


Chapter 4

Social Media Platforms in Promoting Island Tourism Destination: A Netnography Approach

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ABSTRACT

Social media has an important role in marketing a destination as it can assist in both demand and supply. Social media in tourism supports providing search information about a destination, and the decision-making among the stakeholders. Leverage of social media for marketing tourism products along with sustainability is stated to be an excellent strategy. The current study is conducted by obtaining data from social media sites about the reviews of the customer's thought process on the island tourist destination. The findings from the study will help policymakers make appropriate decisions while marketing an island tourism destination.

INTRODUCTION

A tourism destination has a natural entity that displays unique conditions and properties. Tourists before visiting a destination develop an image either through previous experience, word of mouth, press reports, or advertisement (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997) and form a mental picture of the destination (Kavoura & Bitsani, 2013). A consumer has a large selection of destinations to choose from but less time

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to make a buying decision. With the development of information and communication technology and social media, the relationship between destinations and tourists has changed radically to make the destination open to an international market and attract foreign direct investment and economic growth (Sukunesan et al., 2020).

With the growth of digital communication channels currently social media has become a powerful tool for marketing and broadcasting information about tourist destinations. An island destination does have a unique natural beauty that provides cultural richness and is attractive to travelers who seek diverse experiences. For the global tourism industry island tourism has a significant role in the economic development of host regions along with cultural exchange between visitors and local communities. With the increasing dependence on digital media platforms for information social media currently has developed as a key for destination marketing.

The marketing of tourism destinations has been revolutionized by social media platforms which provide a dynamic space for sharing visual content including videos of locations, reviews, and recommendations that influence the perceptions and decisions. Past studies have stated that social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have considerably influenced travel preferences (Gretzel et al., 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2019). Low-cost marketing efforts have currently become a challenging task to make a destination attractive (Naciye & Adam, 2020) and sustainability is vital for a destination's overall image (Pahrudin, et al., 2022). The tourists contribute by promoting and making a destination sustainable through their behavior and the posts they put on social media (Pasquinelli, et al., 2021). Currently, social media platforms have an important role in destination marketing as they provide travelers with the prospect of sharing their experiences in real time (Khan, et al., 2022).

With the presence of social media, there is a revolution in destination marketing which offers a dynamic platform to engage travelers by showcasing unique offerings at a destination. The advent and accessibility of the Internet have brought about fundamental shifts in how travelers seek information, plan and book their trips, and share their travel experiences (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). A significant development in the Internet's evolution is the growing prevalence of social media platforms, which allow users to collaborate, communicate, and create original content like blogs, videos, wikis, reviews, or photos (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Social media sites, which facilitate consumer-generated content (CGC), are widely utilized by online travelers (Gretzel, 2006). CGC and review platforms such as Tripadvisor.com are widespread and may even challenge the authority of traditional destination marketing organizations (DMOs) or conventional advertising methods (Gretzel, 2006; Gretzel et al., 2000). This research aims to investigate the extent to which marketing organizations for top international tourism destinations make use of social media.

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