Chapter 13
The Role of Social Networks in Choosing a Tourist Destination in the Case of Saudi Tourists

Walid Chouari
College of Arts, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

Monia Ben Ltaifa
College of Community in Abqaiq, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

Abdelkader Mohamed Sghaier Derbali
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4098-3120
Applied College, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This chapter is about exploring the role of social media and blogs in choosing a destination from the perspective of Saudi tourists. The authors use a sample of people who are planning their destination. The study is based on a survey of 1200 Saudi tourists in the end of 2021 year. To do so, the authors use a Pearson test, a measure of the stability of the questionnaire by the coefficient of Alpha-Cronbach. Also, they employ a descriptive analysis to explain the impact of social networks in choosing a tourist destination. The empirical results show that the role of the internet in general and social media, in particular, plays an important role in the Saudi tourist's choice of a destination. Facebook is the most frequently consulted social network when choosing a destination. Tourists in Saudi Arabia book their stay 1 to 3 months in advance at a physical travel agency and book accommodation and transport.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the leading industries in the global economy, especially in most countries, and the interest of countries in tourism development and activating its role in the national economy has increased due to its economic, social and environmental benefits, which made it a major source of input

in a large number of countries in the world. The financial return of the tourism industry is also characterized as a branched and manifold return, and various activities, whether economic, social, political, cultural or other human activities, benefit from it.

Tourism is currently a commercial industry and a promising economic sector of varying importance from one country to another, depending on the size of the tourism resources that are available with it and the financial, human and technological material resources harnessed to prepare it in the future and make it a tourist destination. Perhaps the trend towards improving the quality of tourism and hotel services represents the preoccupation of many countries with the aim of growing the local economy.

Also, tourism is a developed economic sector that is experiencing the emergence of new destinations in an increasingly competitive environment, the individual needs to discover new destinations. To meet this need, the consumer will set up a decision-making system to choose the right destination and limit the risk of disappointment at the end of the stay. For this, today, the tourist has many means to find information: families, friends, travel agency, newspapers, internet, and media (Beerli and Martín, 2004).

In recent years, the tourism sector has witnessed a significant evolution of new information and communication technologies. These developments have changed the way things are done, both for the tourist and for the professional. There are many increasingly mobile mediums these days, allowing tourists to connect wherever and whenever they want (Beerli et al., 2007).

Wang et al. (2021) consider that the spatial program of tourists from foundation to destination, and amongst destinations, donates to a regional tourism collaboration network, and they employed Social Network Analysis (SNA) to investigate the structure of tourism picturesque spot collaboration networks. Additional, Wang et al. (2022) complete a proportional examination of tourism collaboration networks by utilizing Social Network Analysis (SNA) from the viewpoint of both supply and demand.

Gao et al. (2021) investigate the spatial differentiation and associated characteristics of tourism flows within China by utilizing Tencent migration big data. Nistor et al. (2020) employ Geographic Information System (GIS) to discover the spatial characteristics and differentiation instructions of different categories of tourism flows.

The Web has been constantly evolving for the past few years. This phenomenon is supported by the emergence of new digital media that are ever more mobile and efficient, the arrival of the Internet and social media has revolutionized the exchange of information between individuals, who have become active. Today's tourist is an e-tourist, hyper-connected and over-informed. For professionals, being present online has become essential. It is a multifunctional medium for communicating as well as for disseminating and selling the tourist offer (Castro et al., 2007).

Indeed, the abundance of different offers on social networks and the amount of information offered are gradually, but undoubtedly radically, changing the process of collecting information and buying from the tourist, which forces tourism companies to face to these demanding consumers and offer them services that will satisfy them.

Our problem is to know the role of the use of social media in the choice of a tourist destination from the search for information through the reservation of the stay until the outcome of the stay in Saudi Arabia.

The question raised in this communication is therefore: "What is the role of social media in the choice of a tourist destination in Saudi Arabia?". This paper will therefore attempt to provide some answers to these.

This study consists in understanding the role of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Snapchat) furthermore as blogs, within the alternative of a holidaymaker destination from the purpose of read of the Saudi tourist. To try and do so, we study a sample of individuals who prepare their tourist

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