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Chapter 77

Instagram Influencers in Social Media–Induced Tourism:
Rethinking Tourist Trust Towards Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT

Social media-induced tourism happens when a traveller visits a destination/attraction after being exposed to certain social media content. A user-generated content (UGC) provider, such as a social media influencer, has been identified as the initial motivator in social media-induced tourism. Social media influencers generate persuasive messages for their followers and are typically sources of credibility. In destination marketing and tourism destination studies, the UGC of social media influencers is significantly related to the destination image, destination brand, tourist trust, and tourist expectations. Of particular interest for Instagram influencers, this chapter proposes a conceptual framework to describe the role of the Instagram influencer in inducing his/her followers to travel and suggests a guide for future research.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Web 2.0 has made social media a powerful tool in shaping everyday life. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 is a platform where content and application are no longer for specific individuals but shared by each and every internet user in a collaborative manner. Web 2.0 is also defined as a phase for social media expansion where the public can interact and contribute to each other

by sharing, creating, communicating, and modifying user-generated content (UGC) that is posted online. Social media examples include Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Modern technology has helped the social media platform to become easily accessible by portable gadgets such as smartphones and tablets (Silver, Smith, Johnson, Jiang, Anderson & Rainie, 2019).

Media-induced tourism is not a new concept (e.g. movie-induced, TV-induced); however, tourism caused by social media seems more unpredictable and substantial (Shin & Xiang, 2019). Social media-induced tourism has occurred originally when unpopular attractions that are least expected to become travel hotspot (Coffey, 2019). For instance, a few geotagged posts uploaded by social media influencers on Instagram has turned Delta Lake in Grand Teton National Park into a hotspot almost instantly (Holson, 2018). Adversely, the unexpected and overwhelming popularity of tourism destinations induced by social media has contributed to overtourism. The overtourism has lead in emerging issues of environment, social and economic such as environmental degradation, travellers exposed to risk due to lack of necessary infrastructure to handle the crowd, increase local tax for new infrastructure development, and temporarily or permanently closed of attractions (Hausold, 2019; Lowry, 2019; McLaughlin, 2019).

Social media influencers have always played a significant role in social media-induced tourism. They are the motivators for social media-induced tourism to happen. Social media influencers are online personalities with large numbers of followers across one or more social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, or personal blogs) that influence their followers (Agrawal, 2016; Varsamis, 2018). The well-known figures in traditional media are celebrities or public figures. In contrast, social media influencers are "regular people" who have become "online celebrities" by creating and posting content on social media. They generally have some expertise in specific areas, such as healthy living, travel, food, lifestyle, beauty, or fashion. A recent Twitter's study indicated that followers give social media influencers the same degree of trust they have for their friends (Swant, 2016).

User-generated content (UGC) refers to online reviews, pictures, videos, and blogs that are uploaded in any virtual community or website (Bigne, Ruiz, & Curras-Perez, 2019). As content creators, social media influencers have a significant influence on others (Asquish, 2019). A study in influencer marketing suggested that the informative value of influencer-generated content, influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity to the followers positively affect followers' trust in influencers' branded posts, which subsequently influence brand awareness and purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In tourism, tourist expectations of market-generated and consumer-generated content are distinctly divided, with travellers increasingly turning to consumer-generated depictions and reviews, especially among contemporary young travellers (Tourism Research Australia, 2017). The co-creation of tourism information on social media is part of the prioritisation of the genuine, with photographs and information shared by fellow tourists seen as more trustworthy than official campaigns (Kasriel-Alexander, 2017). This suggests that Instagram influencers have nothing to gain or lose by sharing their experiences and opinions, so there is a higher level of perceived reliability and authenticity. Being able to follow, like and comment on posts by their followers means that Instagram influencers can be perceived as friends rather than as travel marketers.

A recent survey found that 40% of contemporary young travellers responded by saying that they chose a travel location based on their "Instagrammability" (Hayhurst, 2017), their choice of travel destination based on whether it will provide enviable images to post on social media. Contemporary young travelers refers to the demographic that has been nicknamed 'millennials', born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). Instagram has 800 million monthly users worldwide, posting 52 million images per day, with 59 percent of users aged between 18 and 29 (Dogtiev, 2018). The intensity level of social interaction

within Instagram plays an increasingly important role in both official and informal destination marketing (Kibby, 2020).

Arguably, how social media-induced tourism happens to need to be differently explained from other media-induced tourism (Gretzel, 2019). Shin and Xiang (2019) have proposed a research question based on their social media-induced conceptual framework: Why influencers are influential in social media-induced tourism? Extending that notion, this chapter aims to explore the role of Instagram influencers in social media-induced tourism. Social media influencers from Instagram frame the discussion because the characteristics of influencers which give them influential power will vary depending on the context (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Exploring the potential roles of Instagram influencers in inducing tourism can provide meaningful insights into social media marketing strategies of tourism destinations (Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez, & Buhalis, 2018). Based on the expectation-disconfirmation model and social media influencer value model, we consider the potential roles of Instagram influencers in relations to tourist trust on destination image, tourist trust on destination brand, and tourist expectation on tourism destination.

TOURIST EXPECTATION ON TOURISM DESTINATIONS

The mechanism of consumer satisfaction is generally clarified by the concept of disconfirmation of expectations (Oliver, 1980). The expectation-disconfirmation model states that before buying a product or service, consumers expect to develop expectations. Subsequently, they compare actual performance with expectations. In the tourism context, tourists as consumers generally have initial expectations of the type and quality of services to be offered at a particular destination (Lorenzo, Avilés, & Centeno, 2010). Tourists may be satisfied if the expectations on tourists' destination are met. Expectations are considered to be criteria by which tourists measure the efficiency of providers (Meirovich & Little, 2013). Nowadays, social media and UGC allow tourists to share their experiences with each other in such a way that the contents later affect the travel perceptions of future travellers.

The process of tourist expectations revolves around two variables: information trust and social interaction of social media. Based on research from Narangajavana, Fiol, Tena, Artola and García (2017), tourist expectation progress covers a range of areas from social media usage behaviour to intensity of the usage. From that, the expectations will channel the motivation to accept the available UGC that has been shared by other users and influence the users' expectations toward the destination. Also, the online image from social media can trigger the tourist's expectations as beliefs, perceptions, or impressions held by the traveller concerning the tourist spot (Lian & Yu, 2019). In the same vein, Jamaludin, Aziz, Mariapan, Lim, and Lin noted that social media help tourists in travel planning and decision-making as positive reviews can lead to positive expectations and vice versa. Thus, this chapter argues that UGCs shared in social media by Instagram influencers are interrelated with the tourist expectations toward the destinations and can also create a visualisation of the tourist destinations.

TOURIST TRUSTS

Trust is a vital component in relationship building between businesses and their customers (Seo, Park & Choi, 2020). UGC is one of the most important foundations on which to build trust with an indi-

vidual throughout the travel decision-making process, specifically to lessen uncertainty and risks for an individual from the complex products or services (Filieri, Alguezaui & McLeay, 2015). Because the information various consumers share is based on their own opinion, it can influence other users' decisions and expectations. Today's travellers prefer online interaction over face-to-face communication; they want to inquire about their problems and solutions over social media channels to form strong social interactions (Mansor & Awang, 2021) and because it helps them save costs and time (Fan, Buhalis & Lin, 2019). Social media users purposely share and update all the useful contents on the social media to make other tourists look for more trusted and credible information provided by them (Sigala, Christou, & Gretzel, 2012). Social media basically changes the way travellers and tourists search for, find, and read the information regarding tourist suppliers and tourist destinations. Quality of information is important for a website to gain consumer trust, particularly for tourism UGC websites (Filieri et al., 2015). In the end, the uncertainty could be reduced, and the usefulness of the information can be shared with other consumers (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

In the tourism industry, information is the main resource of travel planning and decision making. Social media has been instrumental in the understanding of the sharing moments to the society (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). The sharing also gets to utilise the tips and advice of the destination. At the same time, the traveller gets to access the trusted information that would not be found in the guidebooks. Trust in the website has a positive effect on tourist attitude, engagement and intention to book online services (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Trust plays an important role in tourists' intention to follow recommendations (Casaló, Flavián, Guinalíu, & Ekinci, 2015).

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER VALUE

Model of social media influencer value (SMIV) to account for the effects of influencer marketing on social networking sites (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The model proposes that both the UGCs and the credibility of social media influencers formed the value. This value indeed influences the interaction between social media influencers and his/her followers. The SMIV is consistent with McGuire's (2001) communication-persuasion matrix, which suggests that various input components in persuasive communication — such as source, message, channel, receiver, and destination — determine its effectiveness. The SMIV model identifies and highlights a pivotal factor: consumers' trust in influencer branded content. In particular, De Veirman et al. (2017) demonstrated that Instagram's number of followers and product differentiation had influenced brand attitudes. They concluded that the number of followers, the followers/follower's ratio of the influencers, and the product category (e.g., the divergent level) should all be taken into consideration when designing an influencer marketing strategy. Indeed, in-depth interviews with young female Instagram users to explore the effect of celebrities and influencers on buying decisions has concluded that influencers were more influential, credible and relatable than celebrities among young people (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). For social media-induced tourism, this chapter argues that Instagram influencers' value (UCGs and credibility) leads to interaction with the followers and will likely influence tourist trusts on destination image and destination brand.

TOURIST TRUST ON DESTINATION IMAGE

Destination image is a concept created by the tourism providers/suppliers based on supply and demand context. Tourist destination image has strong associations with tourism trust (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Trust in the destination allows visitors to create a favourable impression of their destination during their visits. The concept of trust was first introduced by a psychologist in the 1950s (e.g. Deutsch, 1958) and in the late 1990s, tourism and hospitality researchers started to study trust (e.g. Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). If a destination is considered to be distrustful, making it feel risky and unsafe to visit, the image of a tourist destination is severely diminished. It is reasonable to understand that tourists who are usually unfamiliar with the places they visit (William & Balaz, 2013) will evaluate what they experience and explore at their destination as references to establish their trust system. This suggests that in social media-induced tourism, the followers of Instagram influencers will rely and trust on UGCs related to tourism destinations to reduce uncertainty in risk. Arguably, the value of Instagram influencers for the UGCs (informative value and entertainment value) and the credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity) will likely influence tourist trust on destination image. Moreover, UGC trust has been demonstrated to significantly influence tourist expectations on tourism destinations (Narangajavana et al., 2017).

TOURIST TRUST ON DESTINATION BRAND

Destination brand refers to the compelling features of a destination valued by tourists. Social media is also able to create a destination brand. Users' reviews in social media are the second most trusted resource of the brand information as they consider the information created by other users more credible (Nelson-Field et al., 2012). Also, social media has a positive and significant influence on perceived value (Chung & Koo, 2015). Moreover, the users also believe that other users convey not just positive content but also more comprehensive (Razak et al., 2020). Satisfied tourists are also more likely to recommend those products to their friends (Filieri et al., 2015) and have a higher brand attachment (Zahari, Mansur, Hanafiah, Radzi, & Hashim, 2010). Tourists with a higher level of trust also are more likely to visit and recommend businesses (Anaya-Sánchez, Molinillo, Aguilar-Illescas, & Liébana-Cabanillas, 2019). In addition, UGCs from social media have a positive effect on the overall brand image through trust (Seo, Park & Choi, 2020).

Nowadays, tourists can share their travel experiences throughout the social media platform. Currently, 'connecting' and 'exchanging' have replaced the keywords 'selling' and 'searching' and at the same time information technology has boosted social media to become an essential tool for accessing various resources of tourist information. Thus, social media gives the tourist reliable information that can be used by them during travelling. Due to this, tourists can rely on information based on other experiences to make travel plans effectively (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Arguably, the value of Instagram influencers for the UGCs (informative value and entertainment value) and the credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity) will also enhance tourist trust on destination brands.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explores the potential roles of Instagram influencers in social-media-induced tourism of a tourism destination, particularly in tourist trusts. The potential roles of Instagram influencers in influencing tourist trust on destination image and destination brand can serve as a starting point in understanding the influence of social media influencers in social-media-induced tourism. It also gives insights into the knowledge of destination marketing and destination management. However, information trust in using and creating travel content on different social media platforms might cause a challenge. Distinct information seeking and information sharing behaviours vary across different available platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, travel forums, online review sites, blogs, and online chats. There is also the issue of the data privacy breach on different social media platforms.

Recently, international tourism organisations are starting to examine a new social media channel, TikTok, a Chinese video-sharing social networking service, to strengthen their relationship with millennial travellers (PRNewswire, 2019), although TikTok received earlier criticism of intrusive user tracking and other issues (Doffman, 2020). Nevertheless, the tourism industry will still be using upcoming social media platforms for brand recognition and pave the way for travellers. Yet, there is a lot to understand how this could enhance/hurt tourist trust, destination image and brand image in the long run.

This chapter has provided useful insights and has undeniably contributed to tourism literature. Also, it provides useful insights to tourism marketers that need to understand travellers' use of social media in order to better promote their services and destinations. While there is an increasingly higher number of people that use social media for travel-related purposes and social media influencers of tourism UGCs, the travel and tourism industry shareholders are still sceptical regarding the benefits of the related site and unsure of how to respond to these more recent trends in online and digital marketing. Nevertheless, any strategic decision that travel and tourism marketers would take to integrate social media tools and features into a business in this sector should be preceded by a deep understanding of the market. More to be explored on how users and the tourism industry could enhance co-creation travel contents, especially among Generation Z (anyone born from 1997 onward) as they are the next generation of travellers.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Destination Brand: Compelling features of destination valued by tourists.

Destination Image: A concept created by the tourism providers/suppliers based on supply and demand.

Instagram: A photo and video sharing social networking service.

Social Media Influencers: Non-celebrities who are influential people in social media through his/her UGCs.

Social Media-Induced Tourism: Tourism caused by social media exposure.

Tourist Expectation: Tourist perceptions on tourism destinations and services which are formed before the actual experience takes place. The perceptions are shaping by exposure to the knowledge and information about the destinations and services, orally or visually.

Tourist Trust: Tourist beliefs on the credibility and reliability of tourism destinations and services.

User-Generated Content: Content that is posted in the social media and is being considered as useful electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) among internet users by sharing and interacting with each other.