dimensions of this study. This study integrates self-determination theory to identify patterns of motivation from the perspective of travel vloggers themselves, while

examining how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, commercial dependency, and dual-role performance intersect within the influencer economy.

3. METHODOLOGY

The philosophical stance of this research was adopted to reveal deeper motivations and interpret the negotiated identities of travel vloggers. Hence, the study adopted an interpretive research paradigm positioned within a relativist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Saunders et al., 2015). The study is epistemologically grounded in interpretivism, since knowledge concerning travel vloggers' motivations and role integration is co-created through vloggers' narratives (Pretorius, 2024; Saunders et al., 2015). For this study, a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for examining the complex and subjective experiences associated with digital content creation, identity negotiation, and motivational dynamics (Longo, 2020; Lim, 2025). In this study, extensive qualitative materials were generated from 17 online in-depth interviews conducted with professional Bangladeshi travel vloggers. This data collection technique was selected as it was suitable for revealing the motivations and limitations of travel vlogging practices to a greater extent and could provide greater insights into the negotiation of social frameworks (Aquino & Cabalquinto, 2025). Moreover, this study also used content analysis of 40 travel vlogs from YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram that were retrieved from the channels and social media pages of the interviewed travel vloggers. The video analysis was used to corroborate and contextualise the interview themes by examining sponsorship disclosures, destination selection, and the performance of the traveller and creator roles.

3.1 Sampling

The participants were chosen through a non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique. Established travel vloggers were considered for the study, and they were formally invited to participate. Influencers with a strong presence on social media platforms who are recognised and distinguished by follower numbers ranging from 100,000 to 1 million are termed macro influencers (Şenyapar, 2024). This study used the macro-influencer criterion suggested by Şenyapar (2024) and purposively selected travel vloggers whose followers and subscribers together exceeded 100,000 across three platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. A summary of the professional profile of the interview participants is presented in Table 1, including follower numbers, number of published videos, and the year of their first travel vlog. In addition, 40 videos of the interviewees were selected for content analysis. These videos were initially selected based on rankings by views and likes, followed by purposive selection to provide variation in destination, format, duration, sponsorship, and storytelling practices that fitted the current study. There was no fixed threshold for views or likes in selecting the videos. The final videos were selected from among the most-viewed videos of each interviewee, along with the other criteria, to capture variation relevant to the study. The platform of each selected video is also reported in Appendix B. This video selection approach ensured diversity in format, duration, destination type, sponsorship presence, and storytelling practices, which provided

a richer context for analysing the multirole performance of vloggers (Aquino & Cabalquinto, 2025).

Table 1: Professional Profile of Interview Participants

Respondent Numbers	Number of Followers	Number of Videos	First Travel Vlog Published
Interviewee 1	257,000	39	2021
Interviewee 2	540,000	295	2017
Interviewee 3	445,000	86	2017
Interviewee 4	342,000	440	2022
Interviewee 5	361,000	126	2019
Interviewee 6	145,000	476	2018
Interviewee 7	2,089,000	623	2019
Interviewee 8	776,000	361	2019
Interviewee 9	710,000	258	2017
Interviewee 10	132,000	493	2021
Interviewee 11	1,000,000	360	2018
Interviewee 12	256,000	356	2019
Interviewee 13	189,000	327	2020
Interviewee 14	112,000	208	2019
Interviewee 15	203,000	461	2020
Interviewee 16	746,000	396	2018
Interviewee 17	962,000	482	2018

Source: Authors' compilation from interview participant data.

3.2 Data Collection

Empirical data were collected through online in-depth interviews with travel vloggers. The interviews were conducted between November 2025 and February 2026. All interview sessions were digitally recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. Interviews were conducted in Bangla and later transcribed and translated into English. Similarly, travel vlog videos were downloaded, and timestamped captions were generated and converted into digital transcripts in Microsoft Word before being translated into English. To address the research questions, each interview was organised into two parts and focused on (1) initial motivation and changes in travel vloggers' motivations over time, and (2) balancing, negotiating, and prioritising the dual roles of traveller and content creator. Each interview lasted between 75 and 90 minutes. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative data were analysed thematically. Deductive thematic analysis was used to generate themes from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analytical method is particularly applicable for theory application, testing, and refinement (Fife & Gossner, 2024). Particularly, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations within self-determination theory were examined to address the first research question, and autonomy as one of the basic psychological needs was scrutinised to answer the second research question. The interview transcripts were first analysed deductively using the self-determination theory-informed dimensions relevant to the research questions. Repeated reading of the transcripts was used to identify recurring patterns related to motivation, autonomy, sponsorship influence, travel experience, and creator identity. Once the interview-based themes and sub-themes were developed, the selected videos were examined through visual-verbal analysis to identify how these patterns were reflected in actual content practices. The video evidence was therefore used mainly to corroborate and contextualise the interview findings rather than to generate a separate set of themes. Evidence from both sources was then brought together in interpreting the final themes and sub-themes. Overall, two themes and several sub-themes emerged from the analysis.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Driving Forces of Motivation

Empirical evidence from Bangladeshi travel vloggers identified both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence travel vloggers' creative and professional paths. Through the interview and video evidence, this study identified three predominant motivational forces: passion for travel documentation, storytelling, and memory preservation; alternative career and income opportunities; and opportunities to represent destinations through information sharing.

4.1.1 Passion for Travel Documentation, Storytelling, and Memory Preservation

Qualitative evidence suggests that passion, hobbies, and the practical need for securing storage to preserve memories are intrinsic motivations that drive travel vloggers to enter the digital domain. This process was highlighted by Interviewee 10, who stated:

"In my early days, I used to do mobile photography and documentary …then, I started travelling across Bangladesh and making videos from these trips. Then, out of the blue, I started vlogging. It was like a shift from photography, cinematography, then reels, to current vlogging."

The intrinsic motivation for vlogging initially extended to preserving memories and filming served as a digital archive to relive those moments. As Interviewee 5 said: "…I didn't have any idea about travel vlogging. I bought a GoPro camera before going on a trip to save my memories and recorded everything of our day-to-day activities from that trip. …, you know, that is how I started vlogging." These findings suggest that travel vloggers at an early stage are motivated by intrinsic motivational drivers, such as their hobbies, passion, and desire to preserve their memories.

4.1.2 Pursuit of Alternative Career and Income Opportunities

Travel vlogging has evolved into a career opportunity driven by extrinsic motivations such as financial stability and professional aspirations. Career unpredictability encouraged them to consider this field as a viable alternative. Interviewee 7 stated: "Actually, I started it (i.e., travel vlogging) for my livelihood. I was worried about the staff cut in my office despite my increment and promotion. I was searching for an alternative career to create support. …I found that vlogging offers greater income opportunities than I expected." Flexibility and independence compared to rigid conventional jobs also motivated several respondents to pursue a travel vlogging career. Travel vlogging allows vloggers to work from anywhere and explore diverse income opportunities. Interviewee 8 highlighted this, stating: "I saw the opportunity in social media, content creation, and in the online world. I can work in different things from anywhere at the same time. Umm, …I think this motivated me the most to choose this path." Therefore, the findings suggest that travel vloggers' extrinsic motivations reflect a complex blend of income-seeking behaviour, professional flexibility, creative independence, and alternative career opportunities.

4.1.3 Destination Representation and Information Dissemination

Travel vlogging also serves broader social purposes of destination representation and dissemination of travel-related information. Many participants pointed to their motivation to reframe the image of Bangladesh and change perceptions among international audiences. Interviewee 4 explained this: "When I started travelling in 2015, I saw Bangladesh was perceived negatively abroad. Hence, I thought of showcasing beautiful places for improving Bangladesh's image internationally." In addition to bridging the perception gap, some vloggers were motivated to address information gaps that they perceived during planning.

Another form of information circulation is to make travel accessible to budget-conscious individuals. Travel vlogging emerged as a form of social advocacy to reduce socioeconomic barriers to travel. Interviewee 3 stated: "I feel that travelling and tourism is a human right. To make travel accessible, I present affordable travel through my videos so that middle-class people can find worthwhile deals." These findings suggest that representing a destination is more than destination promotion; it also includes modifying destination perceptions, and sharing travel knowledge with a wider audience.

4.2 Motivational Reinforcements

Whether travel vlogging is initiated by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, recognition and monetary aspects also heavily impact travel vloggers. Positive feedback and appreciation of viewers and followers reinforce their creative pursuits. Several interviewees perceive getting views as a fundamental motive of content creation. Consequently, a lack of acknowledgement may diminish their impetus for travel vlogging. Interviewee 13 highlighted this, stating: "It is a human psychology that if you don't get recognition, I don't think anyone will continue it. I won't do it either."

Monetary rewards like sponsorship, monetisation, or brand promotion are important motivating factors for travel vloggers. These facets enable vloggers to devote more time, effort, and focus, as earnings cover their travel expenses. Interviewee 8 reflected on how financial considerations gradually become unavoidable within content production: "It is an economic equation of demand and supply. You can indeed make content from your passion…But as I started working as a vlogger, I had to think about the reality of the financial aspect." However, a few participants placed less importance on rewards and recognition. For them, self-satisfaction is more important than audience comments, feedback, and validation.

4.3 Temporal Journey of Motivation

Empirical evidence suggests that motivational forces evolve over the course of the vlogging career. For many participants, the motivational evolution was an inspirational trajectory shaped by learning, personal improvement, and professional growth. This growth-oriented motivation allows vloggers to widen their purpose. As highlighted by Interviewee 1: "I become more inspired to continue my work and make it more acceptable to global context." Evidence from the video analysis suggests improvements in storytelling and content structure. These improvements reflect how some vloggers renew their motivation to adapt to changes. For several participants, their motivation to continue travel vlogging gradually shifted from gaining financial returns to responsibility and audience consideration. Interviewee 13 highlighted this, stating: "…At first, it was about my income. But now, I believe, there is a lot of responsibility to the society, to the country, and to the people. I am trying to improve my vlogs with useful information so that viewers can learn something from here."

Taken together, these findings illustrate the temporal evolution of travel vloggers' motivations. Figure 1 illustrates how motivational forces develop from early intrinsic interests and extrinsic opportunities into broader reinforcements across the vlogging career trajectory.

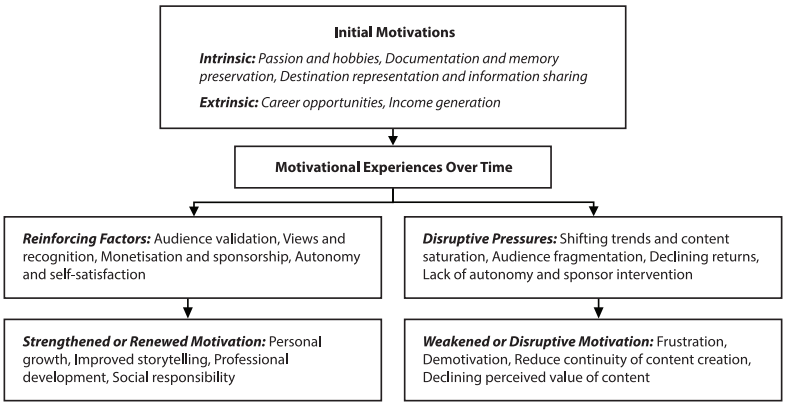

Figure 1: Dynamic Evolution of Travel Vloggers' Motivation
Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on empirical findings of the study.

However, the findings of this study suggest that travel vloggers' motivational progression was not always linear. Demotivation also arises from the saturation of similar types of content, shifting market trends, and changing audience behaviour. These issues disrupted the continuity of the vlogging journey, forcing a backward movement in the trajectory of the vlogging career (see Figure 1). Interviewee 5 expressed his frustration over similar content, stating:

"…sometimes I feel down, demotivated because the popularity of short-form content has changed the way we were used to create content. …Many vloggers now focus mainly on income."

In addition, the rapid expansion of short-form content intensified perceptions of market saturation and increased concerns regarding authenticity and creative value. Emphasising this point, Interviewee 8 argued that: "Many content creators share almost the same content as mine. …I don't think they do any research." Moreover, audience fragmentation and a declining trend in financial returns are also gradually weakening vloggers' motivation. Interviewee 9 highlighted this issue, stating, "Our viewers are becoming divided. Our content is now less valued. We are trying our best, but Facebook returns have almost fallen to zero." Taken together, these findings suggest the present challenges to the long-term sustainability of professional travel vlogging.

4.4 Tourist and Travel Vlogger: The Dual Role Integration

Travel vloggers operate within a complex intersection of identities as travellers and creators, where they need to compromise on autonomy, priorities, and enjoyment. While some vloggers achieve mutual interests and benefits, others still strive to balance when to act as a creator and when to leave the camera behind to experience a moment as a traveller. The findings reveal that travel vloggers continuously negotiate between experiential travel and professionalised content creation. Rather than performing both roles equally at all times, vloggers shift their priorities according to the purpose of the trip, audience expectations, sponsorship commitments, and personal travel interests. The extent of role integration therefore ranges from traveller-first practices, where content emerges from the travel experience, to creator-first practices, where travel is increasingly organised around content production and commercial obligations.

4.4.1 Priority Setting – Traveller or Creator First

Playing dual roles requires travel vloggers to prioritise one role over another. Which role is foregrounded and which is held back depends on the purpose of the trip, commitment to the audience, and personal aspirations. For several vloggers, being a traveller remains the priority, and content production appears as a natural by-product. As Interviewee 4 explained, "I mainly try to be travel-centred, and video creation comes after. It is not the other way round." Some vloggers, however, emphasise the interest of the audience and employ a content-centric approach that overshadows being a traveller. Travel becomes structured around storytelling, audience expectations, sponsorship, and production planning. Interviewee 8 explained: "My spontaneous and

adventurous travel has changed … now I have huge planning and budget regarding team members, production value, sponsorships, brand commitments, which clothes I will wear in which video, etc. I am bound to rules. The pleasure for others is my daily work." External obligations often determine each role of the travel vloggers. On a trip involving an external commitment, the travel vlogger prioritises the creator role. The video analysis supported this distinction: Video 5 framed the China trip around a flagship-phone launch event before presenting visits to several attractions in Beijing (see Appendix A).

4.4.2 Autonomy in Travelling and Content Creation

Qualitative evidence suggests that creative freedom was sometimes negotiated within the constraints of sponsorship dependence, brand collaboration, and economic need. Multiple vloggers claimed they were unable to turn down commercial offers or maintain complete control over their content due to financial pressures. When one's "bread and butter" relies on travel vlogging, creators sometimes have to accept projects they didn't necessarily want to do, said Interviewee 2. Participants also explained that sponsors intruded into the storytelling structure, scripts and product placement. Interviewee 5 described that some sponsors gave creators scripts to follow and told them what to sell. Similarly, Interviewees 7 and 16 reported that sponsor interference was too much and that they were unable to make content from their own preferences. Findings from the video analysis also support this. The commercial integration was quite visible in Videos 4 and 6, which promoted an online travel agency sponsorship. Similarly, in Video 26, the content covered a promotional message about discounted flight tickets (see Appendix A).

Nevertheless, some vloggers tried to strike a balance between their autonomy and collaboration with corporate sponsors. They did not stop sponsorship altogether, but strategically minimised the visibility of sponsors and retained some level of control over content integration. Interviewee 2 stated that too much exposure of the sponsor makes the videos "sponsor-centric," so he kept sponsor exposure to a minimum. Interviewee 10 explained that he built credibility and reputation over time. This enabled him to ask for greater creative freedom in partnerships with his sponsors. The more experienced vloggers were more likely to have autonomy because of their niche audience position and market value. Interviewee 11 explained that he would only take sponsors who have similar promotional ideas that match with his content. In a similar vein, Interviewee 8 stated that his niche positioning made it difficult for brands to replace him with a different creator. Other participants also envisioned autonomy as a form of ethical responsibility towards an audience. A few vloggers refused sponsorship offers which they believed were deceptive or unfair to their audience, indicating that autonomy was linked to authenticity, trustworthiness, and moral responsibility.

4.4.3 Balance of Travel Experience and Documentation

Balance, imbalance, and dilemma emerged as the dominant patterns where travel vloggers negotiate between travel enjoyment and content creation (Figure 2). Their

dual role perception ranges from incorporating ways of balancing experience to focusing only on content fulfilment and habitual attachment to the camera. Travel vlogging simultaneously enriches, constrains, and structures the travel experience. Some vloggers consciously separated filming time from experiential travel to ensure that content creation did not entirely lessen their enjoyment of the destination. This adaptive approach allows them to manage the challenge between being a content creator and being a traveller. This phenomenon was highlighted by Interviewee 10, who described his attempt to balance both roles, stating, "I schedule my tours in such a way that I make videos for a while and take a break to do experience in the place."

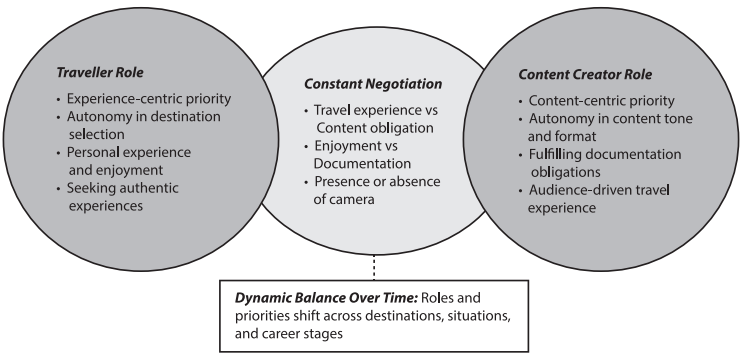

Figure 2: Travel Vlogger's Dual-Role Negotiation
Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on empirical findings of the study.

Nevertheless, some vloggers sacrificed travel experience to capture the perfect shot. On these occasions, the need for recording and capturing the scene surpassed vloggers' immediate experience. Interviewee 14 noted this, stating: "…during filming, my eyes stay on the controller of my drone, …on my camera. I need to focus on capturing moments; …experiencing the moment or the place first-hand becomes less important." These practices illustrate how travel gradually becomes reorganised around production logic. Here, the act of documentation competes with the immediacy of lived experience. In addition, for several vloggers, prolonged attachment to content creation gradually reshaped how they experienced travel. Interviewee 7 expressed, "I am in such a situation where I feel that I can no longer fully enjoy a beautiful view, unless there is a camera with me." These findings indicate that travel vlogging not only mediates destination representation but also transforms how vloggers themselves emotionally experience mobility, memory, and presence during their travels.

5. DISCUSSION

This study identified the intrinsic motivations of Bangladeshi travel vloggers, consisting of personal passion, hobbies, memory preservation, and social advocacy. Self-fulfilment and hedonism persuaded travel vloggers to start travel vlogging. This aligns with what Deci and Ryan (2000) explained regarding how intrinsically motivated behaviour emerges from individuals' inherent curiosity and exploration,

which provide satisfaction and pleasure rather than arising from external incentives and pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2020). An (2019) also concluded that the ultimate intrinsic motivation in creative work is maintaining enjoyment rather than economic and viewership aspects. The creative fulfilment and satisfaction in filming, sharing travel details, and inspiring and entertaining others are internal motivations of travel vloggers that drive them to continue travel vlogging. This is consistent with the observation of Septiari and Omar (2022) that intrinsic motivation encourages sharing travel experiences on social media.

Income generation and career opportunities are extrinsic motivations that led travel vloggers to pursue vlogging as a profession and sustain it, particularly due to limited opportunities and flexibility in traditional employment. This echoes the study of Törhönen et al. (2020), who observed the strong presence of commercialised and professionalised attributes in video content creation, where income and prestige are extrinsic motivations for content creators. Views, recognition, monetisation, financial rewards, and sponsorship act as reinforcements of motivation for sustaining their content creation. These validate their efforts and provide the necessary support to upgrade their content production and travel to various destinations. Previous research also highlighted that monetary outcomes, visibility, and viewers' validation are crucial extrinsic cues in shaping content creation behaviour (Poch & Martin, 2014; Le, 2023).

The findings of this study reveal that motivational reinforcement among travel vloggers is equivocal. In some cases, the intrinsic beginnings of passion and storytelling move to more extrinsically motivated practices through financial incentives and audience validation. Besides, extrinsic feedback reinforces intrinsic drives as it becomes integrated into their internal motivational structures. Yet, these extrinsic rewards remain secondary for some vloggers, as self-expression and inspiring others remain important sources of motivation for content production. Ryan and Deci (2017) denoted such an outcome as identified regulation within self-determination theory, where external rewards are internalised in a meaningful way. Also, harmonising external incentives with internal values is consistent with the integrated regulation aspect of self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2017). Thus, the sustainability of the creator's intrinsic motivation depends on external validation that is relevant to their internal goals (Poch & Martin, 2014). Rather than functioning as entirely separate categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations continuously interact and reshape one another throughout the vlogging career trajectory. These motivational changes are also reflected in how vloggers negotiate their dual roles as travellers and content creators. For some vloggers, as audience validation, financial returns, and sponsorship become more important, the content-creator role becomes more prominent, with travel increasingly organised around production planning, audience expectations, and commercial commitments. In contrast, where enjoyment, self-expression, and personal travel experience remain central, vloggers make greater efforts to preserve the traveller role by balancing or separating content production from the experience of travel. Thus, changes in motivation not only influence why vloggers continue

creating content, but also shape which role is prioritised at different stages of their vlogging careers.

This connection becomes particularly visible where sponsorship and brand collaboration are empowering for some vloggers, while others find them restrictive due to financial dependency, thus impacting the autonomy of travel vloggers. Such conflict emerges from professional obligations and the need to fulfil the demands of brands and sponsors. Therefore, extrinsic motivational factors are sometimes internalised at the expense of autonomy. Such factors undermine intrinsic interest and make rewards conditional upon external commercial expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Deci and Ryan (1985) referred to this as the over justification effect, where individuals get extrinsic rewards for actions that are driven by internal motivation, which can compromise their autonomy. Sundet et al. (2025) also noted that influencers' autonomy is restricted by complex factors such as algorithmic pressure and economic engagement, which shift influencer–marketer relationships towards control before rather than collaboration and hinder content creators from presenting themselves authentically (Broască et al., 2024). This reflects the challenge in which travel vloggers must continuously negotiate creative freedom against economic survival and platform visibility.

Vloggers who achieve success and establish a distinct position in the travel vlogging arena can gain greater autonomy, even when vlogging is their sole profession and main source of income. This echoes Deci et al.'s (2017) argument that extrinsically motivated activities can also be autonomous when individuals understand their value and feel ownership and consequently perform better. Therefore, travel vloggers' autonomy should be understood in relation to brand alignment and mutual benefits. However, Campbell and Farrell (2020) contrasted this view and recommended that brands should provide guidelines to the influencers and control their creative freedom and autonomy. If such an approach does not align with macro vloggers, Gholamhosseinzadeh (2023) suggested that brands should work with micro vloggers with a lower budget and more control.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has explored intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers and the dual-role integration of travel vloggers as they perform multiple shifting roles. The present study particularly incorporated the perspective of established travel vloggers who have long been associated with travelling and travel vlogging. This helps to understand the focal motivations and motivational dynamics of travel vloggers over an extended period through the lens of self-determination theory. In doing so, the findings revealed that vlogging emerges through a dynamic interplay of intrinsic motivations such as passion for storytelling and destination representation, and extrinsic motivations such as income generation and career transition. The findings further revealed that travel vloggers constantly negotiate their roles as travellers and content creators to balance travel experience with professional obligations and attain autonomy. The findings of the study demonstrate how travel vloggers continuously

negotiate between authenticity, creative freedom, audience expectations, and commercial obligations throughout their career trajectories.

This study makes theoretical contributions by extending the application of self-determination theory to the digital tourism vlogging sphere by providing a deeper understanding of vloggers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and the extent to which they attain autonomy. The study advances the tourism and influencer literature by demonstrating that early intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are reinforced by audience engagement, recognition, and economic returns, which significantly reshape vlogging practices over time. The findings further suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not static categories but dynamically interact through online visibility, dependency on sponsors, validation through audiences, and professionalised content creation. It contributes to tourism scholarship by reframing travel vloggers as creative professionals who navigate market, institutional, and algorithmic pressures. Methodologically, the study combines in-depth interviews with qualitative video content analysis to examine motivational development and role negotiation.

Nonetheless, the study has practical and policy implications. This study will support tourism practitioners, brands, destination marketers, and researchers in understanding the perspectives of travel vloggers. The findings indicate that destination marketing organisations and tourism industry operators need to design autonomy-enhancing partnerships that help maintain authenticity, as excessive commercial obligations might hinder creative motivation. For example, destination marketers and brands could agree on key campaign objectives and disclosure requirements while allowing vloggers greater control over storytelling, content style, and the way sponsor messages are integrated into travel narratives. Collaborative content briefs rather than highly prescriptive scripts may also help preserve creative freedom and audience trust. Structured institutional support and collaboration frameworks for tourism promotion might be developed at the policy level.

However, this study was limited to a small sample size and the specific context of Bangladeshi travel vloggers. Thus, the generalisability of the findings might be limited. In addition, the changes in motivation across the vlogging career were reconstructed from participants' retrospective accounts rather than observed through a longitudinal study. Therefore, these accounts may reflect participants' current interpretations of their earlier motivations and experiences. The study also did not quantify financial outcomes such as vlogging income, sponsorship revenue, or platform monetisation. Future research could examine how these financial outcomes are associated with vloggers' autonomy and dual-role negotiation. Future research could use the findings of this study as a basis for international and cross-cultural comparison. Longitudinal research could also examine motivational changes as they occur across different stages of a vlogging career. Additional research on algorithmic impact, creator burnout, and sustainable digital careers in tourism would further enlighten scholars on the changing creator economy and tourism industry.

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Appendix A: Qualitative Evidence Supporting Findings

Sub-theme	Illustrative Evidence	Analytic Note
Passion for Travel Documentation, Storytelling, and Memory Preservation	"I create content as a serious hobby. I don't consider myself as a full-time travel vlogger yet. …whenever I travel, I make vlogs." "I lost rare videos and pictures from my hard drive… Then I started looking for a secure place and discovered that, YouTube videos could be saved in public mode. So, I started uploading videos on YouTube."	This highlights how vlogging simultaneously happens from a personal hobby and how uploading videos on YouTube emerged from the practical need to preserve personal memories from being lost. This pattern was also visible across the video corpus, where travel experiences were documented and organised as personal and destination-based narratives (see Appendix B).
Motivational Reinforcements: Monetary Aspects and Audience Validation	"When you are making content, you will definitely think about the views of your video." "It is an economic equation of demand and supply. You can indeed make content from your passion, …but as I started working professionally as a vlogger, I had to think about the reality of the financial aspect." "I upload the video only after I am satisfied. Whether the audience watches my video much or not, it doesn't matter."	Participants discussed the importance of financial gain and viewers' validation in reinforcing their motivation. For some vloggers, viewership and financial considerations gradually become unavoidable within professionalised content production, whereas others rely more on self-satisfaction than on audience metrics. The varied audience reach of the 40 videos and the explicit promotional content in Videos 4, 6, and 26 further contextualised the role of audience and financial reinforcement (see Appendix B).
Temporal Journey of Motivation	"I used to roughly say information in the voiceover before; now I present it more appealingly with text on the screen, so that people can easily absorb it." Throughout Video 19, the vlogger combines structured voiceover, on-screen text and edited visual transitions to present destination information clearly.	The motivational focus shifted to renew their motivation to adapt to the changes and refine their content formats to ensure that their content remains relevant to the audience. Video 19 illustrates the more developed and visually engaging content practices described by the interviewee. Variation across the corpus provided contextual evidence of different content formats and destination coverage.

Appendix A (Cont.)		
Sub-theme	**Illustrative Evidence**	**Analytic Note**
Priority setting - Traveller or Creator First!	"There is no planning for content or anything. Just planning for a trip is a must. Automatically, content comes out because I take raw shots. So, first and foremost are people, culture, nature, and then vlogging." "I see the interest of people in the places first. Then I search if any content creators have already made any vlogs about those places or not, as it can impact the interest of the viewers to see repetitive places." (00:15-00:47) "A while ago, I visited China, mainly for the launch event of a flagship phone, which many of you have probably already seen in the video. Besides that, I explored quite a few places in China, especially some iconic spots in Beijing." (Video 5) (02:42-45:03) The video presents the trip as both a personal travel experience and a planned content-production activity. (Video 7)	Emphasising role prioritisation, few vloggers prioritise the traveller role, where content becomes naturally when encountering things at the destination. On the other hand, some vloggers prioritise their role of being content creators by strategically selecting destinations to maximise viewer engagement and avoid repetitive content. Video 5 demonstrates how a commercially initiated trip was subsequently incorporated into wider destination-based storytelling.
Autonomy in Travelling and Content Creation	"If the sponsor dictates the tone of the content, it might impact the outcome of their campaign, too… I can't do it from my heart either." (00:57-02:21) "But before we get into today's video, I want to mention something. Today's video is sponsored by (an OTA). You can plan your trip hassle-free and travel without limits with them." (Video 4 and 6) (0:16-0:28) "And guess what? I bought tickets for this trip from the (company name). If you book a domestic flight ticket from them, you will get up to 21% discount." (Video 26) "In previous videos, I had to say, 'special thanks to this brand for sponsoring this video.' But over time, when I started getting better, I kept telling my brands, 'Give me creative freedom, I will give you better outcomes.' Now the issue is solved." "I accept only those who don't restrict the content in the way I prepare … the content of the sponsors has to be aligned with my plan." "Sometimes, the things sponsor ask to add to the video are kind of unfair to the audience. Thus, I refuse to collaborate." (00:30-02:00) Sponsor branding and a promotional message are incorporated into the opening section of the travel narrative. (Video 39)	The evidence demonstrates restricted, negotiated and greater levels of autonomy. Videos 4, 6, 26, 39 illustrate how sponsorship disclosures and promotional messages are incorporated into travel narratives. Interviewees also described sponsor influence over tone, scripts and product placement. Reputation and audience acceptance empowered some vloggers to bargain, negotiate, and gain greater creative freedom. In contrast, some vloggers refused collaborations based on considerations of fairness and audience trust.

Appendix A (Cont.)		
Sub-theme	**Illustrative Evidence**	**Analytic Note**
Balance of Travel Experience and Documentation	"When I first go to a place, I look around and absorb everything… My mind settled on a good frame that I will use later." "I see the video as a responsibility. When the shoot is taking place, even if I laugh, that laugh is choreographed. But the time when I actually enjoy, I don't take the camera at all. At that moment, I enjoy myself as I am." "If I go to shoot somewhere, I get more serious about the video because I have a lot of thoughts in my head… It happened a lot that when editing the video, I realized I was in such a beautiful place. But I couldn't enjoy it fully." "If I go to any place without vlogging, I can enjoy it to the fullest. Yet, I regret not capturing it and showing it to the people. But when I frame and capture it, I feel the exact opposite." (01:42–02:05) The vlogger repeatedly positioned and retook the same destination shot before continuing the journey. (Video 18)	A mindful balancing approach of vloggers is experiencing the destination first and then framing content more meaningfully. Yet, among some vloggers, each continuum lies at the opposite edge where performance as a creator and enjoyment as a traveller never intersect, thus the dual role never co-exists. In the case of several vloggers, an absolute conflict between the dual roles shows a trade-off between capturing the momentum and enjoying it. Additionally, between balance and imbalance of travel experience, there lies a recurring dilemma about the presence or absence of camera that becomes inseparable from the travel experience of the vloggers. Video 18 further illustrates how seeking and repeating a suitable shot can interrupt and structure the travel experience. The presence or absence of the camera therefore creates a recurring dilemma between recording and experiencing the moment.
Destination Representation and Information Dissemination	"I feel that travelling and tourism is a human right. To make travel accessible, I present affordable travel through my videos so that middle-class people can find worthwhile deals" "Through my videos, a lot of people have started hitchhiking and couchsurfing when I promoted…." (02:12-3:37) The vlogger explains the destination itinerary while alternating between informational narration and cinematic footage. (Video 35) (12:18-33:11) On-screen text, maps, prices, or itinerary details are used to make the travel information more accessible to viewers. (Video 14)	The evidence illustrates how travel vloggers combine destination representation with practical information sharing. Visual storytelling, itinerary guidance, pricing information, and on-screen details make destinations more understandable and accessible to viewers.

Note. All 40 videos listed in Appendix B were reviewed as part of the qualitative content analysis. The video references presented in Appendix A are illustrative examples selected to contextualise and corroborate the interview-based themes rather than an exhaustive mapping of every video to each sub-theme.

Source: Authors' analysis based on interview and video data.

Appendix B: Characteristics, destinations, platforms, and audience reach of the selected travel videos

Video No.	Video Length	Destination	Number of Views	Number of likes	Platform
1	12.33	Nepal	44.6K	2.7K	YouTube
2	8.00	River side, Bangladesh	42.3K	1.2K	YouTube
3	10.19	North Bengal, Bangladesh	163K	6.4K	YouTube
4	20.20	Nepal	341K	11K	YouTube
5	15.45	China	46K	1.1K	YouTube
6	27.19	Switzerland	236K	4.0K	YouTube
7	47.47	Sundarban, Bangladesh	429K	6.6K	YouTube
8	42.18	Sajek, Bangladesh	151K	4.3K	YouTube
9	51.16	St. Martin, Bangladesh	100K	2.2K	YouTube
10	0.18	Bandarban, Bangladesh	3.2M	71K	Facebook
11	0.19	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	2.9M	132K	Instagram
12	0.25	Sunamganj, Bangladesh	128K	5.4K	Facebook
13	33.59	London	110K	2.2K	YouTube
14	39.08	Malaysia	179K	2.6K	YouTube
15	24.59	Sri Lanka	107K	2.3K	YouTube
16	1.23	Nepal	161K	6.2K	Facebook
17	0.53	Khulna, Bangladesh	1.2M	48K	Facebook
18	11.03	Bandarban, Bangladesh	38.3K	1.3K	YouTube
19	28.43	Turkey	600K	12K	YouTube
20	45.12	River side, Bangladesh	274K	4.6K	YouTube
21	23.49	Saudi Arabia	963K	10K	YouTube
22	1.11.11	Canada	267K	7.6K	YouTube

Appendix B (Cont.)					
Video No.	**Video Length**	**Destination**	**Number of Views**	**Number of likes**	**Platform**
23	36.36	Norway	283K	6.2K	YouTube
24	18.30	Italy	392K	7.2K	YouTube
25	22.03	Indonesia	28K	644	YouTube
26	25.38	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	32K	694	YouTube
27	11.19	Sundarban, Bangladesh	366K	5.2K	YouTube
28	6.44	Bhola, Bangladesh	599K	26K	Facebook
29	2.22	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	640K	40K	Instagram
30	2.21	Gazipur, Bangladesh	58.5K	2.1K	Instagram
31	55.28	Saudi Arabia	500K	8.4K	YouTube
32	22.47	Singapore	315K	4.3K	YouTube
33	25.18	Thailand	250K	4.5K	YouTube
34	33.42	Saudi Arabia	567K	9.2K	YouTube
35	8.12	Sonargaon, Dhaka	217K	3.1K	Facebook
36	12.05	Maldives	312K	12.9K	Facebook
37	19.48	Thailand	468K	15.6K	YouTube
38	42.08	Malaysia	212K	11.1K	YouTube
39	29.47	Sri Lanka	389K	7.2K	YouTube
40	8.55	Sylhet, Bangladesh	189K	4.1K	Facebook

Source: Authors' compilation from the selected travel-vlog sample.