


Chapter 11

The Power of Social Media: Unveiling its Impact on Millennial Travel Choices

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has significantly transformed various aspects of modern life, from how people communicate to how they make decisions. In the tourism industry, the impact of social media is particularly profound, influencing travellers' perceptions and choices in unprecedented ways. Millennials, often referred to as digital natives, are now the largest travel demographic. Their preferences for authentic, immersive experiences, combined with a strong reliance on peer reviews and visual content, have reshaped traditional marketing strategies in the tourism sector. This chapter aims to explore the role of social media in influencing millennial travellers' destination choices. The findings will offer insights into how the tourism industry can better adapt to the evolving digital landscape and develop more targeted strategies for reaching millennial audiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media has significantly transformed various aspects of modern life, from how people communicate to how they make decisions. In the tourism industry, the impact of social media is particularly profound, influencing travellers' perceptions and choices in unprecedented ways (Jibril & Javed, 2020). Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook have become essential tools not only for personal sharing but also for discovering and selecting travel destinations. According to Kasim, Abdurachman & Furinto (2019), for millennials, a generation that has grown up in the digital age, social media plays a central role in shaping their travel experiences and decisions.

Millennials, often referred to as digital natives, are now the largest travel demographic. Their preferences for authentic, immersive experiences, combined with a strong reliance on peer reviews and visual content, have reshaped traditional marketing strategies in the tourism sector. (Han & Chen, 2022) Unlike previous generations who relied on brochures, travel agencies, or family recommendations, millennials are heavily influenced by social media content, whether it be from influencers, friends, or user-generated reviews.

This chapter aims to explore the role of social media in influencing millennial travellers' destination choices. Specifically, it will analyse how platforms like Instagram, which are rich in visual content, serve as inspiration for millennials when selecting travel destinations (Terttunen, 2017). Additionally, it will investigate the influence of user-generated content, influencer marketing, and peer reviews in shaping their travel behaviours. Understanding the relationship between social media and destination choice among millennials is crucial for marketers, travel agencies, and destination management organizations (DMOs) looking to effectively target this highly influential group. (Arviani & Prasetyo, 2020)

According to Dabija, Bejan & Tipi (2018), the travel and tourism industry has undergone a digital transformation over the past decade, fuelled largely by the rise of social media platforms. These platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook, have become integral in shaping how people discover new travel destinations and make travel decisions. For millennials, a generation that has grown up in a digitally connected world, social media is a key source of inspiration and information for travel planning.

Unlike previous generations, millennials tend to rely more heavily on peer recommendations, user-generated content (UGC), and influencer marketing than traditional forms of advertising like TV or print (Barros, 2021). Social media platforms offer a space where travelers can access authentic and visually rich content from fellow travelers, brands, and influencers. The visual appeal, accessibility, and constant

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