



Chapter 20

Social Media and Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital communication technologies and the increase in the use of digital platforms by individuals have increased the tendency towards touristic activities. Cultural tourism, which is carried out for certain purposes within the diversity of tourism, is one of the rising tourism activities of recent times. In this context, tourism management benefits from social media platforms as a tool in marketing their products and services related to cultural tourism. Social media platforms are important here for two aspects. The first of these is the use of social media by tourism management in the marketing of products and services by organizing individual and mass cultural tours and communicating with target audiences. The second is that individuals benefit from social media platforms in participating in cultural tourism and decision making. In this direction, it is important to evaluate conceptually the relationship between social media platforms, one of the most important digital communication technologies, and cultural tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Social media, which emerged as a result of technological developments, has become an inseparable part of individuals' lives. Individuals benefit from these platforms in the decision process of any touristic activity. In this respect, the actors of the cultural tourism sector should also actively use social media platforms and communicate with their target audiences on these platforms, and market their products and services to them.

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On the other hand, the importance of social media platforms, which are effective in the promotion and marketing of touristic product attractions, is increasing day by day for both tourism businesses and consumers. Social media platforms, which are the most important source of information for tourists who are motivated by the desire to experience the culture of a destination, have also become an important tool of intercultural communication. Moreover, it can be stated that the recognition and awareness of cultural tourism, which is a type of tourism that aims to recognize and share all products of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, has increased through social media platforms. The necessity of taking into account the preferences of tourists in cultural tourism, which is a complex phenomenon, draws attention to the connection of the concept with social media. In this respect, it is important to associate social media with the concept of cultural tourism because of its features such as developing relationships, raising awareness, impressiveness, creating content for interests, mediating intercultural interaction and showing different cultures to other users. The aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between social media and cultural tourism in today's world, which is under the influence of digitalization, in line with the literature. In this context, the relationship between social media and cultural tourism has been conceptually examined in this study. In this direction, in this study, it has been tried to explain how individuals use social networks and social media environments related to cultural tourism and how they benefit from these environments and why cultural tourism companies need to exist strategically in these environments. In the study, various platforms and applications related to social media and social networks are included. In addition, it has been mentioned about what cultural tourism means conceptually, its types, activities, sources, and reasons. Finally, the priority issues in the marketing of cultural tourism through social media are discussed.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONCEPT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows users to create and share content (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Social media defines the online resources that people use to share content such as videos, photos, images, text, ideas, insights, humor, gossip, and news. These resources include blogs, vlogs, social networks, message boards, podcasts, general bookmarks, and wikis (Drury, 2008, p. 274). Social media has transformed individuals into content publishers beyond being content readers. These platforms allow people to share and interact with each other (Evans, 2008, p. 33). It is characterized as a collection of websites and applications designed to create and develop online communities for networking and information sharing. Talking and sharing things with individuals on social media is not different from the situation in real life. The only difference is that these interactions take place online (Osborne-Gowey, 2014, p. 55). Social media is a new type of media that has the characteristics of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. These concepts, which express the characteristics of social media tools, were explained by Mayfield as follows (2008, p. 5):

- Participation: Social media encourages contributions and feedback from anyone interested. It blurs the line between media and audience.
- Openness: Most social media services are open to feedback and participation. It encourages voting, commenting, and information sharing. There are no barriers to access and use the content.

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