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

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