



STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION ON DOMESTIC TOURISTS ARRIVALS TO SOUTHERN COASTAL AREA OF SRI LANKA

P.B.S.N. Kumara

*University College of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka
sumithranandana@gmail.com*

T.M.C.D. Senarathna

*Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
mail.chaturika@gmail.com*

Abstract

Tourism plays a major role in the world as a growing industry sector and it also has become an important part of the Gross Domestic Production of both developing and developed countries. The domestic tourism sector is also a valuable sector for the proper destination. Galle is identified as a popular tourist destination for both domestic and international tourists. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine whether there is an influence of selected social media (Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Instagram posts) on domestic tourist arrivals to the southern coastal area with special reference to Galle city. The objectives were to examine the relationship between social media and domestic tourists' arrivals to southern coastal area, to examine the most effective social media which affect with domestic travel and to provide recommendations to increase domestic tourism via social media. This study was conducted by using the quantitative method. The study's population was domestic tourists who visited the dawn south coastal belt, especially the Galle city and 200 young domestic tourists have been selected based on the convenient sampling method as respondents. Both primary and secondary data were used. Facebook posts, YouTube videos, and Instagram posts were identified as independent variables of the study, and travel decisions were identified as the dependent variable. According to the findings, Facebook posts and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship and YouTube videos and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship. Instagram posts and domestic tourists' travel decisions also created weak positive relationships. Based on the findings, social media highly influences domestic travel decisions.

Keywords: Tourism, Social media, Domestic tourism, Promotion



1. Introduction

Tourism plays a major role in the world as a growing industry sector and it also has become an important part of the Gross Domestic Production of both developing and developed countries. In the Sri Lankan context, the tourism industry has been identified as one of the major industries which have the potential to contribute immensely to the growth of the Sri Lankan economy.

In the modern world, there are two types of main tourists who gain economic advantages for a certain destination. Those were domestic and international tourism. Similar countries like India, Bangladesh, and the Maldives, which are in close proximity to Sri Lanka, are gaining benefits from the economic sector.

The domestic tourism sector is also a valuable sector for the proper destination. It also underpins creating employment opportunities, economic enhancement, rural and regional development (Shantha, 2008). Destination marketing organization uses strategic marketing approaches. The strategic marketing approach of tourism coordinates marketing for tourist attractions, activities, facilities, and services, various and increasingly fragmented tourist markets (Soteriades, 2012).

Destination marketing activities should be smooth to attract tourists to the destination. Social media is used as a competitive advantage resource by the Sri Lankan hotel owners (Kaldeen, 2019). Because it can be used to attract tourists to accommodation places (Mubarak, 2020). Social media helps tourists when they arrange travel, accommodation booking, and site visits (Bulankulama, 2017).

Generally, promotion is a considerable part of the marketing mix. Without promotions, products cannot be succeeded in the target market. Promotion acts as a vital role in the marketing mix. It is an important part of marketing any product or service to achieve the expected level of sales and to ensure awareness of the product by potential target customers (Hasan, Rahman & Hussain, 2015). Components of promotions explain the promotional mix. The mix of promotional elements is used as a way of communicating product or service attribution to potential customers. Sometimes, the role of intermediaries acts as contributors to effective promotions (Cuellar-Healey, 2013).

Galle is identified as a popular tourist destination for both domestic and international tourists. According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2019), Galle was visited by 51,286 domestic tourists and 12,661 international tourists. Hence, this study was conducted to determine whether there is an influence of selected social media “Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Instagram posts” on domestic tourist arrivals to the southern coastal area with special reference to Galle city. Therefore, the objectives are; to examine the relationship between social media and domestic tourists’ arrivals to southern coastal area, to examine the most effective social media which affect with domestic travel and to derive recommendations to increase domestic tourism via social media.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development



In the tourism sector, destinations include attractions, accommodation providers, and service providers such as travel agents. In a successful destination, service providers communicate the destination and its service attribution to the potential customers.

Promotion is the process of message communication. Messages should be influential to motivate the purchase decision of the customer. Different channels are available in the organization help to communicate the message to the customer. Those channels are identified as promotional mix (Sunday & Bayode, 2011). The promotional mix includes four elements such as advertising, personnel selling, public relations, and sales promotion. Promotion is one of the variables through which information regarding products or services is being communicated to customers to change their attitude and behavior. Marketers are concerned with the effective utilization of promotion-mix to increase sales and market share (Patwa & Patwa, 2013).

By using advertising, the promoter can communicate with a large market within a small time period. The personnel selling concept is far beyond advertising. In conducting personal selling, selected sales force tries to promote product or service, makes sales, and build relationships with customer by using personal presentations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

Personal selling and advertising are not sufficient promotions for destination promotions. The next part of the promotional mix is public relations. It can be used in tourism to reach tourists who avoid advertising and personnel selling. It realizes news, speeches, special events, written materials, audiovisual materials as a major public relations tool. The organization can use public relations as personal or non-personal. By using a public relations tool, the organization can gain a competitive advantage over advertising and public relations.

Social media technologies are creating communication patterns. Therefore, it especially addresses the young generation (Mubarak, 2020). It affects domestic tourists' behavior patterns. Online review: e-wom, significant influence on domestic tourist behavior. Also, social media creates a positive image of the destination in domestic youth tourists' minds (Shamini, 2020; Kaldeen, 2019). Social media sites like Facebook are creating more potential for the tourism industry. It helped to create the travel plan. Also, it easily allows users to collaborate, post photos, and give suggestions and recommendations for travel plans, as well as the popularity of the site. (Cahyanto et al, 2011). Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, you tube are effective web promotion tools.

During web promotion, the number of times that visitor logs onto the website creates an impact on the effectiveness of web promotional activities (Kaldeen, & Thowfeek 2018). When considering web promotion for social media views must increase. Web promotion can define as effective promotion whether the tourist arrivals to the destination should increase by web promotion.

3. Research methodology

This study was conducted by using the quantitative method. The research site was in the Galle area. The study's population was domestic tourists who visited the dawn south coastal belt, especially the Galle city. 200 young domestic tourists have been selected based on the

convenient sampling method as respondents. Both primary and secondary data were used. For the primary data, five points Likert scale questionnaire survey was carried out and for the secondary data, published data such as research articles, journal articles, statistical reports, books, websites, etc. were used by the researcher. Facebook posts, YouTube videos, and Instagram posts were identified as independent variables of the study, and travel decisions were identified as the dependent variable.

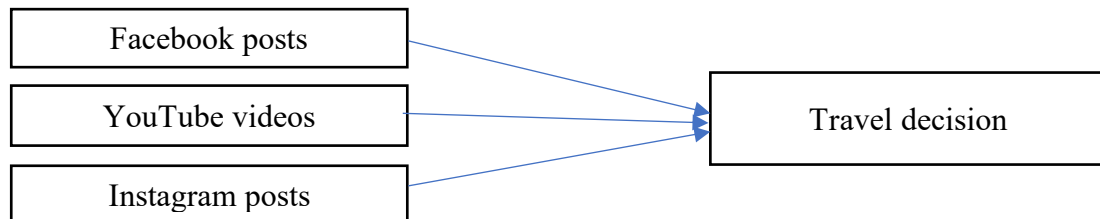


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, 96% of respondents had Facebook accounts, 86% of them had the Instagram account and 91% had accessibility to YouTube. 53% of them were male and the rest were female. 78% were used in their own transport mode and rest were used bus, train, etc. 64% interested in beach activities, 30% interested with other attractions available in the area. 95% were interested in discounted accommodation prices offered by hotels in the area. When concern with the level of satisfaction of the domestic tourists, 56% were highly satisfied, 32% were mostly satisfied and the rest were moderately satisfied.

Table 1: Validity and reliability

Variable	No of items	Reliability Statistics Cronbach's Alpha	Validity test KMO and Bartlett's Test
Facebook posts	05	0.827	0.809
YouTube videos	05	0.852	0.802
Instagram posts	05	0.749	0.760
Travel decision	06	0.890	0.880

The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha to find the reliability of the data set. According to Cronbach's Alpha value, the Facebook posts variable achieved 0.827, YouTube videos 0.852, Instagram posts achieved 0.749, and the Travel decision variable express 0.890 value. All variables are achieved more than 0.7 and those are reliable. Also, KMO and Bartlett's Test was used to measure the validity of the data set. All variables illustrated more than 0.7 value and all variables are valid.



Table 2: Correlation and hypothesis testing

Variables	Pearson Correlation	T test	Accepted Hypothesis
Facebook posts -Travel decision	0.727	0.000	H ₁
YouTube videos -Travel decision	0.752	0.000	H ₂
Instagram posts -Travel decision	0.547	0.000	H ₃

Two main objectives of the study were to examine the relationship between social media and domestic tourists’ arrivals to the southern coastal area, to examine the most effective social media which affect domestic travel. To achieve the above objectives, the researcher conducted the Pearson Correlation test. According to Pearson Correlation value, Facebook posts, and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship and the value was 0.727. YouTube videos and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship. The value was 0.752. Also, Instagram posts and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a weak positive relationship. Based on the analysis the following hypotheses are accepted as it fulfilled statistical requirements.

- H₁ – There is significant relationship between Facebook posts and domestic tourists travel decision
- H₂ – There is significant relationship between YouTube videos and domestic tourists travel decision
- H₃ – There is significant relationship between Instagram posts and domestic tourists travel decision

Based on the model summery value, R square value was 0.684 and it mean 68.4% of independent variables are interpreted by dependent variable.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was conducted to find out whether there is a relationship between selected social media “Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Instagram posts” and domestic tourists arrivals to southern coastal area special reference to Galle city. Study objectives were to examine the relationship between social media and domestic tourists’ arrivals to the southern coastal area, to examine the most effective social media sites which affect domestic travel, and to determine the recommendations to increase domestic tourism via social media. According to the findings, Facebook posts and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship and YouTube videos and domestic tourists' travel decisions created a strong positive relationship. Instagram posts and domestic tourists' travel decisions also created weak positive relationships. Based on the findings, social media highly influences domestic travel decisions. Especially, after the first COVID 19 breakdown, there was a rapid increment of domestic tourists to travel Sri Lankan destinations. Tourism organizations were conducted discounted promotion activities via social media channels. Based on the findings, social media is significant with domestic travel.



Social media is a powerful channel to promote domestic tourism activities. There should be a proper flat form to disseminate tourism information in the social media flat form. Because accurate information needs to be distributed. Especially facebook is a significant channel because it creates public comment to motivate domestic tourists. Also, tourism service providers can use social media as a proper marketing and promotion channel rather than traditional channels.

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