

The social media usage and their effect on Tourism marketing behavior A Study among University International Students in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of social media on tourism marketing behavior among international students in Indonesia. Employing a descriptive research method utilizing a qualitative approach, in some groups it was conducted with international students to explore their travel experiences and the influence of social media on their destination choices. The findings reveal that social media plays a significant role in shaping students' travel decisions, with a particular emphasis on the importance of visual platforms like Instagram and YouTube and their specific interests in how and where to visit with the help of these platforms. This research contributes to the existing literature on the role of social media in tourism marketing and provides insights into the preferences and behaviors of international students, a key demographic in the tourism industry. The discussion covers the range of interests that students have in artificial, cultural, and natural tourism as well as more niche types including MICE, health, and information tourism. Notably, participants stressed the need for thorough travel information, especially about lodging, meals, transportation, and guided tours information that is mostly found online. The study emphasizes how social media use and the diverse range of tourist experiences that foreign students in Indonesia are looking for are intricately related. Overall, this investigation clarifies the mutually beneficial relationship between social media dynamics and traveller behaviours, revealing information that is essential for academics and industry participants to comprehend in order to fully utilize digital platforms in modern tourism.

Keywords: *digital platforms, international students, social media usage, tourism marketing behavior, travel decisions*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural beauty, has become an attractive destination for international students. The country's tourism potential, including its mountains, seas, beaches, and cultural attractions, offers a unique and immersive experience for students studying abroad. In addition to academic opportunities, international students have the chance to explore and immerse themselves in the local culture, history, and traditions of Indonesia. By participating in cultural activities and visiting historical sites, international students can gain a deeper understanding of Indonesian society and develop a broader worldview. Furthermore, Indonesia offers a wide range of educational opportunities for international students, with numerous universities and institutions offering programs in various fields. These programs provide international students with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in their chosen field while experiencing the rich cultural diversity of Indonesia. Indonesia's tourism industry plays a significant role in attracting international students.

Technology and the internet have revolutionized tourism marketing, providing consumers with information on potential travel destinations and enabling them to book online. Mobile devices like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok influence decisions during vacations and allow frequent contact with friends and family. Travelers send immediate reports about their trip experiences through email, text messaging, and social networks, and leave ratings and reviews online to assist others in trip planning. Technology and the internet have created a revolution in tourism marketing. The internet not only inspires and provides consumers with information on potential travel destinations, but also enables them to take immediate action by booking online. In addition, this is only the beginning of their online engagement, as the internet continues to play a role during the

vacation as well as long after the visitor returns home. Mobile devices such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp groups..., are a primary source of influence on the decisions; visitors make while they are exploring and enjoying their destination and allow frequent contact with friends and family. Travelers send immediate reports about their trip experiences through email, text messaging, and social networks. Once they return home, they leave ratings and reviews online to assist other people in their trip planning.

This study aims to explore the effect of social media on tourism marketing behavior among international students in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to understand the influence of social media platforms, particularly visual-oriented ones like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, on travel decisions and preferences among this key demographic. By conducting in-depth interviews with international students, this research will provide insights into the evolving role of social media in shaping travel experiences and marketing strategies in the tourism industry.

Literature Review

Social media has had a significant impact on various industries, including tourism. In the case of Indonesia, social media has revolutionized tourism-marketing strategies and has become an essential tool for promoting tourist destinations in the country (Fransisca & Ningsih, 2023). It allows businesses to connect and engage with their target audience in a more personal and interactive way. By leveraging social media platforms, businesses can create brand awareness, drive website traffic, generate leads, and ultimately increase sales (Febrianta et al., 2021). Social media marketing has revolutionized the way businesses connect with their target audience and promote their products or services. It offers businesses the opportunity to reach a large audience at a relatively low cost, making it an effective and affordable marketing tool. Using social media for marketing purposes has become crucial in today's digital landscape (Mitrović et al., 2020). Social media marketing is a powerful tool that allows businesses to connect with their target audience, increase brand awareness, and drive website traffic (Febrianta et al., 2021).

Relationship of tourist behavior with Social Media

Social media has revolutionized the way tourism businesses market their products and interact with customers. It has significantly influenced customer behavior by providing a platform for users to share their tourism experiences online and influence the decisions of others (Bezerra & Correia, 2019). Social media has revolutionized the way businesses engage with consumers, and the tourism industry is no exception (Oliveira et al., 2020). With the rise of social media, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, tourism businesses now have direct access to a vast online audience. They can promote their destinations, services, and experiences directly to potential travelers. Moreover, social media allows businesses to engage with customers in real time, respond to inquiries and feedback, and build relationships.

METHOD

Research design serves as the cornerstone for systematic and efficient exploration and analysis by researchers. It encompasses the entire research process, from planning the research to selecting and collecting data within a specified timeframe. This study delves into assessing the impact of social media on tourists' decisions, specifically focusing on the perspectives of international students in various provinces across Indonesia. To uncover the intrinsic truth and navigate the research focus effectively, a meticulous method is imperative. Adopting a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study. The qualitative approach was chosen, as the subject matter was not quantifiable but rather hinged on reasoned analysis, where the researcher acts as the primary instrument. The study draws its data from diverse sources, including focus group discussions with international students and foreign tourists studying or traveling in Indonesia. Additionally, it relies on scholarly resources such as books, papers, journals, and existing research findings aligned with the study's thematic focus and location.

RESULT

An influx of international students arriving in Indonesia seeks not only academic pursuits but also endeavors to immerse themselves in the diverse cultural landscape, language, and religious facets

of the country. Their quest for cultural enrichment often involves traversing provinces and islands, intending to delve into the indigenous traditions and historical richness inherent in various regions. Integral to this exploration is the reliance on social media platforms, which serve as a paramount source of information for evaluations and insights into transportation, lodging, dining options, notable landmarks, and shopping destinations. The preference for tourist sites and attractions is largely contingent upon individual preferences and sought-after experiences. Notably, the countries from which these students predominantly originate further influence the patterns of travel and exploration within Indonesia. By asking respondents when social media was most useful in their travel decisions and how they used it, we identified how social media was used at each stage of the decision-making process, the visited area, and the reason for Travel.

Table 1
Students Profile, Countries, and Preferred Social Media.

Participants' countries	Gender and age	Social Media Used on student's travel decision	Visited Area	Reason of Travel
Madagascar	Female, 23	Facebook, Youtube	Jakarta, Malang, Bali	Visiting parks and Zoo
Ghana	Male 35	Instagram, Tiktok	Jakarta, Bogor	Conference, Exhibition
Uzbekistan	Female, 24	Instagram	Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Karimun Jawa	Water activities and shopping centers
Egypt	Female, 25	Facebook, Youtube	Makassar, Surabaya, Yogyakarta...	Visiting old mosques
Yemen	Male, 30	Youtube, Facebook	Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Jakarta	International Conference
Philippines	Female, 25	Tiktok	Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung	Historical monuments and museums
Vietnam	Female, 24	Tiktok, Facebook	Bali, Yogyakarta, Jakarta	Exploring sports activities
Japan	Male, 30	Instagram, Tiktok	Bali, Surabaya, Jakarta	Exhibition and visiting some temples

Source: processed data

Perceptions and decision-making among participants from diverse nationalities, including Madagascar, Ghana, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Yemen, Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan, were examined to understand their approach to tourism activities in Indonesia. In this qualitative study, participants, evenly represented by gender, shared their experiences, preferences, and sources of information for travel planning. A significant aspect revealed was the pivotal role of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. These platforms, particularly through video content like reels, played a decisive role in their destination selection and travel arrangements. Tourist-visited areas that are frequently visited by students are Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Bali, Malang, Makassar, and Karimun Jawa due to the tourist attractions there. The participants, predominantly aged between 23 and 35, expressed varied purposes for travel, including tourism exploration and attendance at conferences. Their diverse reasons underscored the multifaceted nature of student travel preferences. Moreover, the discussion highlighted a spectrum of tourism activities sought after by students, offering insights into the types of experiences and facilities sought during their travels.

Table 2
Tourism Potential of Indonesia

Types of Potential Tourism Available	
Students' Tourism Attractions	
Natural	1. City park tours 2. Tea Plantations, mountains...
Cultural	1. Gallery 2. Performance building 3. Historical building 4. Art-Culture Environment
Artificial Tourism	1. Zoo, Traffic Park, and others. 2. Museum
Special Interest tourism	1. Shopping tours: production centers, Factory Outlets, Dept. Store, specialty shopping. 2. Knowledge Tourism: fabrication/processing of products (milk, vaccines, medicine, textiles), buildings of cultural value. 3. Spiritual tourism: Meditation, Mosques, churches, Temples 4. Health tourism (Hot spring water) 5. Sports tourism (golf, bowling, horse riding, etc.) 6. MICE tourism (Meeting, Incentive, Conference, Exhibition/meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions). 7. National/international events and city venues 8. agro tourism, adventure, camping ground, volcanoes, special sports (paragliding, rafting, aerospace), water tourism
Tourism facilities	
Accommodations	1. Star hotel 2. Budget Hotel 3. Homestay and Hostels
Transportation	1. Bus 2. Train 3. Airplane and others
Restaurants	1. Restaurant 2. Local food and other typical food vendors.
Travel Agents	1. Travel agent 2. Event organizers 3. Tourism Consultant

Source: processed data

The study encompassed an exploration of students' demographic information, including their country of origin, gender, age, and preferred social media platforms for travel-related decision-making. The participants articulated diverse preferences in tourism types within Indonesia. Natural tourism emerged prominently, embracing city park tours, tea plantations, and mountainous terrains. Additionally, cultural tourism captured considerable interest, spanning visits to galleries, historical landmarks, artistic environments, and performance venues. Participants also highlighted artificial tourism, encompassing zoo visits, traffic parks, and museum tours. Moreover, a subset exhibited a special interest in various thematic tours, including shopping, spiritual explorations at historical mosques or temples, knowledge-seeking endeavors, health-centric tourism, sports-related travel, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism aimed at conference attendance. Adventure and extreme activities like rafting, paragliding, and aerospace adventures were also significant draws for these travelers. The significance of tourism facilities, such as transportation, accommodation, dining options, and guided tours, was underscored in participants' narratives. The reliance on Internet resources and social media platforms for gathering information on transportation, accommodations, and dining establishments was a notable trend. Participants highlighted the advantages of accessing travel agencies or tourism consultants through online platforms to obtain recommendations and optimal choices. Food preferences encompassed a desire for a variety of local and traditional cuisines, as well as restaurants offering diverse culinary options. These insights emphasize the pivotal role of comprehensive travel information in facilitating informed and satisfactory travel experiences for international students exploring Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia stands as a beacon among tourist destinations, with culinary exploration and shopping remaining focal points for visitors. The country's approach to tourism development has traversed three pivotal stages. Initially, the short-term phase prioritized the implementation of tourist attraction strategies. Progressing into the medium term, the focus shifted to amenities and accessibility strategies, incorporating community involvement and ancillary measures. Amidst this evolution, the pervasive use of social media by students has wielded a profound impact, bearing both favorable and adverse effects across various economic sectors. Notably, the tourism industry stands as one of the most significantly affected domains. Businesses within hospitality, travel, transportation, and tour operations face heightened scrutiny. In this context, effective marketing becomes indispensable as services form the industry's cornerstone product. The heightened visibility on social media places businesses under intense scrutiny, with even minor negative feedback potentially tarnishing reputations. To leverage social media's potential, businesses are establishing official accounts and appointing dedicated personnel for engagement. Prioritizing customer satisfaction and swiftly addressing complaints become pivotal, considering the propensity of younger generations to vocalize grievances via multimedia on social platforms. The agility demanded by social media's instantaneous nature underscores its criticality in today's landscape. Notably, larger tourism enterprises adeptly harness social media's reach, swiftly addressing customer concerns to safeguard their standing. The study dives into understanding Indonesian university international students' favoured social media platforms, their usage patterns in tourism-related pursuits, and demographic-based segmentation a critical exploration that sheds light on the nuanced interplay between social media and tourism activities.

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