

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM: CASE STUDY ON SAMARKAND

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Abstract: *Tourism is a vital industry for every country's growth in economy. As a consequence of the advancement of information and communication technology, social media has become a vital part of people's life, and they have made great use of it while choosing on any touristic organization. Social media plays a critical part in cultural heritage tourism, which is one sort of alternative tourism. Through social media, any traveler may learn about the place to which they are traveling. Simultaneously, they raise recognition and knowledge of cultural heritage tourism values using social media platforms. The purpose of this study is to investigate the usage of social media in cultural heritage tourism in the case of Samarkand. The study covers social media by using theoretical analyzing, social media platforms, and the usage of social media in cultural heritage tourism and the study suggests different recommendations are made to increase the use of social media in cultural heritage tourism in Samarkand.*

Keywords: *tourism industry, cultural heritage, media, social medial platforms, tourism development, social media marketing.*

Introduction: Social media is commonly characterized as internet-based, restricted as well as persistent mass communication channels that enhance the perception of user interactions and extract value from user-generated material (Carr and Hayes, 2015). According to Weber (2007), it is "an online community where people with similar interests can come together to share their thoughts, comments, and ideas." Social media plays a vital role in communication among individuals, groups, and institutions (Kietzmann, 2011), and it has evolved into a medium via which people may seek for and acquire information from sources other than conventional ones. It has also served as a platform for them to generate new content, convey their ideas and experiences, and exchange information (Dickey and Lewis, 2011). Many tourists make use of social media to purchase tourism-related services. According to the findings of EGM's research, the tourist industry is one of the quickest attempting to reach its target audience through the internet and social networks (Van Der Bank, 2015). Furthermore, Manap (2013) discovered that the tourist business was working hand in hand with modern information and communication technology. As a result, social media plays an essential part in the development of cultural heritage tourism, as it does in many other industries, and this role will only grow in importance as information and communication technology advance. In this perspective, this study looked at the use of social media in cultural heritage tourism in Samarkand.

Literature review: Various definitions of social media have emerged to clarify what it implies. It is defined as "a set of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Merriam-Webster (2011) defines social networking websites as "forms of electronic communication (websites for social networking and microblogging) created by online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content." In other words, it may be any type of computer-mediated communication in which users can develop their own profiles and content to show who they are, as well as watch and engage with the information of others (Carr and Hayes, 2015).

Social media - The use of ICT (information and communication technologies) in the tourist sector has provided several benefits to businesses and customers, and social media has therefore become

an integral aspect of daily life. Because it is a new and useful instrument for connecting with family, friends, and organizations, it should not be separated from the offline world. There has been a social revolution in the way society communicates as a result of the widespread usage of social media with the help of various technology such as tablets and smartphones (Tiago & Verssimo, 2014).

Social media platforms - With social media, the process of contact between customers and businesses has changed dramatically (Aladwani, 2014), and social media has become a prominent instrument in communication. The prominence of social media platforms shows shifts in media consumption (Twitter, 2014). Approximately 88% of companies in the media, information technology and telecommunications, FMCG and retail, travel and entertainment, and other industries began to use various social media platforms, and approximately 42% have fully integrated various social media sites into their marketing strategies (Rapp, 2013). As a result, social media has become a more successful means of acquiring new clients and retaining existing ones (Luo, 2015). Furthermore, the Institute of Marketing Science (2016) has recognized social media as one of the topics of study emphasis between 2016 and 2018.

Cultural heritage – Cultural heritage tourism refers to tourism markets and industries that have developed around heritage. Heritage and tourism are inextricably linked (The Travel and Tourism Programme, Ireland; Kamani Perera). Cultural tourism comprises a wide variety of perspectives including a whole spectrum of human expressions and manifestations that visitors undertake to experience the heritages, arts, lifestyles, and other aspects of people living in cultural locations. Cultural tourism is commonly associated with heritage tourism. Heritage tourism: refers to travelers visiting areas of traditional, historical, and cultural value for educational and recreational purposes (Nzama, 2015).

Use of social media in Uzbekistan - In January 2023, the entire population of Uzbekistan was 34.90 million people. According to statistics, the population of Uzbekistan rose by 549 thousand (+1.6 percent) between 2022 and 2023. Uzbekistan has a female population of 50.0 percent and a male population of 50.0 percent. At the beginning of 2023, urban regions housed 50.6 percent of Uzbekistan's population, while rural areas housed 49.4 percent (Simon Kemp, 20230). According to Kepios data, the number of social media users in Uzbekistan rose by 421 thousand (+1.6%) between 2022 and 2023. For context, these user numbers show that 8.17 million individuals in Uzbekistan did not access the internet at the beginning of 2023, implying that 23.4 percent of the population was offline at the start of the year.

Cultural heritage in Uzbekistan - Uzbekistan's culture has a rich history that is closely linked by centuries-old customs and lifestyles of Central Asian peoples. Uzbekistan, located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, has accumulated many architectural structures, old fortresses and castles, enigmatic and unique natural monuments, and folklore components, many of which are now protected by UNESCO World Heritage. To date, the UNESCO Representative World Heritage list includes four architectural complexes: Khiva's Ichan Kala Museum-reserve (1990), Bukhara's historical center (1993), Samarkand's historical center "Samarkand - crossroads of cultures" (2001), Shakhrisabz's historical center, the Ugam-Chatkal National Park (2016), and nine intangible heritage monuments (National PR, 2023).

Results: Consumers are far more affected by recommendations about things they have used, and the tourist sector is anticipated to follow suit. Online information resources are user-generated content that travelers may locate and assess by identifying and reviewing text, videos, graphics, and images submitted online by other users or experienced travelers (Manap, 2013). Online chats provide users a variety of engagement options, ranging from conversation to numerous video conferences, as well as the exchange of e-mail messages and participation in blogs and discussion groups (Campbell, 2010). Major cultural attractions (popular palaces, castles, museums) in the very vast field of cultural heritage tourism may have highly professional organizational and management

structures, as well as financial and people resources. Smaller and maybe less popular tourist locations in rural regions, for example, may have to operate with fewer personnel and a restricted budget. This can result in considerable disparities in the use of information and communication technologies across cultural heritage areas, having an impact on how business operations are handled and information is maintained and disseminated. Visitors, on the other hand, are no longer happy with just "information." New technologies and digital databases can assist cultural and heritage organizations in sharing knowledge, promoting and selling their services, and improving the tourist experience (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt and Aljas, 2009).

Discussion: Tourism is evolving quickly, notably in new applications of mobile location data, online scraping and open application programming interface (API) data, sharing data, collaborative economy and passenger data (Kalvet, 2020). The number of visitors that destinations host on a daily basis is one of the most important indicators produced from mobile positioning data (MPD) that may be used to analyze the impact of cultural heritage tourism on destinations. MPD also allows for the capture of visitors who do not stay overnight at the venue. Furthermore, MPD frequently includes information about travelers who do not stay in lodging facilities, such as those who stay with friends or family or who use Airbnb rentals, which are frequently excluded from official accommodation statistics. According to MPD statistics, the number of visitors that places welcome on a daily basis may not be as significant as traditional data sets. The use of MPD to tourism studies enables comprehensive temporal and geographical tracking of visitors. Thus, visitors' daily, weekly, and seasonal visits may be analyzed (Kalvet, 2020). Despite the fact that cultural heritage tourism goods may be enjoyed all year, tourist figures demonstrate that arrivals are not evenly distributed. In Samarkand, there are still high and low seasons, with activities for cultural heritage visitors available all year. One of the most well-known ways to minimize the low season is to create large tourism events. Concerts, exhibits, fairs, and other such large events pique the interest of both inhabitants and visitors. Based on MPD, it is possible to evaluate the hinterland of events by analyzing the origin of visitors, where they come from, how long they stay, and what other places they visit, to analyze recurring identities in the database over time, and to determine visits made by a person during the data period (Nilbe, 2014).

Conclusion: With the introduction of social media channels, the tourism sector continues to adapt. Geotagged data from social networks such as Twitter, Foursquare, Flickr, or Instagram has become a key source of data on people's travels in recent years (Kalvet, 2020). These geotagged social media data (GSMD) are used to estimate the number of arriving guests and to track tourist activity at specific destinations. It may be advantageous for users to establish their profiles since it provides information about the traveler's country of residence, interests, and other tourist places visited, but it creates a privacy barrier (Chua, 2016). Tourists use social media platforms to obtain information before their journey, to share their thoughts and experiences while traveling, and to express clearly if they are happy with their experiences after their trip. As a result, they either inspire or discourage others. As a result, tourism destinations should collaborate with all stakeholders, provide all types of information that their clients want, and, of course, seek expert assistance. Businesses may use social media to establish websites, emails, text messages, and forums. As a result, it allows for more concise and direct communication with target groups (Tinuoye, 2020). As a result, venues that wish to promote their cultural tourism assets may simply communicate with their target audiences. At this point, destinations might improve their market shares by skillfully using numerous social networks.

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