


Chapter 16


Analysis of Romanian Tourism Bloggers Characteristics and Their COVID–19 Content

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a key global economic sector that employs diverse promotional strategies, including social media and blogging. The rise of new media, especially blogs, has fundamentally reshaped communication dynamics by offering powerful platforms for personal expression and interaction. This study examines Romanian travel bloggers, analyzing their demographic characteristics and content strategies in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings reveal a preference for nature-based travel, particularly in the spring, and for guesthouse accommodations, especially among bloggers aged 30-40. The study also observed divergent responses to the pandemic.

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While some bloggers adapted their content to navigate the challenges, others ceased blogging. Despite such disruptions, travel blogs reaffirm their vital role in destination development and sustaining tourism's relevance amid evolving global scenarios.

INTRODUCTION

The first blog widely recognized in literature was Justin Hall's Links.net, which appeared in 1994. Hall's intention was not to create a blog, but rather a homepage containing personal information (Findlay, 2015, p. 159; Elega & Özad, 2018, p. 82). In December 1997, online diarist John Barger coined the term “weblog”, derived from “logging the web” (Thompson, 2015, as cited in Elega & Özad, 2018). Around 1998, there were fewer than 50 known blogs worldwide (Ho, 2007). Jesse James Garrett started organizing sites and included those that resembled his own in his list. He contacted Cameron Barrett to help him publish the list. Then, others with similar sites sent their URLs to be included on the list. The list had 23 URLs by early 1999. Earlier that year, Peter Merholz mentioned that he would pronounce it “wee-blog,” which led to the abbreviation “blog” and the term “blogger”, both of which are common in the 21st century. With each passing day, the number of blogs grew considerably, leading to the launch of “Pitas,” the first free tool for creating blogs. After the first tool for creating blogs appeared, others followed in mid-1999 (Blood, 2000; Siles, 2011).

In the early 2000s, blogging became a fast-spreading phenomenon with a huge global impact. Thus, it began to play the role of influencing the population on various areas, such as daily routines, personal experiences (Elega & Özad, 2018, p. 81).

Blog is “a hierarchy of text, images, media objects and data, arranged chronologically, that can be viewed in an HTML browser” (Armstrong and McAdams, 2011, p. 115) or a new form of mainstream personal communication, suitable for exchanging information as well as building different relationships (Rosenbloom, 2004, Volo, 2012). Reading and participating in blogs can be seen as relaxing, entertaining, enthusiastic activities that are undertaken in one's spare time (Armstrong and McAdams, 2011).

Links can be inserted into the content of a blog to other articles on the same blog or perhaps even to articles on other blogs. This network of blogs is called the blogosphere (Orzan, Vege and Orzan, 2011, p. 10). As mentioned earlier, blogs originated as a form of online diaries. Every reader of a blog can write his or her opinion, ask other questions to the blogger in the comments section. This function of blogs is to make readers feel they belong to that online community (Orzan et al., 2011, p. 10).

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