A study on the monetization model of influencer traffic in the cultural tourism E-commerce industry

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Abstract: In the context of the digital economy, the integration of cultural and tourism e-commerce with influencer traffic has reshaped the cultural and tourism consumption ecosystem. However, the reality of "high traffic but low conversion rates" poses a significant constraint on industry development. This paper systematically explores the monetization pathways of influencer traffic in cultural tourism e-commerce through literature review and case analysis. By analyzing four core monetization models—content traffic, scenario traffic, IP traffic, and private domain traffic—it reveals the adaptability patterns of different models for entities such as scenic spots, homestays, and cultural creativity industries. Additionally, it proposes practical strategies to address the monetization challenges of influencer traffic, providing theoretical references for the digital transformation of cultural tourism enterprises.

Keywords: Cultural and tourism E-commerce, Digital marketing, Influencer traffic, Monetization models, Traffic conversion.

1. Introduction
The deep integration of cultural tourism, e-commerce, and the influencer economy has made traffic a key driver of cultural tourism consumption. Not only is traffic the link between supply and demand, but it has also become the core indicator for measuring the market competitiveness of cultural tourism entities. However, although the integration of cultural tourism e-commerce and the influencer economy has increased the value of traffic, problems such as low monetisation efficiency and insufficient sustainability have emerged. Although existing research has examined the mechanisms behind generating influencer traffic in the cultural tourism sector, a systematic analysis of complete monetisation pathways for such traffic remains lacking. This paper focuses on the cultural tourism e-commerce context, combining recent industry data and case studies to construct a framework for influencer traffic monetisation models. The paper analyses the applicable scenarios and practical challenges of these models, aiming to provide cultural tourism entities with feasible solutions for converting traffic value.

2. Research Background
The rapid evolution of digital technology is reshaping the cultural and tourism industry ecosystem. The widespread adoption of short video platforms and the growth of the influencer economy have changed not only how tourists access information, but also how they make decisions about cultural and tourism consumption. Traffic has become the core link connecting supply and demand. Against this backdrop, the deep integration of cultural and tourism e-commerce with the influencer economy has injected new vitality into the industry, while also giving rise to new challenges, such as improving traffic monetisation efficiency and ensuring sustainable operations. The practical significance of related research is becoming increasingly evident.

2.1. The inevitable Trend of Digital Transformation in the Cultural and Tourism Industry
Since 2020, the traditional cultural and tourism industry has been severely impacted by the ongoing effects of the global pandemic, prompting a digital transformation of the sector. In the Yangtze River Delta region, the digital economy has significantly improved the total factor productivity of the cultural and tourism industry through optimising factor allocation and technological penetration. The spatial spillover effect has driven the growth of regional cultural and tourism revenue by increasing the penetration rate of online services, and this

mechanism has promoted the continuous expansion of the scale of online cultural and tourism transactions (Tang, 2025).

2.2. Development Environment Driven by Policy and Technology Coordination

The government has introduced several "digital tourism" policies to help the industry transition. The 2024 'Guidelines on Promoting High-Quality Development of Tourism E-commerce' state that the aim is to 'turn traffic value into industry value'. In terms of technology, the algorithm recommendations of short video platforms have completely transformed the way tourism is promoted, making it much easier to gain a large following.

2.3. The Reconstructive Effect of Internet Celebrity Traffic on Cultural and Tourism Consumption

Travel and tourism influencers have become a key factor in people's travel decisions. According to data from the Douyin Travel and Tourism Ecosystem Research Institute, reported in the Journal of Tourism Studies, the total number of followers of travel and tourism accounts on the platform increased from 250 million to 1 billion between 2020 and 2024. Content featuring local cultural symbols, such as intangible cultural heritage crafts and regional cuisine preparation, had an interaction rate 42% higher than ordinary sightseeing videos. The aggregation effect of influencer traffic has led to significant economic conversion. For instance, Litang County in Sichuan Province saw its total tourism revenue reach 368 million yuan in 2021 — a 270% increase from 2020 — after the "Ding Zhen IP" went viral in 2020. This growth continued at a rate of 120% in 2023 (Litang County Tourism Bureau Annual Report, 2021–2023).

However, behind the surge in traffic lies a hidden concern. According to a 2024 survey of the Yangtze River Delta cultural and tourism market by China Tourism News, around half of the region's most popular tourist attractions experienced a sharp decline in visitor numbers of over 50% within three months of reaching peak traffic. The main reason for this is the disconnect between content marketing and service experience: 62% of tourists reported a significant discrepancy between their actual experience and promotional videos. This 'high exposure–low conversion' dilemma is particularly pronounced in smaller tourist attractions, highlighting the absence of a sustainable traffic management mechanism.

2.4. Realistic bottlenecks and breakthrough needs for traffic monetization

The experiential nature of cultural and tourism consumption requires that traffic monetization must complete a closed loop from attracting attention to fulfilling services, while most influencer marketing currently remains stuck at the former stage (Tang, Wang, & Peng, 2025). A special document issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2024 specifically pointed out the need to establish a mechanism to match influencer traffic with the quality of offline services, providing a clear research direction for exploring monetization models suitable for cultural and tourism scenarios.

3. Literature Review

With the deep penetration of cultural tourism, e-commerce, and the influencer economy, the monetisation of traffic has become a focal issue of common concern among academia and industry. This literature review will systematically organise relevant research findings from both domestic and international sources, clarify core concepts and theoretical frameworks, summarise the breakthroughs and limitations of existing research, and lay the groundwork for developing a more practical theoretical framework for traffic monetisation.

3.1. Cultural and Tourism E-commerce

As a result of the deep integration of the tourism industry and the digital economy, the scope of research into cultural and tourism e-commerce continues to expand alongside technological advancements. At its core, cultural and tourism e-commerce involves the online organisation of tourism elements through digital technology, encompassing fundamental functions such as ticket booking and hotel reservation (Li & Yang, 2025). This definition highlights the role of e-commerce in optimising traditional cultural and tourism supply chains. Other studies have further upgraded this concept to a 'data-assetized cultural and tourism ecosystem', highlighting that when cultural and tourism resources are transformed into tradable data elements, such as tourist flow heat maps and visitor preference tags, e-commerce platforms evolve from intermediaries of transactions into entities that create value.

Empirical research indicates that big data user profiling can enhance the accuracy of cultural and tourism product recommendations at the technology-driven level. However, algorithmic bias may lead to cultural symbols

being flattened, such as overemphasising popular tourist spots while neglecting niche cultural heritage (Lyu & Wang, 2025). At the behavioural level, cultural and tourism e-commerce users prioritise cultural cognitive value, hedonic emotional value and functional value in that order. Consequently, platforms such as Ctrip have recently introduced "Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience Booking" sections.

3.2. Influencer Traffic

Influencer traffic in the cultural and tourism sector is not just an aggregation of attention; it is a unique form of traffic that is closely linked to regional culture and experiential settings. The core characteristic of traffic generated by cultural and tourism influencers lies in the emotional dissemination of cultural symbols. Unlike ordinary e-commerce traffic, which relies more on 'product functionality demonstrations', cultural and tourism influencer traffic requires the construction of local imagery to facilitate the transition from 'page views' to 'travel decisions' (Wang & Jin, 2025).

In terms of traffic generation mechanisms, Douyin's 'interest tag' algorithm prioritises the promotion of two types of tourism content: First, visually striking 'spectacle-type' videos and second, emotionally resonant 'narrative-type' content. User-driven sharing behaviour exhibits distinct community-based characteristics: the post-1990 generation tends to spread traffic through secondary creation, such as dubbing and reinterpreting viral videos, while the post-1960 generation prefers direct sharing. In terms of value assessment, traditional metrics such as follower and view count are being challenged. Zibo barbecue is a case in point: although it experienced a traffic peak in April 2023, the customer retention rate dropped to 11% six months later due to insufficient cultural alignment and weak connections between barbecue and local culture (Wang & Yang, 2025). Research on the impact shows a clear dichotomy. On the positive side, traffic exposure can increase brand awareness of county-level cultural and tourism enterprises by over 50%. However, negative effects are concentrated in traffic overload and cultural distortion, with overly commercialised traffic operations leading to the alienation of cultural symbols.

The current focus of research is on traffic sustainability. Many small and medium-sized cultural and tourism destinations lack the capability to operate long term and often experience a sharp decline in visitor numbers after a period of rapid growth due to a lack of content. Therefore, it is crucial to find ways to generate long-term revenue from traffic.

3.3. Digital Marketing

In the cultural tourism sector, digital marketing has moved beyond the traditional one-way communication model of advertising to create a closed-loop ecosystem of 'content production–user interaction–consumer conversion'. The core feature of this model is the synergy between cultural narratives and technological tools. Unlike the functional marketing of ordinary commodities, successful digital marketing in the cultural tourism sector must simultaneously ensure the accurate transmission of cultural symbols and create an immersive user experience.

3.3.1. Live Streaming Marketing

The alignment of 'people, goods, and venues' has become a popular research topic. Analysis of data from live streams in multiple scenic areas revealed that hosts' cultural interpretation skills are more effective in boosting conversion rates than their physical appearance. Hosts with tour guide qualifications achieved significantly higher sales conversion rates than entertainment-focused hosts (Zhong, 2025). The presentation of 'products' should emphasise experiential elements. For instance, the Palace Museum has adopted a combination of 'cultural relic restoration live streaming and virtual tour reservations', thereby increasing the reservation rate for cultural and creative products (Zhang, 2023).

3.3.2. Short Video Narrative

The "three-layer narrative model" includes the surface layer (visual spectacles, such as terraced fields and sea of clouds), the middle layer (scenes of daily life, such as cooking in a farmhouse), and the deep layer (cultural values, such as rice-growing civilisation). Short videos that incorporate the three-layer narrative model have significantly higher user travel intentions than videos featuring a single spectacle, highlighting the importance of cultural expression. However, excessive entertainment can lead to cultural distortion, so it is important not to blindly pursue traffic.

3.3.3. Private Domain Traffic

Operating in the private domain significantly reduces customer acquisition costs by enabling the establishment of stable and close customer relationships. A comparison of the customer acquisition costs of public and private domains revealed that private domains can reach users directly, thereby reducing intermediate advertising costs. At the same time, private domain operations continuously optimise the user experience, enhance user loyalty and stickiness, and provide strong support for traffic monetisation. This is an important way for enterprises to achieve sustainable profit growth. As a key driver of traffic monetisation, private domain operations effectively optimise the user experience and improve traffic conversion efficiency through refined operations and in-depth user maintenance. In a highly competitive market environment, this approach helps businesses to identify new profit growth opportunities (Luo & Luo, 2018).

3.4. Monetization Model

The monetisation of traffic in the cultural and tourism sector has developed a system that is unique and distinct from physical e-commerce due to its experiential and service-oriented characteristics. Monetisation in this sector must transcend the simplistic logic of direct traffic conversion. It is important to emphasise that monetisation models must align with traffic attributes (e.g. content-driven or transaction-driven), product characteristics (e.g. standardised or customised) and user decision-making stages (e.g. awareness or purchase). High-quality monetisation models should avoid prioritising traffic at all costs and instead strive to achieve a balanced triangle of 'cultural heritage, user experience and commercial returns'.

3.4.1. Diverse Forms of Advertising Monetization

As the most basic method of monetisation, cultural and tourism advertising has evolved from hard placement to scene integration. Although scene-based advertising, which has emerged in recent years, has more advantages, excessive advertising can damage the credibility of the content.

3.4.2. Cultural and Tourism Characteristics of e-Commerce Product Promotion

The intangible nature of cultural and tourism products means that the logic behind selling them is significantly different from that of physical goods. Demonstrating the experiential nature of these products is key to overcoming conversion bottlenecks, and combination packages are more profitable than individual products. However, the problem of redeeming service-type products is particularly prominent due to the trust crisis caused by low-price traffic acquisition but reduced services.

3.4.3. Deep Mining of IP-Derived Value

The commercialisation of cultural and tourism intellectual properties (IPs) depends on the replicability of cultural symbols. The monetisation potential of virtual IPs is receiving increased attention. However, excessive commercialisation of IP can spark controversy, so care must be taken to ensure that it does not compromise cultural attributes (Hang & Huang, 2024).

3.4.4. Long-Term Monetization of Membership Services

Private membership systems in the digital domain achieve long-term value through emotional connections. For instance, a bed and breakfast in Dali has achieved a significantly higher repeat stay rate among members than non-members by offering exclusive cultural experiences to its members. However, membership services can be limited in scope, and small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises generally have low membership activity due to their limited capabilities.

3.5. Research Review

Existing research has mostly focused on individual aspects or universal patterns, failing to develop a comprehensive theory that considers "full chain integration, subject differences, technological frontiers and cultural sustainability". This study addresses these gaps by proposing a three-dimensional adaptation model to provide cultural and tourism enterprises with more practical guidance on monetisation.

Table 1.
Research review

Dimension	Existing research results	Research gaps	Solutions
Theoretical basis	1. The evolution of cultural tourism e-commerce: from online distribution to virtual-real integration. 2. The influencer traffic mechanism: a content-algorithm-user interaction model.	1. Lack of an integrated analysis of the entire "traffic-marketing-monetisation" chain. 2. Failure to establish a framework that links the four elements.	1. Create a three-dimensional coupling model of 'traffic characteristics, marketing methods and monetisation paths'. 2. Reveal the linkage mechanisms between the different links.
Differentiation of main subjects	1. Digital marketing scenario-based practices 2. Classification of monetisation models	1. Failure to consider the different needs of scenic spots, homestays, cultural and creative industries, and other entities. 2. Lack of targeted path design.	1. Break down monetisation models by entity type. 2. Propose differentiated adaptation strategies.
New forms of response	1. Preliminary exploration of the propagation effect of virtual IP addresses. 2. The impact of algorithms on traffic distribution.	1. There are no monetisation mechanisms involving virtual influencers or AIGC. 2. A disconnect between cutting-edge technology and monetisation practices.	1. Incorporate emerging technologies such as virtual IP and AIGC. 2. Build a monetisation path adapted to the technology.
Sustainability dimension	1. Traffic value assessment model 2. Research into the impact of cultural and tourism consumption.	1. There is a lack of assessment indicators for 'economic-cultural' balance. 2. Disconnect between short-term conversion and long-term sustainability.	1. Introducing the concept of a cultural sustainability assessment. 2. Establishing a triangular balance model of 'traffic, culture and revenue'.

4. Analysis of the Current Status, Issues, and Driving Factors of Influencer Traffic in the Cultural Tourism E-Commerce Sector

The digital revolution has driven the integration of cultural tourism, e-commerce and the influencer economy from niche innovation to core industry trend. As the key link connecting supply and demand, influencer traffic has significantly influenced the cultural tourism industry's development trajectory through its expansion in scale and evolution in form. Thoroughly analysing its current state, core contradictions and underlying driving logic is essential not only for understanding the dynamics of the current cultural tourism market, but also for breaking through the traffic bottleneck and promoting the industry's sustainable development.

4.1. Analysis of the Current Situation

From 2020 to 2025, the traffic generated by cultural and tourism influencers will increase significantly in both total volume and structural complexity. In terms of scale, short video platforms have become the primary carriers of this traffic. The traffic structure has diverged clearly: from a regional perspective, the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta regions accounted for over half of national cultural and tourism traffic (Tang, 2025) whereas underdeveloped western regions, despite having lower absolute traffic volumes, experienced significant growth rates. In terms of content, the proportion of visual spectacle-related content (e.g. snow-capped mountains and waterfalls) has fallen by over half between 2020 and 2025, while the proportion of content related to cultural experiences (e.g. folk festivals and traditional crafts) has increased significantly. This shift reflects an evolution in user demand, moving from superficial, check-in-style consumption to deeper, experiential engagement (Yuan & Shen, 2024).

4.2. Problem Analysis

Amid the deep integration of cultural tourism, e-commerce and the influencer economy, the traffic dividend has created an illusion of industry prosperity. However, the structural contradictions behind this prosperity are gradually becoming apparent. These phenomena reflect the practical difficulties of monetising traffic and expose

misconceptions within the cultural tourism industry about the nature of traffic in the digital transformation process.

4.2.1. Disconnect between Traffic and Monetization

The contradiction between high exposure and low conversion rates is the main obstacle preventing the value of tourism influencer traffic from being realised. This disconnect manifests in two ways: firstly, there is insufficient short-term conversion, with many tourists abandoning their purchases due to a discrepancy between their expectations and the reality of their experience (Wang & Yang, 2025). Secondly, there is long-term value loss, as influencer-driven tourist attractions experience a sharp decline in visitor numbers once the initial "check-in craze" has died down. The deeper underlying cause is the mismatch between the characteristics of the traffic and the monetisation scenarios. Most tourism influencer traffic is attracted by single viral videos, and this type of traffic tends to be price-sensitive and lacks brand loyalty. However, the monetisation strategies of scenic spots often rely on high-value-added services, creating a mismatch between supply and demand (Lin et al., 2023).

4.2.2. Disconnect between Content and Products

The difference between the content of cultural tourism influencers and the actual products and services offered creates a cognitive gap. Most short videos focus on visual spectacles or entertaining performances, providing little description of cultural nuances or service details. This distortion of content directly affects consumer decision-making, and departmental barriers between content production and product operations exacerbate the issue. In small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises, 80% of content creation is carried out independently by the marketing department, with no collaboration from the operations or service departments (Wang, 2024).

4.2.3. The Sustainability Crisis

Operating models that rely on short-term traffic dividends find it difficult to achieve long-term growth and exhibit short-cycle characteristics. Their lack of sustainability stems from insufficient content innovation and superficial cultural exploration. Influencer-driven cultural tourism content is severely homogenised: over half of ancient town videos feature elements such as milk tea shops endorsed by influencers and lantern streets, while over 80% of rural tourism videos use the same background music and template copy. This 'replicable traffic' lacks vitality, and the high barriers to producing content that delves deeply into culture further undermine sustainability (Cai, Wan, & Li, 2024).

4.2.4. Lack of Standardization

There is no unified assessment system in place for monetising the traffic generated by popular cultural and tourism influencers. Industry practices still rely primarily on basic data, such as view counts and fan growth. This focus on traffic alone often results in the misallocation of resources.

4.3. Motivational Analysis

The explosive growth in traffic generated by popular online travel and tourism influencers, and the issues that have arisen as a result, are essentially the product of several factors, including technological innovation, policy guidance, changes in consumer habits, and market competition. While these forces have laid the foundation for the development of the traffic ecosystem, they also conceal the logic behind the emergence of contradictions.

4.3.1. Underlying Drivers of Technological Iteration

Breakthrough developments in digital technology have provided core support for generating and monetising influencer traffic. Algorithm-based recommendation mechanisms have changed the way cultural and tourism information is shared, while immersive technologies such as VR/AR have expanded the ways in which traffic can be used (Li & Yang, 2025). However, technology has a significant double-edged sword effect: on the one hand, AI tools have lowered the barriers to content production, leading to a proliferation of homogeneous content; on the other hand, the pursuit of viral content by algorithms has led to data silos, with many users reporting that they 'receive the same type of cultural and tourism information in the long term, neglecting niche destinations'. This technology-driven traffic distribution mechanism exacerbates the Matthew effect of 'top-heavy concentration and bottom-heavy stagnation' (He & Wang, 2025).

4.3.2. Policy Guidance Shaping Direction

National-level digital economy policies provide an institutional framework for the cultural tourism ecosystem. In January 2024, the National Data Bureau and 16 other departments jointly issued the 'Three-Year Action Plan for Data Element × (2024–2026)', which explicitly lists 'cultural tourism' as one of 12 key areas. The plan proposes the promotion of the legal trading and circulation of cultural data resources, such as cultural relics and intangible cultural heritage. This directly facilitates the inclusion of elements such as scenic spot visitor data and cultural IP in market transactions. These policies have driven a significant increase in digital investment across the industry. In some pilot regions (such as Wuxi Xishan District) and leading cultural tourism enterprises, the growth rate of digital investment has exceeded 40%, while the national average growth rate for the cultural tourism industry is 25–30%.

Policy-driven initiatives also carry risks. Some regions, in pursuit of performance metrics driven by traffic, have incorporated the number of influencer check-in spots and video view counts into their evaluation criteria. This has led to tourist attractions catering too heavily to algorithmic preferences. This phenomenon, whereby policy guidance triggers anxiety about traffic and distorted behaviour, has become a significant factor in the disconnect between content and culture.

4.3.3. Demand Driven by Consumption Upgrades

The shift in tourist demand from sightseeing to experiences has led to changes in cultural and tourism trends. Young people account for the majority of cultural and tourism influencer traffic. Consumer demand has driven the evolution from check-in-style consumption to the co-creation of content. Over half of tourists born after 1990 actively film cultural and tourism videos and post them on social media platforms, prompting secondary consumption. However, this demand has also led to performative experiences, whereby many tourists engage in activities solely for the purpose of filming videos, paying no attention to cultural significance. This exacerbates the divergence between traffic and value (Zhang & Xia, 2024).

4.3.4. Survival Pressure from Market Competition

Homogeneous competition in the cultural and tourism industry has forced companies to shift their focus to growing visitor numbers. According to publicly available data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, as well as industry monitoring reports, the national cultural and tourism scenic spot market exhibits the characteristic of 'faster expansion in the number of scenic spots than growth in visitor numbers' from 2020 to 2025. If we use a broad definition of scenic spots that includes A-rated spots, rural tourism sites and theme parks, the total number of spots nationwide will increase by around 35% between 2020 and 2025 (with non-A-rated leisure spots accounting for 62% of this increase). Meanwhile, the growth rate of domestic tourists is around 18% over the same period, which is slightly lower than the increase in attractions. This 'too many cooks, not enough soup' situation has led many small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises to prioritise influencer marketing as a core strategy. This competitive pressure has resulted in a 'traffic bottleneck', whereby enterprises are forced to invest more resources in pursuing short-term viral hits, while small and medium-sized entities constrained by limited funds fall into a vicious cycle of acquiring traffic at low prices. This ultimately leads to dependency on traffic, causing a decline in quality and a collapse in reputation (Guo et al., 2024).

5. Monetisation Models for Influencer Traffic in the Cultural Tourism e-Commerce Sector

In an industry ecosystem where cultural tourism, e-commerce, and the influencer economy are deeply intertwined, the traffic monetisation model serves as the core hub connecting user attention and commercial value. It is also the key to overcoming the challenge of achieving high exposure while maintaining high conversion rates. Influencer traffic has evolved from a marketing tool to a core element of value creation within the industry, with monetisation efficiency determining market competitiveness.

5.1. Monetization Model Based on "Content Traffic"

Content-driven monetisation relies on the emotional appeal of high-quality cultural and tourism content to facilitate the transition from content promotion to consumption. The key lies in the organic integration of cultural narratives and commercial information. The efficiency with which cultural and tourism content is converted for commercial purposes is positively correlated with its cultural authenticity. However, excessive commercialisation will reduce the conversion rate.

The operational mechanism takes the form of a 'three-layer penetration' approach: the surface layer builds trust through in-depth experience videos created by influencers; the middle layer reinforces intent through interactive content combining 'key points + consumption guidance'; and the deep layer fosters word-of-mouth virality through 'user-generated content co-creation' (Chen, 2025). Chen (2025). Typical cases demonstrate that different content formats are suited to different conversion scenarios: short videos are effective at driving traffic to low-priced products, whereas long-form, documentary-style vlogs are better at promoting high-value consumption (Chen, 2025; Zhang & Xia, 2024). Zhang and Xia (2024). This model is particularly well-suited to small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises, especially those lacking a strong online presence, such as workshops showcasing intangible cultural heritage and niche tourist attractions. However, attention must be paid to the frequency of content updates.

5.2. Monetization Model based on "Scenario Traffic"

Scene-integrated monetisation leverages the synergistic empowerment of 'online virtual scenes and offline physical experiences' to overcome the spatial and temporal limitations of traffic conversion. The core concept is the "extension and reconstruction of scene experiences through digital technology". This technology primarily relies on VR/AR and digital twin technologies. Online virtual tours allow users to preview scenic routes, forming a closed-loop process of 'online planning – offline experience – online sharing' (Liao, Yu, & Lin, 2025). Practical outcomes exhibit significant differences in scale. Large-scale scenic areas, with stronger technical investment capabilities, achieve higher conversion rates through scene integration. In contrast, smaller areas, which are constrained by costs, often adopt lightweight solutions, such as WeChat Mini Program virtual check-ins, which result in lower conversion rates.

This model is particularly well-suited to themed attractions and cultural tourism complexes, especially historical and cultural destinations, as well as science fiction experience destinations. However, caution should be exercised against a tendency towards 'technical showmanship'. Most visitors prioritise cultural content over technical form, so overreliance on VR could result in a superficial experience.

5.3. Monetization Model based on "IP Traffic"

IP-derived monetisation involves extracting the core cultural symbols of cultural and tourism resources, developing diverse derivative products and achieving the economies of scale of 'one-time creation, multiple monetisation'. The key lies in personifying IP and binding user emotions. Mature IP must go through three stages: symbol extraction, product implementation and building a user community. Monetisation methods for each stage should differ (Wang & Jin, 2025). IP development paths can be categorised into three types: physical derivatives, digital derivatives, and cross-industry collaborations. However, the excessive commercialisation of IP can undermine its cultural value.

This model is suitable for destinations with a rich cultural heritage and unique natural landscapes. Nevertheless, smaller cultural and tourism entities should focus on IP lightweighting, beginning with regional specialty products or folk tales, in order to reduce development costs.

5.4. Monetization Model Based on "Private Domain Traffic"

Monetisation in the private domain is achieved by building a traffic pool that connects businesses directly with users, using refined services to increase repurchase rates. The core of this strategy lies in 'emotional maintenance and value stratification'. Operational strategies follow a tiered progression principle: entry-level content is used to attract users to join groups, intermediate-level content provides exclusive benefits to paid members, and advanced-level content offers customised services to high-net-worth users. Tool selection should be proportionate to the size of the organisation. Large enterprises can develop dedicated apps, whereas small and medium-sized entities can use the WeChat ecosystem (communities and mini-programmes) to significantly reduce costs. However, private domain operations face human resource barriers. Most small and micro cultural tourism enterprises lack dedicated operational staff, resulting in low levels of member activity (Cheng & Zhou, 2018).

5.5. Mode Comparison and Compatibility Analysis

The suitability of different monetisation models varies significantly. Content-driven models are generally suitable for small and medium-sized entities with weak traffic foundations. Scenario-integrated models are suitable for attractions with strong technical investment capabilities. IP-derived models depend on cultural resource

endowments. Private domain accumulation models are a long-term choice for all entities. Successful monetisation practices often combine multiple models.

Table 2.
Pattern comparison and analysis.

Monetization model	Core Strengths	Typical matching subjects	Critical success factors
Content-driven	Low cost, high trust	Intangible cultural heritage workshops, niche tourist attractions	Cultural narrative power, update frequency
Scene-integrated	Powerful experience, short path	Themed attractions, complexes	Technical fidelity, consistency between reality and virtuality
IP derivative	High premium, long cycle	Cultural heritage sites, specialty products	IP recognition, commercialization control
Private domain accumulation type	High stickiness, high repurchase rate	Guesthouse, hot spring resort	Refined operations, differentiated rights

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

With the deep integration of digital technology and cultural and tourism consumption, the monetization of influencer traffic is gradually undergoing a transformation and upgrade. This section will summarize the core conclusions of the research and propose targeted recommendations based on industry needs, aiming to establish a feasible bridge between theoretical frameworks and industrial practices, and provide directional guidance for addressing the challenges of traffic monetization.

6.1. Conclusion

This study systematically analyses the operational logic and adaptability patterns of monetisation models, reviewing the theoretical evolution and current state of practice of influencer traffic in the cultural tourism e-commerce sector.

Firstly, effective monetisation of influencer traffic in this sector must be based on the synergistic integration of 'content-scenario-IP'. A model that relies solely on traffic scale is not sustainable. The experiential nature of cultural tourism consumption means that traffic conversion must go beyond simple 'click-to-purchase' logic, incorporating deep design elements that embed cultural perception and immersive scenarios instead.

Secondly, existing monetisation models can be divided into four clear categories: content traffic, scenario traffic, IP traffic and private domain traffic. The suitability of these models is highly correlated with the resource endowments of cultural and tourism entities. Specifically: The content traffic model is suitable for entities such as intangible cultural heritage workshops and niche tourist attractions lacking strong visual resources. It leverages in-depth cultural narratives to break down cognitive barriers. The scenario traffic model is better suited to tourist attractions and cultural tourism complexes. It uses VR/AR technology to create a "virtual preview–physical consumption" closed loop. The IP traffic model is most effective for cultural and creative brands and cultural heritage sites. The private domain traffic model is suitable for entities such as homestays and hot spring hotels operating in repeat purchase scenarios. Entities should select these four models based on their own resources, avoiding blind replication.

Thirdly, the main issue with monetising traffic from popular cultural and tourism websites is the disconnect between traffic, products and experiences. Strengthening the contextual matching of content and cultural and tourism services is the key to solving this problem. Conversely, if the content description matches the actual service well, user satisfaction will increase too, proving that contextual matching is crucial for conversion.

Fourthly, technological innovation and policy guidance are important external drivers of the evolution of monetisation models, with emerging forms set to reshape the traffic ecosystem in future. Technologically, AI content generation and big data user profiling have enormous potential. In terms of policy, local governments' 'traffic cultivation plans' have led to a significant increase in cultural and tourism traffic at county level. Looking ahead, virtual influencers and AI-customised marketing will become mainstream, driving monetisation models to transform from standardised push notifications to personalised co-creation.

Fifthly, sustainable monetisation requires a mechanism that balances short-term traffic conversion with long-term user operations, and initial customer acquisition with long-term value extraction. While influencer content can quickly attract initial traffic in the short term, in the long term it is necessary to rely on private domain

operations and IP accumulation. Combining short-term and long-term strategies not only solves the problem of declining traffic, but also generates secondary dissemination through user word-of-mouth, continuously releasing monetisation efficiency.

In summary, monetising traffic from cultural and tourism e-commerce influencers is not simply a case of converting "traffic to revenue", but rather involves a systematic synergy of cultural value, user experience, commercial logic and technical capabilities. The long-term release of traffic value can only be achieved by focusing on the 'experiential nature' of culture and tourism, accurately matching models with core resources, and bridging the gap between content and services.

6.2. Recommendations

Firstly, a dynamic 'traffic-product' matching mechanism should be established to address conversion gaps. To address the current mismatch between traffic attributes and conversion scenarios, it is recommended that an intelligent matching system is established, based on big data tools that can categorise and label traffic. Additionally, user profiling can be employed to predict demand. Third-party tools can be integrated for small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises to lower the technical application threshold.

Secondly, strengthen the symbiotic creation of 'content-culture' to avoid value distortion. To address issues such as exaggerated content and cultural disconnect, a cultural authenticity review mechanism should be implemented. Furthermore, cultural protection clauses could be introduced to clarify the retention of cultural symbols in IP derivative products, thereby mitigating commercialisation risks effectively.

Thirdly, the empowerment system for small and medium-sized entities should be improved to alleviate capability imbalances. To address the operational shortcomings of small and medium-sized cultural and tourism enterprises, a three-dimensional support network comprising 'policy-platform-community' is recommended. At the policy level, a special fund should be established to subsidise content creation. At the platform level, platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu should be encouraged to open template-based editing and data monitoring functions to lower the barriers to creation. At the community level, regional cultural and tourism alliances should be encouraged to form, and small and medium-sized entities should relate to professional institutions. Revenue should be shared based on monetisation outcomes to reduce collaboration risks.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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