

The influence of social media on tourist' planning and destination selection decisions

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Abstract- Social networks are becoming increasingly popular. According to researchers, more than half of the world's population now uses social networks. Social media represents a revolution in terms of advertising opportunities for businesses. Thus, the mechanisms of social networks have changed not only the means, but also the communication. Social media is becoming an important marketing tool for destination management organizations and thus has a major impact on tourism markets. The advent of new technologies such as social media has changed the way consumers seek information related to their purchasing decisions. Through the advice or knowledge, they receive from the community, they create an image of the destination and are used by consumers to make decisions. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the use of social media and the impact of social media on consumer travel decision making.

Index Terms- tourist destination, information in social networks, communication in social networks, decision-making process

I. INTRODUCTION

Promote Mongolia-specific tourism and enhance competitiveness in the international tourism market as the third priority economic area in Chapter 4 "Economy" in Development Guidelines 2021-2025." The tourism is mentioned as above. In addition, tourism is mentioned second after infrastructure development in Chapter 8 "Regional and Rural Development." The followings have been specified as specific targets and are described in the Investment Program (PIP), an attached document: project name, project budget, financial plan, financial resources, and supervision, and others that are scheduled to be implemented.

1. Improvement of tourism products, services, quality, and planning to enhance competitiveness and increase the number of tourists to 1 million

2. Establishment of the Chinggis Khaan Complex to promote historical tourism by protecting historical sites that appear in the secret history of Mongolia, and by implementing international promotion and infrastructure development in stages

3. Sustainable tourism development projects will be implemented in Khuvsgul aimag, Khentii aimag, Arkhangai aimag, Bayan-Ulgii aimag, Uvs aimag, Khovd aimag, and

Zavkhan aimag, contributing to the increase in revenues from local residents and businesses.

The number of tourists visiting Mongolia grew steadily from 2015 to 2019, but in 2020 it fell to one tenth of that of 2019 due to COVID-19. According to the COVID-19 RESPONSE of the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), Mongolia was a country that experienced the largest decrease in the number of tourists in 2020, an 89% decrease from that of 2019 (source: UNTWO Tourism Dashboard). According to the OECD's forecast, the number of tourists around the world will return to its 2019 level in 2024 at the earliest. The table below shows the results of estimating the number of tourists from 2025 based on the average rate of increase from 2015 to 2019 [2].

The annual average growth rate of the number of foreign tourists from 2015 to 2019 before the COVID-19 situation became more serious was a 10.5% increase. UNWTO assume that the Post-COVID tourism industry will take at least four years to return to 2019 levels. Considering the heightened sense of anxiety about health among people, Mongolia, a country adjacent to the origin of the COVID-19 outbreak without a high level of medical care, may require more time for recovery. The impact of the COVID-19 infectious disease is essentially different from and far more serious than the economic crisis caused by the Lehman crisis. However, it is not an exaggeration to say that the future of tourism in Mongolia depends on how to prepare for the Post-COVID situation and making it an attractive country for tourists during this period when the world's tourism industry is stagnant.

In Mongolia, the number of domestic tourists has increased sharply in recent years. Under the COVID-19 crisis, as pointed out by many people, the tendency to shift to domestic tourism will appear, but Mongolia has another background. Since the statistics are not fully developed, all we can do is to guess based on the number of visitors to specific areas of major sightseeing areas or tourist spots, but we can see that the number has increased sharply in recent years as indicated below. As soon as COVID-19 in Mongolia settled down, the number of domestic tourists is expected to further increase in the future.

Tax revenues in the tourism sector in 2019 amounted to approximately 7.3 billion MNT (approximately 2.65 million USD) from approximately 570 thousand foreign tourists. Although the tax revenue decreased to 5.2 billion MNT in 2020, despite a

decrease of the number of foreign tourists to one tenth, tourism revenues have not decreased much. The cause of this is considered to be attributed to a significant increase in the number of domestic tourists.

Many researchers have studied social media in tourism from different perspectives, such as the benefits and risks of using social media, and whether traveler social media engagement is positively associated with motivation and empowerment. A variety of information is collected before the trip and shared after the trip, especially for unfamiliar destinations. The connection between social media and purchasing decisions is highlighted by the fact that almost 78% of travelers use social media for travel. Social networks were analyzed as they play an important role in the communication process. However, quantitative measurement tools for social media are quite limited, since the decision-making process influenced by social media is analyzed mainly through qualitative research [1].

Social media influences all stages of travel as it facilitates information gathering, communication and travel decisions. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers with any segment of the offer can spread very easily, since social networks can quickly spread this information across the digital environment. Although many active users use the Internet and social networks to get information about destinations, some tourists find it takes too much time to find certain information.

The purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which communication through social networks can influence the process of choosing a destination and the importance of communication for potential tourists. To achieve the objectives of the study, an empirical study was conducted using a self-completion questionnaire. The research instrument was a structured online questionnaire that was developed from previous literature and the questions were adapted to meet the needs of the study. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the importance of using social media, social media communication, social media information and decision making. The purpose of this is to find out whether respondents believe that social networks facilitate communication and help to simplify the process of collecting information when choosing a destination, and whether they find the information collected useful and important when choosing a destination. Education. This section also includes questions about the importance of timely information and updated address profiles. The second part of the questionnaire examines the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, education and employment, and the use of social networks [3].

According to the results of the survey, Facebook is the most frequently used social network by users, along with Instagram and YouTube (Figure 1).

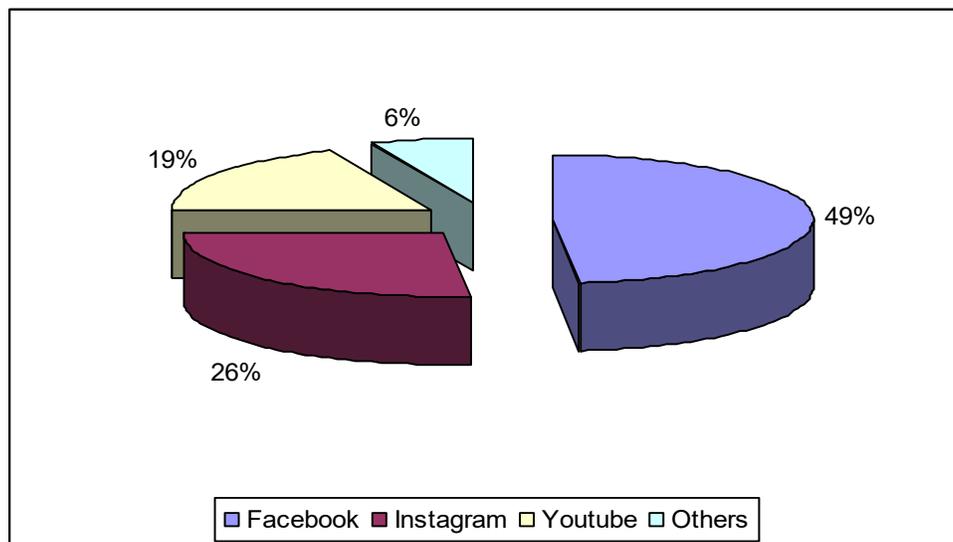


Figure 1 – The most popular social networks among respondents [4].

H1: Reviews posted and shared by consumer stakeholders on social media have a positive impact on travel decisions.

One of the questions in the study was asked as follows: "Do you use information from social networks when planning a trip"?

Figure 2 presents the results of respondents' answers to the question of whether tourists use data obtained from social networks in the process of preparing for travel.

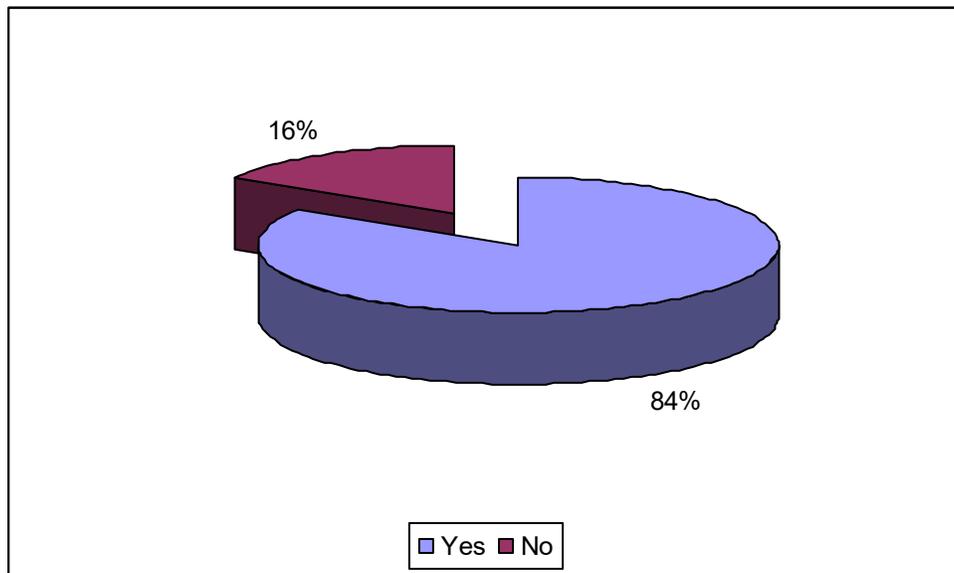


Figure 2 - Use of information from social networks in the process of preparing for the trip

Thus, the data presented in Figure 2 convincingly shows that the vast majority of respondents use information from social networks in the process of planning travel.

The next question that needed to be answered in the course of the study was the following: “To what extent do you trust reviews and comments on social networks”?

Figure 3 shows data on the degree of user trust in reviews and comments on social networks.

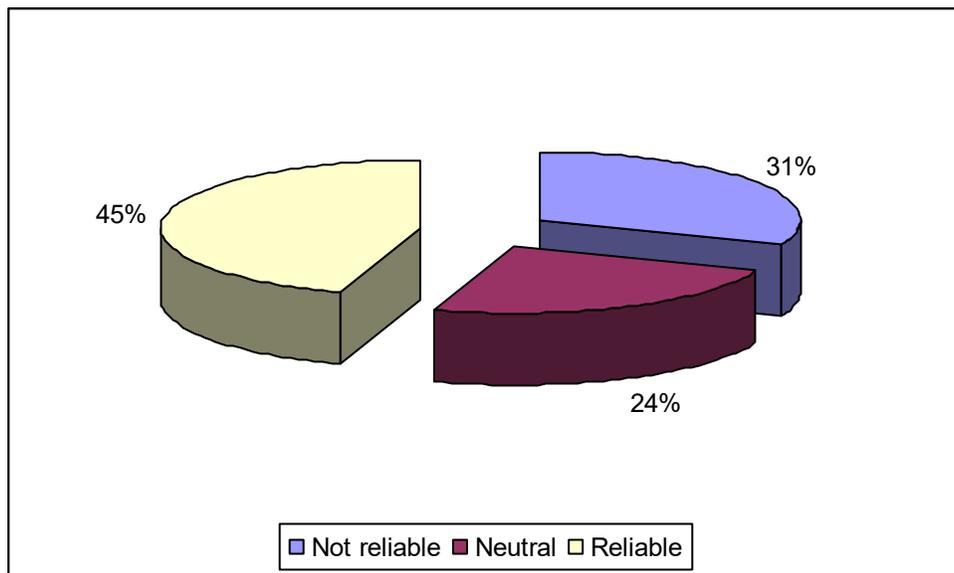


Figure 3 - Reliability of social media posts and comments as a source of information

Thus, as the results of the survey show, almost half of the respondents consider posts and comments on social networks a reliable source of information.

Therefore, the hypothesis that reviews posted and shared by consumer stakeholders on social media have a positive impact on travel decisions can be considered proven.

H2: social media has a direct impact on tourists' decision-making as they find it easier to use social media when choosing a travel destination.

When studying the level of influence on decision-making by tourists of various sources of information, the respondents were asked the question: “Which sources do you prefer to use when making a decision about choosing a place to travel”?

Figure 4 presents data on the results of the survey.

As the data shown in Figure 4 show, a significant part of the respondents, when making a decision on choosing a travel destination, are guided by reviews and comments on social networks.

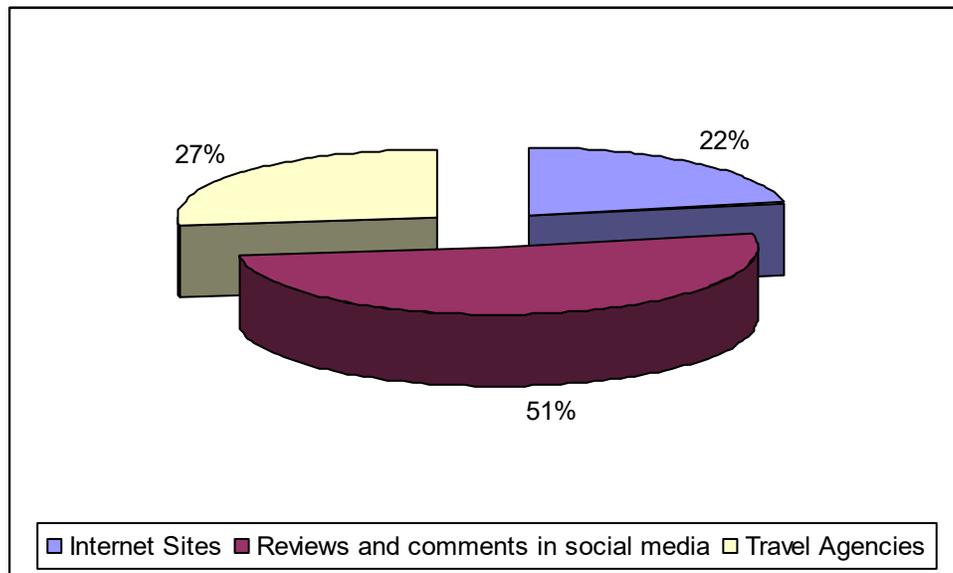


Figure 4 - Preferred sources of information when choosing a travel destination

The discriminant validity of the measurement model, assessed using the Fornell-Larker test, shows that social media use has a statistically significant positive effect on decision making, social media communication, and social media information. Construction Decision making in the aggregate is explained by 69.4%, which is considered important. The f^2 effect size of using social media in explaining the concept of decision making is large (0.436), while social media communication (0.059) and social media information (0.074) have small effect sizes.

Social media offers a number of advertising benefits and this social media offers a combination of different elements such as text, video, audio and photos. This combination creates great advantages in integrated marketing communications. Social media is a new trend, but it is developing rapidly and therefore needs to be managed well [5].

Social networks like Facebook, Youtube and Webpage have gained popularity and trends show that consumers are more educated and young people connect with them every day and become a part of their daily life.

Facebook is good tool for promotion because they have high usage, are reliable, have interest in the information they provide, and have a high monetary value.

In a sense, Facebook brings customers back, e.g. social media users, in advertising and promotional channels. Customers can form a positive or negative impression of a company, its products and services, depending on how the company is

presented to them. Thus, consumers' perceived image or quality affects the opinion or message they convey to others on social media.

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