

FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST'S INTENTION TO SELECT A TOURISM DESTINATION BY USING SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: *Today, there are tons of social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube that can help tourists to find and decide the best tourism destination for their vacations. Despite the growing interest in social media platforms, tourists have an issue with the credibility of social media. In the tourism context, past studies have proposed that social media can increase people's awareness of destination and information search. However, its relative influence on destination selection is still unclear. Because of this, the question of the credibility or reliability of internet travel and tourism information sources has remained arguable. The objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing tourist intention to select a tourism destination by using social media in Malaysia. This study focuses on two major factors of social media- social media information and social media word-of-mouth (WOM). The unit of analysis is individual and the sample population are experienced tourists aged 20 to 59 in Malaysia. Three hundred ninety (390) questionnaires were successfully collected through online platform. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 28.0. The findings revealed that all factors suggested have significant relationships with tourist travel intention from the experienced tourist point of view, providing a better understanding for tourists in Malaysia in using social media when planning a vacation. The existence of social media in marketing strategies made it possible for the industry to offer customers sufficient and essential information with knowledge for their choice of destinations.*

Keywords: *Social media, tourism destination, information, word-of-mouth (WOM), travel intention.*

Introduction

Due to its constant expansion and diversification, the tourism industry has become one of the world's fastest growing industries (Hua et al., 2017). It is also one of the main service industries that contribute to favorable economic growth. Malaysia's hospitality and tourism industries are among the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) (Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2015).

In recent years, the rise of information and communications technology (ICT) through social media has greatly influenced consumer preferences and decision-making in the tourism sector. The result of sharing information with others via online media contributed an enormous amount of data that can be easily shared, searched, promoted, disputed, and created (Nur et al., 2019). Travelers and tourists are searching, finding, reading, and trusting information about tourism suppliers and destinations in new ways links to social networking, or Web 2.0 as it is more commonly known (Hostinsky, 2019). The primary roles of having a Web 2.0 are widely mentioned through the usage of smartphone applications, particularly regarding their main point of data exchanges created by users, consisting of videos, pictures, and messages, including specific or all the mentioned activities. moreover, social media platforms influence the usage and intention to share useful data with other traveler (Cheunkamon et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the influence of this new information environment can be seen. The transmission of knowledge can greatly influence people's behavior and can change the effectiveness of government counter measures (Cinelli et al., 2020). Today, more than 2.9 billion individuals frequently use social media (Merchant & Lurie, 2020). Reference (Merchant & Lurie, 2020) stated that social media platforms played a vital role in disseminating information during the COVID 19 pandemic. In addition, social media enables for involvement in online journal clubs, data sharing with experts, bookmarking information on specific web pages and video attractions on a worldwide open-source platform (Sabouret et al., 2020). Tourists need to carefully choose a destination, hence, an experience, information, reviews, and recommendations on the social networking site, which can then be used as a source of guidelines for visitors from all over the world (Ly & Ly, 2020).

However, similar study has been carried out in the Malaysian setting, but mostly focusing on social media marketing communication and consumer-based brand equity (Adetunji et al., 2018) and the effect of social media advertisement (Hanaysha, 2016). Thus, researchers have decided to expand the study on the tourist's intention in Malaysia towards social media among people in the Northern area of Malaysia. Due to the epidemic, Malaysian tourists cannot cross international borders as usual. There are too many new procedures to do (Trisha, 2021). Thus, tourists might end up spending their vacation in Malaysia since it was more convenient but must follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) by National Security Council (MKN). The findings of this study are crucial to tourists who use social media to select a place. It also can benefit users who intend to use social media platforms for vacation and those who have experience using social media platforms will repeat the process for the next vacation.

Problem Statement

Tourism is acknowledged as a significant service industry that contributes to positive economic growth and is one of the largest service industries in the world (Ravindran et al., 2018). Through destination websites, intermediaries, and travel operators, the Internet has offered a wealth of tourism-related information during the previous decade (Cavlak, 2021). Despite the growing interest in social media platforms, several studies have an issue with the credibility of social

media (Cavlak, 2021). It is because planning a vacation is a highly risk decision and require a lot of facts finding. Reference (Tuclea et al., 2020) mentioned that the quality of created content can range from high-value content to dishonesty, fake news, and spam, potentially unwanted and risky content. Social media nowadays has become a tool for tourists in choosing a destination (Tuclea et al., 2020).

In the tourism context, several academics have proposed that social media can increase people's awareness of destination and information search. However, its relative influence on destination selection is unclear (Cavlak, 2021). All the information found on the internet may not be trustworthy for travelers. Because of this, the question of the credibility or reliability of internet travel and tourism information sources has remained arguable (Berhanu & Raj, 2020).

This research aims to study the factors influencing tourist intention to select a tourism destination by using social media. The objectives are as follows:

1. To examine whether social media information have a positive relationship on tourist's intention to select a tourism destination.
2. To examine whether social media word-of-mouth have a positive relationship on tourist's intention to select a tourism destination.

Literature Review

Tourist Travel Intention in The Selection of Destination.

The intention to travel plays a significant role in the selection process of a destination. Understanding the factors that influence traveller's destination selections is becoming increasingly important for governments, tourism organizations, and tourism operators as competition for tourist numbers and money increases in the industry (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2019). Tourists' travel intention will be influenced by the virtual presence of a tourist location on destination websites (Lian & Yu, 2019). Reference (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2019) stated that geographical attractiveness is an aggregated assessment of the characteristics that make a certain location interesting as a potential travel destination to tourists or business travellers.

Through consumer review sites, social networking sites, blogs, and media sharing sites, among other places, social media provides an unequaled platform for travel consumers to share their experiences and opinions online in the form of text, photographs, and videos (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018). Reference (Chu & Luckanavanich, 2018) studied the influence of a destination's image is not limited to the stage of destination selection; rather, it has an impact on the overall intentions of customers. It was also found that consumer evaluations have a particularly strong impact on experiential goods since their quality is typically unknown before consumption and tourist must rely on social media information and word of mouth (WOM) to decide (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015).

As a result, it can be concluded that social media marketing can also be useful in understanding the attitudes of customers, but that the value of social media marketing in the tourism industry has not yet been widely recognized, despite its potential (Ravindran et al., 2018). The concept of social media has many different terms and references, and most of them are used interchangeably, as a result, some experts agree that the terminology on social media does not yet meet a clear definition (Briandana & Dwityas, 2017).

Social Media Information

Typically, destinations are geographically well-defended. The growth of Web 2.0 technologies has significantly contributed to the importance of social media in everyday life (Liu et al., 2020). Social media has risen to become a powerful source of information and communication in today's world. People search for information in different ways, depending on the travel destination, travel time, and travel purpose. In the early 1990s, the Internet was created as a means of information and communication and all the source that exists on the Internet are unilateral (Riera et al., 2015).

Information and communication technology (ICT) has dramatically increased the use of social media, which has a significant impact on consumer behaviours and decision-making to planning a trip or purchasing travel-related products and services (Liu et al., 2020). Social media information has emerged as a popular platform for people particularly to create and share information from anywhere at any time. On the other hand, this fact has unintended consequences for users as it makes it harder to find relevant information first and foremost and the quality of the generated content can vary widely—from high-value content to manipulation, fake news, or spam—thus allowing unwanted and unsafe content to contaminate social networks (Tuclea et al., 2020). Moreover, previous study found that 47.8 percent of their respondents agreed that negative social media comments influence the holiday destination (Azazi & Shaed, 2020).

Several studies (Hua et al., 2017)(Palacios- Marqués et al., 2015) have found that the use of social media is growing in various societies and has become an important source of information, which can have a significant impact on potential consumers. Tourists these days look for each fact on tourism destinations like explanations, feedback, ratings, and so on. This method is known as the facts-accumulating level that normally takes area earlier than any selection has been made through the tourists (Azazi & Shaed, 2020).

Social Media Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

The term "word of mouth" (WOM) refers to consumer-to-consumer communication about a product, service, or company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019). The presence of social media WOM is defined as communication or statement either positive or negative between persons who are perceived to be independent of the company providing the product or service in a medium that is regarded as independent of the company (Harahap et al., 2018). It may apply to informal communication between people who have no financial motivation to persuade others to use the product.

Recent study in the tourism area has demonstrated the influence of both positive and negative WOM upon tourism products, in studies across a broad range of nations (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019). In their study, it was reported that negative WOM can have a significant impact on a destination's image, as dissatisfied visitors spread unflattering comments about their experiences to their friends and family.

Reference (Hua et al., 2017) reported that state-of-the-art technology created a virtual space as e-WOM, in which communication and transmission of information are unlimited in the world. Despite this, there is no doubt that WOM communication between consumers has a significant impact on their purchasing decision process for both goods and services (Iuliana-Raluca, 2012). Although many studies on WOM communication have been conducted in the context of goods, (Iuliana-Raluca, 2012) believes that WOM communication is more important and relevant for

service consumers because services are difficult to evaluate before purchase and are perceived as being highly risked. By WOM, consumers can provide information that is more authentic, current, enjoyable, and credible than other marketing-controlled sources or marketer-generated content (Liu et al., 2020). The researchers have indicated that receivers of WOM recommendations were more likely to trust the recommendation because the person who initiated the WOM was not acting in his or her self-interest (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019).

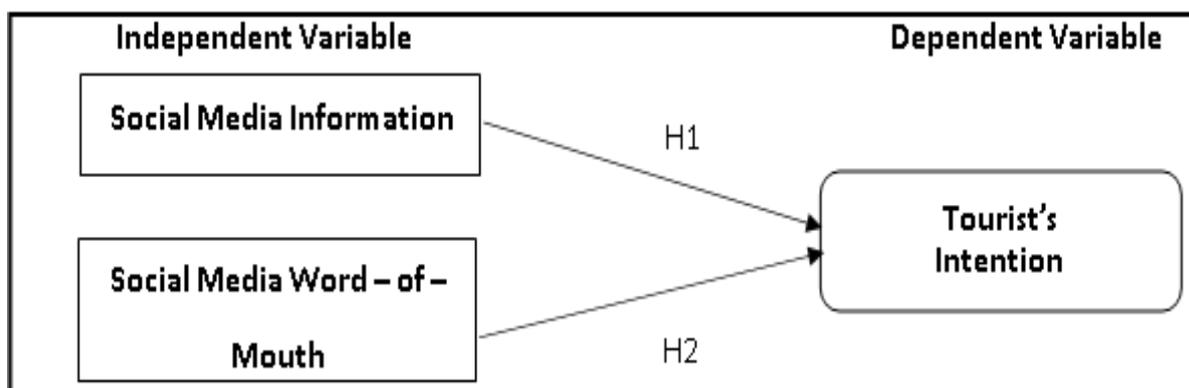


Figure 1: Adapted from (Mohaidin et al., 2017) Mohaidin, Wei, and Ali Murshid, 2017; Paul, Roy, and Mia, 2019 (Paul et al., 2019).

According to the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), a higher degree of actual behaviour will arise from a higher level of intention to carry out behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Reference (Mohaidin et al., 2017) reported that tourist intentions have focused on the components that impact behavioural intention. This study aimed to study the factors influencing tourist intention to select a tourism destination by using social media through applying the TPB. It proposes that certain behaviours would be developed by individuals depending on personal and social aspects of relative attitude to their behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Mohaidin et al., 2017). This theory is used to anticipate behavioural intents and behaviours. Reference (Li et al., 2012) and (Jin et al., 2015) have revealed good predictive usefulness in scenarios that are not within boundaries.

Therefore, for this study the following hypotheses were postulated:

- H1:** There is a positive relationship between Social Media Information and Tourist's Intention to select a tourism destination.
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between Social Media Word –of- Mouth and Tourist's Intention to select a tourism destination.

Methodology

Quantitative research was used as a research design as it is distinguished by its ability to investigate the tourist intention to select a destination in this area. This study's units of analysis are individual aged 20 to 59, who have experienced as tourists. For this purpose, potential respondents were everyone that fits the criteria. The total population is 32,655,400 people and the age population between 15 to 64 years are 4,540,000 people (Department et al., 2021). This study used a non-probability sampling method, specifically the purposive sampling technique, to obtain the sample, and the sufficient sample size decided upon was 384 respondents who are acceptable as supported by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The questionnaire was distributed through Google Form within five weeks duration and has been forwarded through Whatsapp, Telegram, and Facebook.

In terms of data analysis, the structured questionnaire was analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 28.0 to obtain descriptive statistics – frequency. The relationship of each variable was analyzed using Pearson Correlation.

The instrument for this study was adapted from the works of several authors for the variables of Demography, Social Media Information, Social Media Word-of-Mouth, and Tourist Travel Intention (Mohaidin et al., 2017)(Paul et al., 2019). A five-point Likert Scale was used for every variable except Demography, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Findings and Discussion

Subject Demography

All 390 people who passed and completed the online questionnaires were split evenly between males and females, with 47.9% of the respondents being females and 52.1 percent being males. For the age frequency, the majority are between 20 to 29 years old (62.6%) followed by 30 to 39 years old (32.6%), 40 to 49 years old (4.1%), and lastly 50 to 59 years old (0.8%). After a preliminary screening, a sample of 390 respondents with a response rate of 100 percent was used for the next stage of the analysis.

Reliability

Since the instrument was adapted from varying studies, a reliability test was conducted, and all the variables reported Cronbach's Alpha values higher than the acceptable value of 0.6 (Social Media Information = 0.876, Social Media Word-of-Mouth = 0.825, Tourist Travel Intention = 0.762) (Zeller et al., 1982).

Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis

Table I identifies the correlational value between the variables of Social Media Information, Social Media Word-of-Mouth, and Tourist Travel intention. The values of Social Media Information (.562) and Social Media Word-of-Mouth (.563) recorded values that are significant at 0.01 levels in relation to Tourist Travel intention. The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) is used in this study to explain how social media information, social media WOM, and tourist travel influence intentions to choose a tourism destination.

Table I: Correlation Analysis

		Social Media Information	Social Media WOM
Tourist's Intention	Pearson Correlation	.562**	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	390	390

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the results Table 2, it can be seen that the Adjusted R Square value is 0.391 or 39.1%. This means that the magnitude of the influence or contribution of independent variables on the dependent variable is 39.1%. The rest is influenced by other variables outside this study.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.625 ^a	0.391	0.388	2.33724

Table 3 shows the ANOVA test. This is to determine the regression model that has been tested is significant towards the research. Based on the table, it shows that the p-value < 0.001. This means that the null hypothesis has been rejected. This shows that this regression model is significant to the research study.

Table 3: Anova Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1357.775	2	678.888	124.277	<.001 ^b
	Residual	2114.061	387	5.463		
	Total	3471.836	389			

Table 4 shows the coefficients result which is the standardized coefficient for Social Media Information is 0.347 and Social Media WOM is 0.348. Then, the significance of brand awareness is 0.449 meanwhile brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty is 0.000. The p-value of both variables is < 0.000, which means that there is a significant impact on the tourist's intention to select the tourism destination.

Table 4: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	7.033	1.802		3.902	0.000	3.489	10.576
	SocialMedia Information	0.319	0.046	0.347	6.888	0.000	0.228	0.410
	SocialMedia WOM	0.326	0.047	0.348	6.909	0.000	0.233	0.419

The first major finding of this study is that social media information has a positive relationship with tourist travel intention. Therefore, this finding can be interpreted as, if travellers' used social media information more favourably, they will viewd that the destination is well-known, has a good reputation in the public sphere, and has convenient transportation options (Park et al., 2019). In addition, the highest frequency of respondents in this study was between the age of 21 to 29 years old. They tend to use social media for planning a vacation to have quick and simple access to content that is relevant to their interests (Park et al., 2019).

The second major finding is that social media word-of-mouth has a positive relationship with tourist travel intention. This study also revealed that social media WOM is the strongest influence on tourist intention to select a tourism destination. Traveling to multiple destinations affects tourist intention (Park et al., 2019). If a destination has overall positive marketing (word-of-mouth), they tend to visit a destination to evaluate their perceptions of service quality with

many prospective customers, which increased the connectivity of other tourists' intentions. It is also supported by (Park et al., 2019) in their studies, WOM is, understandably, regarded as a good suggestion that will benefit tourist locations while also influencing people to visit a destination in the future or return. The more satisfied tourists are with a place, the more likely they are to automatically share it with other people (Mohaidin et al., 2017).

For tourism businesses, it was found that they can increase the cost of conversion if they have a good value development strategy and focus on personalizing their offerings (Werenowska & Rzepka, 2020). Followed by the same study, images of the destination that may persuade indecisive people to choose a specific vacation spot are also encouraging.

The Table 1 above shows a completed finding to predict the factors influence tourist's intention to select a tourism destination by using social media. All two hypotheses were accepted. All two variables relate to Tourist Travel Intention. The result of both hypotheses shows a moderate positive linear relationship between the tourist travel intention. The results are consistent with the TPB. The previous study believed that both independent variables are influenced because it directly affects tourists creates a positive value for tourist intentions (Paul et al., 2019). However, if the decision-makers and policymakers improve the tourism knowledge level of potential tourists through media, the Internet, and other promotion tools, travellers' intent to select destinations is to be favorably influenced (Mohaidin et al., 2017). It can be concluded that hypotheses have been achieved.

Moreover, based on the factors of those variables, this study can point out that social media WOM is a significance factor that influence tourist to travel. Comparing to the result of this study, it is likely to bear the resemblance to previous study (Mohaidin et al., 2017)(Paul et al., 2019). It is also aligned with previous study which found that positive tourism service product experiences can generate positive WOM impacts among travelers' friends and relatives (Mohaidin et al., 2017).

Limitations and Future research

In conclusion, this study has achieved all the research objectives which are to examine the relationship between social media information, social media word-of mouth, and tourist travel intention to use social media to select a tourism destination. In this study, the researcher had found some limitations on conducting this study. This study only focuses on two variables which are social media information and social media WOM.

For future study, the survey needs to be conducted online and fieldwork. It is important to help the respondent of the study to understand deeper about the questionnaire. Besides, the researcher can make an interview session with the respondent and directly ask any opinion about the question and improve the research methodology. In addition, the future study of this topic needs to focus on the urban area because this topic needs people who live in a busy and crowded area with advanced technology. Therefore, future research looking into other possible moderators to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the drivers of behavioral intention is deemed necessary.

Overall, the present study successfully confirmed the factors that influenced tourist intention to select a tourism destination by using social media. Furthermore, social media information was discovered to be significant and slightly affecting tourist travel intention toward using social media to select tourism destinations.

This study contributes to the inexperienced tourists needing to get the benefits of using social media as a tool to select a destination. The existence of social media in marketing strategies make it possible to give customers enough and essential information with knowledge of their choice of destinations. Besides, the positive reviews about how easy it is to use help tourists have a positive attitude about the destination. Tourists can keep using the social media sites that are beneficial and convenient, which could make them return to the social media sites again and again. In addition, this study also can contribute to the body of knowledge, add literature, for marketing purposes, planning for the hospitality industry players, and as guidance in building the image of the destinations in the social media. Industry players must also be aware of the power of social media sites. Positive or negative feedback about a vacation destination will quickly spread, and vice versa.

There are several important implications of this study. This study suggests ways to promote tourist intention to select a tourism destination by using social media. To ensure increased WOM, the future marketer should be strengthened to develop tourist sites and their facilities by changing their marketing method.

Moreover, tourists also want to know if the destination has good or high-quality services, which will make them want to go there again in the future. This necessitates maintaining close ties with country governments and tourism companies, as well as a robust evaluation mechanism. The habit of using social media as a tool becoming a trend in Malaysia in sustaining tourism industry as one of the main source income industry in Malaysia

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