

THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INCENTIVIZING UZBEKISTAN TOURISM, AND ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to determine the role and impact of social media in promoting tourism industry in Uzbekistan. The primary objective of the research is to examine the value of social media in promoting tourism. Uzbekistan is regarded as the leading tourism destination in central Asia. Leung, Law, Hoof, and Buhalis (2013) add that travelers have widely adopted social media in order to search for information, organize, share and annotate their experiences and stories through micro blogs and blogs, online communities, media sharing sites, and other tools collaboratively. Tourism marketers are also considerably using social media to engage with actual and potential tourists throughout the decision-making journey (Hudson and Thal, 2013). There is a need for ongoing efforts to promote the tourism industry for it to remain competitive and continue contributing to the welfare of the people in Uzbekistan. The study followed a quantitative research method in order to attain the set objectives of the study. Non-probability sampling technique was employed in recruiting the participants. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to generate the sample population in this study. The target population for the study were all the tourists that visited Uzbekistan’s tourist destinations. The next sampling population is the tourist organizations of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Tourism industry, Uzbekistan, Travel facilities, Social media, Investment destinations, Analysis, Sites, Projects, Marketing

INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on three significant targets. The essential target is to investigate different social media and their usage in developing tourism industry in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the paper endeavors to investigate the current status of social media in tourism marketing through a similar examination with the online media showcasing technique. The third and last objective of the paper is to recommend suitable systems and checking measures for developing tourism sector via social media of Uzbekistan’s tourism industry.

Social media is a communication channel between individuals which enables the creation of interactive content on the Internet and cooperation and exchange by participants and the public (Al-Qaysi, Mohamad-Nordin, & AlEmran, 2018; Weng & Huang, 2018). It is a means of significant changes and comprehensive progress between companies, organizations, communities, and individuals (Leung et al., 2013). It links the users in society by default through the use of the platforms, and thus affects the behavior of real people and their lives (Al-Emran & Salloum, 2017). Social media is also considered as one of the most prominent modern means used in marketing, where it has a role in attracting tourists and helping them determine their destination by providing valuable information (Abd Al-Samee, 2012). The role of social media in tourism in the present time has been increasingly discussed as a new topic of

research (Habes et al., 2018; Habes et al., 2018; Salloum & Shaalan, 2018; Salloum et al., 2018). Social media is increasingly playing an essential role in many aspects of tourism, especially for reservations, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and also marketing for tourism sites (Harrigan et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2013; Salloum et al., 2017). Social media networks have exceeded the limited traditional functions of regular websites in exchanging and disseminating. The title of the research study is very much coordinated towards the goals.

DEFINITION OF TOURISM

There are some important and conceptual terms related to tourism industry which need to be given basic explanation here for a clear comprehension. Among these terms, the most important ones are tourism, tourist, travelling, service, recreation and leisure which can be stated briefly.

Tourism is an important field of discussion which covers many interrelated areas. As a result, important elements based on which tourism is built required special attention to define tourism itself. It was observed from the World Conference on Travel and Tourism in Rome in 1963 that tourism has both the positive and negative impacts on economy, socio-cultural, political and environmental. For many nations especially for the developing countries, tourism brings economic benefits by generating employment opportunities in tourism related different sub-sectors, earning foreign currency, while United Nations for example consider it as a strong way of contributing to peace and understanding.

In the old days tourism didn't exist. But it was started to be known from the very beginning of human civilization. But most popularly and widely tourism is an invention of the 19th century- a period of history which sometimes seems to have stretched out to unnatural length. It is important to define 'tourism' itself for a clear understanding of the term itself. But the fact is that there is no single definition of the term tourism which is universally accepted. Academicians and practitioners feel that defining tourism is not an easy task. Even there are some differences of the outlook among them. For example, some prefer to consider tourism as an industry, others especially scholars take a different approach. In addition, terms like tourist, visitor and excursionist are used to describe people involve in tourism covering the various purposes of travel, leisure, business and short stays. The Ottawa Conference on tourism held in 1991 organized by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) put forwarded some fundamental recommendations for a meaningful and acceptable definition of tourism. Based on the recommendations, the definition of tourism which one was endorsed by the WTO in 1992 and adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in 1993 is as (Middleton, 1994): Wikipedia defined tourism as the act of travel for the purpose of recreation and business, and the provision of services for this act. It also included a more comprehensive definition which would be that tourism is service industry comprising a number of tangible and intangible components. According to this definition, the tangible elements include transport systems- air, rail, road, water and now space; hospitality services- accommodation, foods and beverage, tours, souvenirs; and related services such as banking, insurance and safety and security and the intangible elements in include rest and relaxation, culture, escape, adventure, new and different experiences. Basically, tourism is a whole interrelated and interdependent industry.

Sometimes tourism is also used pejoratively which implies a shallow interest in the societies and place that the tourist visits.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Social media play an important role as sources of travel information. Travellers perceive their content as more relevant, up-to-date and credible than information available via other channels (Gretzel and Yoo, 2017). Social media also make travel planning more enjoyable for travellers (Chung and Koo, 2015). Even when not specifically looking for social media-related sources, travel planners will likely be exposed to social media-related content as part of their online travel searches (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

Based on this information, in the following sentences there is given the significance of this thesis:

Firstly, the influential power of social media technologies urges clients to post, and travel encounters loan themselves impeccably to the motivation behind delivering and posting heaps of shareworthy content, particularly on visual stages like Instagram and area-based applications like Foursquare and Snapchat. In this case, international image of Uzbekistan and its travel industry can have a great chance to reveal its potential. So, in this thesis it is explained current power of social media to make the country internationally well known.

Secondly, travel is indeed an important element of the personal and social media-based identity of many individuals and the travel lifestyles modelled by travel influencers can motivate social media users to pursue travel, so as to at least get a glimpse of what such a life might be like and be able to impress others. Based on this statement, there is given a wide explanation of some categories of social media and their impacts on developing the country's image.

Thirdly, social media not just present forward-thinking rich experiential data that upholds dynamic cycles, they likewise present evaluations and surveys and regularly utilize this data to make arrangements of top objections and attractions. Such records give data searchers an advantageous choice heuristic and apply social impact. A significant number of the rundowns are naturally created dependent on appraisals (for example, the TripAdvisor "Top Things to do") or are organized and scattered by forces to be reckoned with. Scratching places off these rundowns then, at that point, turns into a significant pursuit for some online media clients, as it permits them to construct notoriety, feel firmly associated with the powerhouses and their crowd, and acquire endorsement from their own interpersonal organization. Therefore, one of the most crucial significances of this study is analysing the present ratings of up-to-date information of Uzbekistan on the famous and widely-used social media.

Types of Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) there are different types of social media and these can be categorised into: Social Networking Sites, Blogs and MicroBlogs, Content Community Sites, Collaborative projects, Virtual Worlds, and Sites Dedicated for Feedback. However, this way of categorising social media is different from how it was categorised above by Safko (2010)

Social Networking Sites

These are websites where individuals meet virtually, create personal profiles, develop relationships, communicate, and connect to other individuals whom they might or might not know physically. While social networking sites are a type of social media, some authors refer to all social media sites as social networking sites with different capabilities such as video or photo sharing (Connor, 2008).

Blogs and Micro-Blogs

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) blogs refers to websites that allow bloggers to share insights in a particular area as well as personal experiences, interact with others through posting of comments, and to keep logs. These could be image-based, text-based, video based, or audio-based. Micro-blogs refer to another form of blogging sharing the same function and only different in that the content of those blogs are text-based and are limited to a certain number of characters (Connor, 2008).

Content Community Sites

These are sites designed to share material modified from original work with people who upload the material. The content shared typically includes photos, text, presentation slides, and videos. Content community sites are different from social networking sites in that it is not a prerequisite to create a personal profile to use the shared content (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

Collaborative Projects

These sites aim to aggregate community intelligent through depending on the users to work out the content. They can be classified into two types: social bookmarking sites and wikis. Wikis refers to sites which users can continuously modify and edit and this enhances the quality of the content. Social bookmarking sites helps individuals store and manage collection of links. The links stored online can be shared with others (Koplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Virtual Worlds

These are online applications resembling the real world in a 3D environment. Represented by a customised human-like character or a picture, individuals could interact with others in the virtual world (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

Sites Dedicated to Feedback

This social media type refers to websites that allow users to read, post, discuss, respond, review, and share opinions, thoughts, and experiences on a myriad of topics. Online sites and forums dedicated for product reviews are the most typical of sites dedicated for feedback (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research method to get relevant and important data. The target population for the study were all the tourists, national and international, that visited some tourist destinations of Uzbekistan. A purposive sampling technique was used in

attracting the participants. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques are the two types of non-random sampling technique that were used. The projected sample size was 150 but the achieved response was 87 questionnaires and this gave a more than 65% response rate. Participation was entirely voluntary and the whole process was carried out with great ethics. Open-ended and yes/no questionnaire types with overall 20 questions were used in the survey that was conducted to obtain primary data from the tourists. A pilot study was conducted with 12 questionnaires distributed to the tourists to ensure validity of the instrument. The survey was mainly conducted in the form of online and offline because of pandemic and many responses were collected from online questionnaire. To distribute the online questionnaire social media and google.doc form was used. Furthermore, the researcher used the service of a field worker who helped to distribute and collect the questionnaires from the tourists. In order to make the research approach format clear, Research methods in Tourism, Hospitality and Events management (Brunt et al., 2017) and Social research methods 4th edition (Bryman, 2012) published in the United States by Oxford University Press Inc., New York have been used as a guideline for style and form.

CONCLUSION

The research carried out of available materials allowed us to draw the following conclusions of the tourism development in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has long been considered to have a great deal of potential as a popular tourist destination. For at least a decade, the industry has been expected to boom, and in many ways the country has prepared itself for this potential to be realized, but tourism is developing at only a relatively slow pace. Today tourism in Uzbekistan has low income into the GDP of the country. However, since independence the increase of tourist arrivals was recorded in the country. Compared with some other countries located in the same region and offering similar tourism products, Uzbekistan has more variety and number of tourist resources, and more precisely, it has an advantage geopolitical location, rich cultural, historical and natural heritage. Meanwhile, today Uzbekistan has a very modest place in the global tourist market. Objective assessment of Uzbek tourist resources has shown that, having the exotic and unique attributes, they loose to foreign offers in level of service, access and promotion. Tourism could easily become the most important Uzbek industry in terms of incomes, job creation and number of people benefiting from its direct and indirect impacts. Nevertheless, today it doesn't have its right place in the economy of Uzbekistan. If Uzbekistan increase social media by other countries, this would assist to boom tourism in Uzbekistan and attract more tourists, open new locations, provide good facilities as well.

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