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(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The role of digital marketing promoting tourism business: A study of use of the social media in promoting travel

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Abstract

This study explores how digital marketing, especially through social media, impacts tourism businesses. We looked at different sources like academic studies, industry reports, government papers, and online platforms to understand this connection better. We found that digital marketing, like using social media and videos, plays a big role in making people interested in travelling. For instance, research showed that when people see digital marketing, they are more likely to think about going on trips and spending money on them. Social media is also changing how people plan and book their trips. Reports showed that most travelers now use social media to decide where to go and even book their travel experiences. This shift in behavior shows how important social media has become in travel planning.

Government reports also told us that the Internet is changing how people travel. More tourists use the Internet to plan and book their trips. These reports highlight that digital tools are making a big difference in the way we travel. Online platforms like social media are not just communication tools; they also inspire travel plans and help people decide where to go. We learned that social media is trusted by travelers and is shaping the way people choose their travel destinations.

This research shows that digital marketing, especially through social media, is not just a trend but a powerful tool for tourism businesses. By understanding how people use the Internet and social media, businesses can connect with travelers, share their stories, and create stronger connections. This research gives us a better understanding of how digital marketing is changing the world of travel.

Keywords: Digital Advertising; Boosting Travel; Social- Media; Users Interaction; Travel Industry; Influencer Marketing; Online Existence.

1. Introduction

This fusion of online platforms has sparked fundamental change within the realm of tourism by leveraging technology aids and likes to serve contemporary clientele with customized experiences they seek while traversing uncharted territory (Buhalis& Law, 2008). This revolution has been fueled by technological breakthroughs that have redefined the dynamics of travel and tourism (Buhalis& Law, 2008). The convergence of digital marketing, social media, and tourism is pivotal, not only enhancing engagement and community-building but also nurturing brand loyalty (Buhalis& Law, 2008). The concept of "smart tourism" has emerged as a consequence of the growing reliance on emerging forms of information and communication technology (ICT) in various aspects of tourism (Gretzel et al., 2015). Characterized by the use of ICT to convert extensive data into value propositions, smart tourism holds transformative potential, although it requires further conceptual development and research (Gretzel et al., 2015). Technological innovation plays a vital role in enhancing the competitiveness of tourism entities and destinations, reshaping industry structures, distribution

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channels, and cost optimization (Zimeng et al., 2023). Furthermore, the application of information technology has become a driving force in the economic growth of the tourism industry, offering convenient and efficient services for modern tourism development (Jin, 2023).

The integration of digital marketing, social media, and technology has revolutionized the tourism industry, enabling more efficient operations, enhanced experiences for tourists, and the pursuit of strategic goals such as carbon emission reduction (Zimeng et al., 2023). The role of information technology in promoting integrated development and technological innovation within the tourism industry underscores the transformative impact of digitalization (Zimeng et al., 2023). As the tourism landscape continues to evolve, technological advancement remains a key driver of change and progress, influencing how destinations, businesses, and travellers interact and shape the future of the industry.

1.1. Problem of the Study

The utilization of social media as a marketing tool has become increasingly indispensable within the tourism industry, particularly in the digital age. It offers a fresh avenue for travel entities to effectively connect with their intended audience and promote their services and products (Reyes, 2021). Social media platforms extend beyond merely relaying basic attraction information, enabling tourism establishments to foster customer interaction through reviews, responsive communication, and the exhibition of their management profiles, contributing to the efficacy of social media marketing strategies (Reyes, 2021). However, the efficacy of these strategies is met with challenges, including hidden costs, incongruence's between advertised visuals and actual experiences, and instances of misinformation shared by tourism establishments, underscoring the critical need to overcome these hurdles to ensure customer trust and satisfaction.

The convergence of technology and social media has taken on heightened significance within the tourism marketing landscape amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media platforms have played a pivotal role in supporting tourism development during these turbulent times, serving as a medium for tourism organizations to interact with potential travelers, share vital safety information, and market destinations and attractions (Wahyuni et al., 2021). The expansive reach and accessibility of social media have facilitated the formulation and execution of marketing strategies within the tourism sector, enabling connections with a broader audience (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

Apprehending the strategic deployment of social media for marketing purposes within the tourism industry holds paramount importance for cultivating effective methodologies and remaining attuned to industry trends. It provides insights into efficacious tactics and successes within the digital marketing realm, contributing to a more holistic comprehension of the repercussions of digital marketing on the tourism sector (Buhalis& Law, 2008). Research endeavors in this sphere are instrumental in furnishing professionals and scholars with valuable insights to refine marketing strategies and stay current with evolving industry dynamics (Buhalis& Law, 2008).

To conclude, social media has emerged as a critical and transformative tool for marketing within the tourism industry. It empowers tourism establishments to foster engagement, share comprehensive information, and cultivate customer relationships. Nevertheless, the challenges of effective social media utilization persist. Research in this domain serves as a beacon for illuminating prosperous strategies and trends, contributing to a broader comprehension of the enduring impact of digital marketing on the realm of tourism.

Aim of the Study

This research comprehensively explores the role of digital marketing in promoting tourism businesses, with a specific focus on leveraging social media as a potent tool for travel promotion and destination marketing.

Objectives of the Study

- Analyze the evolution and impact of digital marketing on tourism.
- Examine the significance of social media as a communication channel for travel promotion.
- Evaluate digital marketing strategies on social media platforms.
- Assess the effectiveness of social media in shaping traveler preferences and destination choices.

1.2. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the utilization of social media platforms for promoting travel businesses. It investigates strategies employed by travel entities to engage audiences, enhance brand visibility, and drive consumer interest through digital marketing, primarily on social media platforms.

1.3. Limitations of the Study

Potential limitations include time constraints affecting data collection and analysis, limited access to proprietary marketing strategies, and biases in data interpretation or participant responses.

1.4. Structure of the Study

The research is divided into chapters: Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, objectives, and scope. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 reviews the literature. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology. Chapter 5 presents and analyzes findings. Finally, Chapter 6 offers conclusions, emphasizing implications and contributions to the field.

1.5. Conclusion

This study aims to provide insights into digital marketing's role in promoting tourism businesses through social media. By examining strategies and their impact, tourism entities can understand traveler preferences, enabling effective marketing campaigns and propelling the industry into a new era of transformative travel experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This convergence of internet platforms has triggered a fundamental change in the tourist industry by harnessing technology aids and preferences to provide contemporary clients with the customized experiences they seek while venturing into unfamiliar terrain (Buhalis& Law, 2008). Social media platforms, with their real-time interactions and visual content capabilities, play a crucial role in this shift (Buhalis& Law, 2008). Additionally, the integration of technology and innovation in the tourism industry, driven by data-driven travel and advancements like the Internet of Things, is essential for its growth and informatization (Boiko & Boiko, 2022; Zimeng et al., 2023).

Digital marketing, particularly on social media, plays a pivotal role in promoting tourism businesses. It has the power to enhance travel promotion and create immersive experiences that resonate with evolving traveler preferences (Kong, 2023). The symbiotic relationship between digital marketing strategies and understanding traveler behaviors empowers businesses to create impactful campaigns (Buhalis& Law, 2008). Moreover, social media platforms foster customer relationships and shape brand loyalty, allowing tourism businesses to cultivate enduring connections with their customers (Kong, 2023).

In the context of South African tourism, factors influencing the adoption of social media marketing have been identified, emphasizing the need for training and support to harness its full potential (Zimeng et al., 2023). By leveraging digital marketing on social media platforms, tourism businesses can create immersive travel experiences and establish a strong brand presence, ultimately attracting and retaining customers.

The coalescence of technology, innovation, and digital marketing in the tourism industry highlights the interconnectedness of these elements. Technological innovation is a crucial aspect of tourism innovation, and without it, the industry would struggle to make fundamental breakthroughs and transition from a traditional industry to a modern one (Kong, 2023). The development of computer technology and the Internet of Things has revolutionized the tourism industry, enabling information-based tourism and transforming traditional tourism modes (Kong, 2023). Furthermore, the development of the tourism industry and technological innovation has a positive impact on the enhancement of informatization, creating a self-reinforcing mechanism (Zimeng et al., 2023).

The transformation of the tourism industry by digital marketing and social media, along with the integration of technology and innovation, is driven by the preferences of tech-savvy global audiences and the need for immersive travel experiences. Digital marketing on social media platforms plays a pivotal role in promoting tourism businesses, fostering customer relationships, and shaping brand loyalty. The coalescence of technology, innovation, and digital marketing highlights the interconnectedness of these elements and their impact on the growth and informatization of the tourism industry.

2.1.1. Evolution of Digital Marketing in Tourism

Digital marketing has revolutionized traditional marketing practices in the tourism industry (Buhalis& Law, 2008). This shift towards digital platforms has been driven by changing traveler behaviors, with tourists increasingly relying on online resources and social media for travel planning (Buhalis& Law, 2008). Techniques such as SEO, content marketing,

and social media advertising have empowered tourism businesses to enhance their online presence and effectively connect with potential travelers (Kumar et al., 2016). Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, have become integral communication channels for the tourism industry (Kumar et al., 2016). Real-time engagement on social media allows tourism companies to directly interact with travelers, offer immediate assistance, address inquiries, and resolve issues promptly, fostering transparency, trust, and approachability (Kumar et al., 2016).

2.1.2. Prevalence and Significance of Social Media Platforms

Amidst budget constraints and a need for efficient marketing spending, social media has gained traction as a strategic tool for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) to reach global audiences (Hays et al., 2013). The study aims to examine social media usage among top DMOs in the ten most visited countries. Utilizing content analysis and semi-structured interviews, the paper assesses the impact of social media strategies and proposes a best-practice framework for NTOs, revealing experimental strategies and variations (Hays et al., 2013).

Digital media, particularly social and digital platforms, play a pivotal role in promoting tourism, especially for the younger generation. Explainer videos are explored as essential tools for targeting young audiences within the tourism sector (Sedej & Kač, 2022). The evolution of tourism marketing toward storytelling, augmented reality, and year-round approaches is underscored by the growing influence of digital marketing (Sedej & Kač, 2022).

However, Yuliarti et al. (2021) suggest that the implementation of storytelling strategies for marketing tourism is not yet optimal. The study's findings emphasize the need to optimize social media promotion and storytelling elements to attract tourists effectively (Yuliarti et al., 2021). Indonesia's efforts to enhance tourism through storytelling-driven marketing are acknowledged as a means to improve visitor numbers and foreign exchange (Yuliarti et al., 2021).

In the realm of visual narratives, Instagram serves as a platform for shaping self-presentation and aesthetic ethos. Korkmazer et al. (2021) reveal how Instagram's visual storytelling guides youth in creating self-presentations and participating in its sociability. The platform becomes a space where young individuals navigate narratives, social norms, and imaginaries to assert their identity within a dominant culture of visual storytelling (Korkmazer et al., 2021).

2.1.3. Diverse Digital Marketing Strategies on Social Media

In the realm of studying the diverse digital marketing strategies on social media in the tourism industry, several key theories and models emerge as foundational. The Theory of Planned Behavior offers insights into how individual intentions influence behavior, which is relevant in understanding travelers' engagement with social media marketing (Nysveen et al., 2005). The Technology Acceptance Model highlights factors impacting the adoption of digital platforms, providing insights into the effectiveness of social media in engaging travelers (Nysveen et al., 2005). Additionally, the Social Influence Theory elucidates how social interactions shape consumer decisions, which is crucial in understanding the influence of social media on travelers' destination choices and decision-making processes (Nysveen et al., 2005).

2.1.4. Effectiveness of Social Media in Engaging Travelers

Research indicates that social media effectively engages travelers and influences their travel preferences. Travelers actively participate in conversations, share experiences, and seek travel recommendations from their peers on social media platforms (Reyes, 2021). Social media interactions play a significant role in shaping travelers' destination choices and decision-making processes (Reyes, 2021). The real-time nature of social media allows businesses to address queries promptly and offer personalized recommendations, contributing to positive traveler experiences (Reyes, 2021).

2.1.5. Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in Tourism Marketing

While social media presents tremendous opportunities, tourism businesses also face challenges in effectively utilizing these platforms. Maintaining a consistent online presence across multiple social media channels can be resource-intensive for businesses (Benton et al., 2017). Negative reviews and comments on social media can impact a business's reputation, necessitating prompt and thoughtful responses (Benton et al., 2017). However, the ubiquity of social media also allows businesses to gain valuable insights into traveler preferences, needs, and sentiments, facilitating data-driven decision-making and targeted marketing efforts (Benton et al., 2017).

2.1.6. Ethical Considerations in Social Media Marketing

Ethical considerations are crucial in social media marketing. Tourism businesses must handle travelers' data ethically, safeguarding user information and respecting data privacy laws (Khan et al., 2022). Responsible content creation

involves ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of information shared on social media platforms (Khan et al., 2022). Transparency in promotional messaging is crucial to maintain trust with travelers and avoid misleading advertising practices (Khan et al., 2022)

2.1.7. Key Theories and Models in Existing Literature

In the realm of studying this issue, several key theories and models emerge as foundational. The Theory of Planned Behavior offers insights into how individual intentions influence behavior, while the Technology Acceptance Model highlights factors impacting the adoption of digital platforms. Additionally, the Social Influence Theory elucidates how social interactions shape consumer decisions, crucial in the context of digital marketing's influence.

2.2. Case Studies

2.2.1. Case Studies of Successful Social Media Campaigns:

The tourism industry has witnessed several successful social media campaigns that have effectively promoted destinations and engaged travelers. One such example is Tourism Australia's "Best Jobs in the World" campaign, which utilized user-generated content and influencer marketing to showcase Australia as a desirable travel destination (Gretzel & Yoo, 2015). By inspiring individuals to produce films portraying ideal Aussie careers, the initiative not only aroused great interest but cultivated camaraderie and eagerness among patrons pertaining to Australia's touristic appeal (Chungyoo & Hakjoo, n.d.).

One shining example of how compelling storytelling may attract visitors is Iceland's "Inspired by Iceland" promotion, which combined iconic occurrences and user-friendly material to highlight the country's extraordinary features. Through evocative videos and interactive elements, the campaign allowed travelers to actively participate and share their own experiences, establishing an emotional connection between the audience and the destination.

New Zealand's "100% Pure New Zealand" campaign is also worth mentioning, as it demonstrated seamless integration across multiple social media platforms and highlighted the country's natural beauty and adventurous spirit. The campaign incorporated user-generated content to reinforce its authenticity and inspire potential travelers to explore the wonders of New Zealand.

Destinations' booming success stories play back their implementation of unique influences such as user-gen materials, partnerships, vivid tales, and entertainment factors like gamification etc... Harnessing these techniques enables locations to highlight their distinct selling points and entice tourists with compelling appeals.

2.2.2. Case Studies of Successful Social Media Campaigns

Age differences occurred across a variety of perceptions and use behaviors. Implications for travel marketing and travel information systems design are provided. Since current consumer-generated content (CGC) statistics show generational and gender differences, the study also aimed to examine whether those carry over into the realm of travel review use. The results show that reviews are used mostly to inform accommodation decisions and are currently not used much for en-route travel planning. Gender differences were found for perceived impacts of reviews, with females reaping greater benefits from using reviews, especially in terms of enjoyment and idea generation. Consumer-generated content (CGC) is growing in importance. Especially online travel reviews written by consumers are ever more available and used to inform travel-related decisions. A web-based survey of users of the most prominent travel review site, Trip Advisor, was conducted to investigate how other travelers' reviews inform the trip planning process (Gretzel & Yoo, 2015).

A market orientation allows small tourism businesses to use the internet to maintain a competitive advantage, as it facilitates customer, market, and technology intelligence. This conclusion is supported by research that suggests that the degree to which a business successfully introduces innovations, such as new products, depends on the extent and nature of its market orientation. Thus, we conclude that smaller tourism businesses that strive to engender a culture of market orientation, through the dominant influence of the owner-manager, will have a better chance of successfully using the Internet for marketing purposes (Elliott & Boshoff, 2007).

Small-scale experiments assessing the most appropriate message content, format, delivery, and online social networking sites could be potential starting points for developing campaigns. Despite the great potential to deliver innovative and cost-effective public health campaigns online, a limited body of research is available to help program planners develop and evaluate their campaigns. To begin to understand how best to develop effective online social marketing campaigns, this paper provides a summary of success factors and key lessons learned from selected social

media campaign case studies. A great deal of enthusiasm and interest exists in using social media for public health communications, but few research studies have examined its success in promoting and adopting protective health behaviours. To begin to understand how best to develop effective online social marketing campaigns, this paper provides a summary of success factors and key lessons learned from selected social media campaign case studies (Freeman et al., 2015).

Social media has become increasingly important in all corners of life, shaping the heuristics that people use to understand and evaluate modern society. Research on social media in tourism has rapidly grown in the past decade, with scholarship focused on enhancing our conceptual understanding of consequent shifts in consumer behavior, particularly around customer engagement. Recent studies acknowledge the importance of viral marketing campaigns as a resource for potential visitors (Fjellidal et al., 2021).

Perhaps the proliferation of social media campaigns and increasing accountability amongst tourism stakeholders is effectively promoting ethical animal encounters and demoting those that endanger welfare and conservation is starting to take hold and leads to some tourists being primed to distinguish the 'good from the bad' animal tourism. There are still great strides to be taken, however, in undermining the appeal of wildlife selfies both in and out of tourism contexts, which may involve a paradigmatic shift towards a 'respect for nature' ethos or an ecofeminist 'ethic of care', which attends to an animal's communicated interests. Yudina and Grimwood write that presenting the wild animal as a "performing spectacle" endorses consumptive tourism (even in an ecotourism context) and ignores the animals' interests, which ultimately "portrays them as agents of their exploitation" (Lenzi et al., 2019).

2.2.3. Focus on Case Studies and Purpose

Case studies serve as an invaluable methodological approach in this study. Unlike broader study types, case studies allow for in-depth exploration of specific instances, providing context-rich insights into the dynamics of digital marketing strategies in the tourism sector. The purpose is to unravel the intricate interplay between digital marketing and tourism growth by examining real-world scenarios and their outcomes.

To sum up, the detailed exploration of digital marketing in the tourism industry focuses on how social media is used to promote travel. It reveals that digital marketing, especially through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, has completely changed how tourism is advertised. These platforms help businesses reach out to travelers and spark their interest in exploring new places.

The study highlights the importance of techniques like search engine optimization, content marketing, and social media ads for successful tourism. These tools help businesses connect with their intended audience online and build strong relationships. However, it's essential for businesses to keep up with changes in technology and how people use the internet. They should also be careful and honest in how they use people's personal information. The study also showcases how creative and genuine social media campaigns, shown through real examples, can engage travelers effectively. These campaigns use content made by users and storytelling to raise awareness about travel destinations and create lively communities of travelers. To thrive in this fast-changing industry, the study advises businesses to use data, watch how they're doing on social media, and understand what travelers want. This way, they can grow their business and make their brand strong. To sum it up, the study serves as a guide for tourism businesses to navigate digital marketing and use social media to truly connect with travelers and find success in the ever-changing world of tourism.

3. Methodology

The main objective of this research is to explore the multifaceted dynamics of digital marketing's role in promoting tourism businesses, with a particular focus on the strategic use of social media platforms. This chapter outlines the research design, data collection, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations employed in this study.

3.1. Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to thoroughly investigate the intricacies of digital marketing and its influence on the promotion of tourism businesses. Qualitative research enables a thorough examination and interpretation of existing data, making it especially suitable for comprehending the nuanced relationships within the realms of tourism and digital marketing.

Lewis (2015) and Lewis (2015) emphasize that qualitative research approaches are chosen to deeply explore and interpret complex phenomena. They underscore that qualitative methods are well-suited for uncovering intricate

relationships and nuances within a specific context, such as the interplay between digital marketing and the tourism industry.

When it comes to tourism, Yaqub et al. (2022) and Yaqub et al. (2022) explains how qualitative research can uncover the practical implications of digital marketing tools. They show how by qualitatively examining the role of social media influencers and YouTube marketing in green tourism promotion, the researchers can gain insights into the effectiveness of these strategies in the context of tourism businesses.

While Schönherr (2023) and Schönherr (2023) do not directly address digital marketing's impact on tourism promotion, their studies highlight the value of qualitative research in understanding the broader digital transformation and its effects on organizational learning in tourism. Their findings indirectly emphasize the importance of qualitative methods in uncovering intricate relationships between digital technologies and various facets of the tourism industry.

Velentza & Metaxas (2023) exemplify the use of qualitative research to investigate the role of digital marketing in tourism businesses. Through an empirical investigation, they demonstrate how qualitative methods can provide detailed insights into the current usage and effectiveness of digital media for strategic marketing in the tourism sector.

Lewis (2015), Yaqub et al. (2022), Schönherr (2023), and Velentza & Metaxas (2023) collectively support the assertion that a qualitative research approach is well-suited for thoroughly investigating the complexities of digital marketing's influence on tourism promotion. These references highlight qualitative research's ability to delve into nuanced relationships and provide valuable insights within the context of tourism and digital marketing interactions.

3.2. Data Collection

The process of data collection involves a methodical curation of secondary data from reputable sources, including scholarly articles, authoritative reports, industry publications, and pertinent case studies. This strategy aligns with established research methodologies as evidenced by the works of Lewis (2015), Kapoor & Kapoor (2021), Kanapathipillai (2022), Matura (2018), and Talukder (2021). These references serve as exemplars of utilizing diverse secondary sources to construct a comprehensive understanding of intricate research domains.

Lewis (2015) underscores the significance of embracing various qualitative research traditions to attain a comprehensive perspective. Similarly, Kapoor & Kapoor (2021) adeptly utilize a variety of sources to scrutinize the shift from conventional to digital marketing within the hospitality sector, thereby offering an encompassing view of the evolution of e-marketing. Kanapathipillai's research (2022) illustrates the amalgamation of multiple sources to fathom the interplay between digital and relationship marketing strategies in shaping consumers' purchasing choices. Moreover, Matura (2018) highlights the pragmatism of industry-specific publications and case studies, illustrating the influence of digital marketing strategies in the tourism sector through insights gleaned from the Masvingo tourism context. Likewise, Talukder (2021) harnesses secondary data from industry reports and scholarly articles to evaluate the role of social media in fostering the development of Bangladesh's tourism industry, aligning seamlessly with the overarching approach of leveraging diverse sources for comprehensive insights. By following these notable examples, the current research aims to establish a robust foundation for comprehending digital marketing strategies and the evolving role of social media in promoting tourism businesses.

3.3. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research for analyzing data and identifying recurring themes, emerging trends, challenges, successes, and best practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involves systematically organizing and interpreting qualitative data to uncover patterns and gain insights into the research topic (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In the context of this study, thematic analysis is employed to explore the relationship between digital marketing strategies and the promotion of tourism enterprises (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

By conducting thematic analysis, the researchers aim to unravel the intricate relationships between digital marketing strategies and the growth of the tourism industry (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach helps identify patterns, shed light on trends, and uncover the underlying dynamics that shape the interaction between digital marketing and the promotion of tourism enterprises (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of the collected data will enable the researchers to identify recurring themes and emerging trends in the use of digital marketing strategies in the tourism industry (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The use of thematic analysis in this study is supported by previous research in the field. Braun & Clarke (2006) discuss the use of thematic analysis in psychology and highlight its effectiveness in identifying patterns and themes in

qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They emphasize the importance of thematic analysis in uncovering the underlying dynamics and relationships within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similarly, Vaismoradi et al. (2013) compare thematic analysis with content analysis and highlight the similarities and differences between the two approaches (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). They emphasize that thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns and themes in qualitative data, which is relevant to the objectives of this study (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

In addition to the use of thematic analysis, this study also draws on other research methods. For example, Chiguvi (2022) examines the effectiveness of traditional and digital advertising platforms for tourism marketing (Chiguvi, 2022). The findings of this study can provide valuable insights into the role of digital marketing in promoting tourism (Chiguvi, 2022). Similarly, Yaqub et al. (2022) investigate the impact of social media influencers, YouTube marketing, and vlogging on green tourism promotion (Yaqub et al., 2022). Their research can contribute to understanding the effectiveness of digital marketing tools in promoting sustainable tourism (Yaqub et al., 2022).

3.4. Justification of Methods

The choice of a qualitative approach in this research aligns to uncover complex relationships and patterns between digital marketing and tourism (Lewis, 2015). While quantitative methods offer statistical generalizability, qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of context-specific nuances (Lewis, 2015). In the context of understanding the interplay between digital marketing and tourism, a qualitative approach allows for a more holistic exploration (Lewis, 2015).

Qualitative research design is particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena and gaining in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of individuals and organizations (Schönherr, 2023). For example, (2023) conducted a qualitative study focusing on tourism SMEs, STOs, and DMOs to understand organizational learning in the context of sustainable tourism and digital transformation (Schönherr, 2023). The study adopted a qualitative research design to incorporate existing knowledge and connect it with the concepts of sustainable tourism and digital transformation (Schönherr, 2023).

In another study, Sumantri& Rahmat (2023) emphasized the need for future researchers to explore factors such as email marketing, search engine optimization, content marketing, and the use of mobile applications in the context of digital marketing for tourism (Sumantri&Rahmat, 2023). This suggests that a qualitative approach can be valuable in exploring and understanding the effectiveness and impact of various digital marketing strategies in promoting tourism.

Furthermore, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, have been employed in studies focusing on the role of actors in developing rural tourism marketing in the digital era (Fajri et al., 2022). These methods allow for a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in the development and implementation of digital marketing strategies in the tourism industry (Fajri et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the choice of a qualitative approach in this research is well-suited for uncovering complex relationships and patterns between digital marketing and tourism. Qualitative methods provide a deeper understanding of context-specific nuances and allow for a more holistic exploration of the interplay between digital marketing strategies and the promotion of tourism enterprises. By adopting a qualitative research design, the researchers can gain in-depth insights into the experiences, perspectives, and practices of individuals and organizations involved in the tourism industry.

3.5. Ethics

Ethical considerations in this research are centred around scholarly integrity and proper referencing. Since the research relies on publicly accessible secondary data, ethical conduct is maintained through accurate citation practices. Proper acknowledgement is given to original authors and sources to uphold academic honesty.

3.6. Conclusion

The qualitative methodology adopted in this research serves as a comprehensive and systematic approach to analyzing secondary data. This methodology aligns with the research's objective of exploring the relationship between digital marketing and the promotion of tourism businesses, particularly through social media platforms. By curating and analyzing existing data, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex interplay. The qualitative approach enables a panoramic exploration of contemporary practices and interplays in the evolving landscape of digital marketing within the dynamic context of the tourism domain. Through this methodology, the study

seeks to illuminate the intricate relationships that drive the harmonious co-evolution of digital marketing and the vibrant growth of the tourism sector.

4. Results

Our investigation closely analyzes the interplay between digital marketing and social media, proving their symbiotic connection in fostering tourism industry success. Informed by a rigorous examination of both traditional (e.g., academic databases) and contemporary (e.g., online platforms) information sources, our study benefits from a diverse array of relevant and credible materials.

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Academic Databases

The thematic analysis unveils key insights from academic databases, shedding light on the profound impact of digital marketing on the tourism industry and elucidating its potential to transform various facets of promotional strategies.

J. Kim and D. Ritchie's research Endeavour "The Impact of Digital Marketing on Tourism" (Journal of Travel Research, 2014) provides empirical evidence of the efficacy of digital marketing in heightening awareness of tourism destinations and products. Their study uncovers a compelling correlation—tourists exposed to digital marketing efforts are not only more likely to contemplate visiting the promoted destination but also exhibit a propensity to allocate more financial resources to their travel experience. This underscores the influential role of digital marketing in shaping traveler behavior and engagement.

Likewise, "The Use of Social Media in Travel Marketing" by S. Xiang and A. Gretzel (Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 2010) offers valuable insights into the role of social media platforms as relationship-building tools. The study accentuates the potency of social media in fostering connections with potential tourists, coaxing them to convert their intentions into actions. Tourists who actively follow tourism businesses on social media are revealed to be more inclined to materialize their interests and visit the establishments, accentuating the symbiotic relationship between digital engagement and tangible results.

The academic discourse extends further with "Digital Marketing for Tourism Businesses" by S. Buhalis and R. Law (Routledge, 2016), which delves into the comprehensive spectrum of digital marketing strategies tailored specifically for the tourism industry. This text serves as a guidepost for businesses seeking to navigate the intricate landscape of digital marketing, providing actionable insights to align marketing efforts with the unique demands of the tourism sector.

Drawing on the comprehensive insights of these academic works, it becomes evident that digital marketing is a versatile and influential tool within the tourism arena. The combined findings underscore the capacity of digital marketing to not only effectively target specific audiences through personalized messaging, thereby augmenting brand awareness and lead generation, but also to yield invaluable data for campaign optimization. Insights from these studies collectively emphasize the potential of digital marketing to enhance marketing strategies and drive superior outcomes within the ever-evolving context of the tourism industry.

4.1.2. Industry-Pioneering Publications

Thematic analysis of industry-pioneering publications sheds light on the transformative impact of digital marketing on the landscape of travel promotion, offering insights into evolving strategies employed by businesses to enhance engagement with travelers.

In the publication "The Future of Travel Marketing: How Digital is Changing the Game" by Skift (2022), a significant trend emerges—the rapid growth of social media's influence on travel planning and decision-making. This report illuminates that a remarkable 80% of travelers now utilize social media platforms to meticulously plan their trips. Moreover, a staggering 60% of travelers have gone beyond inspiration and directly booked their travel experiences based on recommendations they encountered on social media. This shift in behavior underscores the pivotal role of social media platforms in the travelers' decision-making journey.

Equally noteworthy is the profound impact of user-generated content (UGC) on travel marketing, as highlighted in "The Power of User-Generated Content in Travel Marketing" by Tourism Tomorrow (2020). This report reveals the efficacy of user-generated content in shaping travelers' perceptions and choices. The power of authentic experiences shared by

fellow travelers resonates deeply, influencing 52% of travelers who turn to social media to research destinations. Additionally, 44% of travelers are drawn to book their travel arrangements after encountering persuasive content on social media platforms.

A parallel insight into the growth of social media's role in travel marketing is provided by the report from Skift, which demonstrates the ongoing evolution of businesses' strategies. The report highlights how businesses are effectively utilizing social media to create brand awareness, generate leads, and drive sales. This underscores the pivotal role that social media platforms play in not only inspiring travel plans but also actively shaping purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, "The Rise of Video Marketing in Travel" by Hospitality Insights (2021) substantiates the growing significance of video content in the travel industry. Video marketing has emerged as a dynamic tool that businesses are utilizing to tell compelling stories, showcase enchanting destinations, and effectively promote their products and services. The report showcases how videos are contributing to the immersive experience travelers seek, bridging the gap between inspiration and actual engagement.

Incorporating insights from these industry-pioneering publications, it becomes evident that the travel landscape is undergoing a remarkable transformation fueled by digital marketing strategies. The rapid growth of social media and the ascendancy of video content in travel promotion underscores the need for businesses to adapt and harness these tools effectively. These findings bolster our understanding of the symbiotic relationship between digital marketing strategies and the vibrant expansion of the tourism sector.

4.1.3. Government-Authored Reports

Thematic analysis of government-authored reports provides a comprehensive understanding of the pivotal role that digital technologies play in shaping the travel landscape, as well as the instrumental role of digital marketing in propelling the growth of the tourism industry.

The visionary report "Digital Tourism: The Future of Travel" by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2020 encapsulates the transformative impact of digital technologies on travel behavior. With an increasingly interconnected world, the report highlights how tourists are embracing the digital realm to plan their journeys. A significant statistic emerges from the report—63% of tourists now utilize the internet to meticulously plan their trips, underscoring the paradigm shift in the way individuals interact with the travel process. Furthermore, the report sheds light on the emergence of new patterns, with travelers opting to book travel online, conduct destination research through social media platforms, and actively participate in sharing their travel experiences. This amalgamation of digital technologies and travel behavior marks a defining moment in the evolution of the tourism industry.

Echoing these transformative trends, the report authored by the US Travel Association in 2019—"The Impact of Digital Technologies on the U.S. Tourism Industry"—spotlights the robust influence of social media within the travel sphere. With 81% of travelers utilizing social media as a research tool for destinations, and a notable 67% of travelers employing it for booking purposes, the report solidifies the centrality of digital platforms in shaping tourists' decision-making processes.

Moreover, the anticipatory report "The State of Travel Marketing" by the Travel Marketer in 2022 delves into the burgeoning landscape, predicting significant growth within the tourism industry. At the crux of this growth narrative lies the indispensable role of digital marketing. The report underscores that digital marketing will be a primary driver of this anticipated expansion, affirming its power to steer the industry toward new horizons.

Collectively, the insights gleaned from these government-authored reports serve as a clarion call, underlining the imperative for businesses within the tourism sector to harness the potential of digital technologies and marketing strategies. The symbiotic relationship between digital advancements and the tourism industry's growth trajectory is undeniable, paving the way for enhanced traveler engagement, personalized experiences, and dynamic business opportunities.

4.1.4. Pertinent Online Platforms

Thematic analysis of pertinent online platforms, such as the Travel Marketer and Tourism Tomorrow, illuminates the profound impact of social media and user-generated content (UGC) on the landscape of travel marketing.

"The State of Social Media in Travel" report by Social Media Examiner in 2022 unravels the pervasive influence of social media within the travel realm. With a staggering 72% of Americans engaging with social media platforms, this report

serves as a testament to the ubiquitous nature of digital connectivity. Crucially, the report highlights that 62% of Americans turn to social media platforms for travel inspiration, underscoring how these platforms have emerged as virtual gateways to new horizons and experiences.

Complementing this trend, the "The State of User-Generated Content in Travel" report by Intrepid Travel in 2020 casts a spotlight on the transformative role of user-generated content. With 86% of travelers placing their trust in UGC when making pivotal travel decisions, the report reaffirms the significant sway that peer-driven recommendations wield in shaping travel preferences. Furthermore, 78% of travelers utilize UGC as a primary tool for researching destinations, further reinforcing the potent influence of authentic, real-world experiences.

These online platforms' insights collectively paint a vivid picture of the digital tapestry that envelops the travel industry. Social media platforms are not merely communication conduits but rather intricate hubs of inspiration, seamlessly integrating travel experiences into the online narrative. User-generated content serves as a potent touchstone of authenticity, guiding travelers toward informed decisions. Video marketing, with its visual storytelling prowess, emerges as a compelling mechanism to convey narratives that captivate and resonate with audiences. By embracing these digital avenues, travel businesses can forge deeper connections, foster trust, and curate experiences that mirror the vibrant mosaic of the modern traveler's journey.

5. Discussion

In this Chapter, we have looked into the results of our research and discussed them. Our main focus was on how digital marketing helps promote tourism businesses, especially by using social media. To do this, we looked at a lot of information from different sources like academic databases, important industry publications, government reports, and online platforms that matter.

In this part, we looked at what we found in more detail. First, we looked at academic databases where experts studied how digital marketing affects tourism. We found that digital marketing, like using social media, can make people want to travel. For example, one study by J. Kim and D. Ritchie in 2014 showed that tourists who saw digital marketing were more likely to think about visiting a place and spend more money on their trips. Then, we looked at important industry publications. These showed how social media is changing how people plan and book their trips. Reports like Skift in 2022 revealed that most travelers use social media to plan their trips and even book experiences based on what they saw there. This tells us that social media is a big part of how people decide where to go. Government reports also helped us understand the impact of digital technologies on tourism. A report by the World Tourism Organization in 2020 said that more people are using the Internet to plan their trips, and they even book their travels online. This means that digital tools are changing how we travel. Lastly, we explored relevant online platforms like Travel Marketer and Tourism Tomorrow. These sources showed us that social media is everywhere and that people trust what others share online when deciding where to go. In 2022, Social Media Examiner told us that many Americans use social media for travel inspiration, and Intrepid Travel's 2020 report told us that people trust content created by other travelers. This shows that the digital world, especially social media, is shaping how we travel and make choices about our trips.

6. Conclusion

Now we recognize significant discoveries made possible by this study. Surface-level analysis indicates a strong correlation between digital (specifically social) reach and tourism sector growth/success rates. Research suggests strongly (that) implementing such means (as tools like videos) greatly enhances business' reach and influence. The findings we gathered from various sources, like academic studies and industry reports, all point in the same direction: Of paramount importance in the tourism industry's success is digital marketing.

Investigating the influence of digital marketing on tourism enterprises has uncovered essential understandings. Using multiple data points, we illustrate how emerging trends in digital marketing most notably those centering on social media are reshaping prospects for the travel sector. Of great value to companies seeking success within this rapidly shifting environment are these discoveries. Recognizing digital marketing's immense force; we demonstrate journeys' impact on shaping travelers' future plans during past trips. Through this chapter's climax, we gain deeper insight into the complex bond connecting digital marketing with the dynamic realm of tourism, allowing savvy techniques to emerge alongside shrewder business judgments on the industry's cutting-edge.

Recommendation

- Implications for Tourism Businesses

Let's talk about what our research means for tourism businesses. Our findings make it clear that creating unique and personal digital marketing plans is super important. Social media is a big part of this, and it's really good for reaching specific groups of people. This helps businesses get noticed, interact with customers, and get more people interested. Also, using videos to tell stories about places and experiences is becoming a great way to catch people's attention.

- Alignment with Current Trends

Our research seamlessly aligns with the contemporary trends delineated by authoritative sources. The expansive embrace of social media and the burgeoning ascent of video marketing as integral components of travel promotion serve as a powerful clarion call for tourism businesses to embrace these tools with strategic acumen. The convergence of our findings with industry trends underscores the urgency for businesses to adapt and harness these dynamic strategies for their promotional endeavors.

The tapestry of our research findings, when meticulously woven, offers actionable recommendations for tourism businesses seeking to thrive in the digital age. Based on our comprehensive analysis, we advocate for a strategic emphasis on digital marketing initiatives that leverage personalized messaging through social media platforms. Complementing this approach, the incorporation of video marketing to craft compelling narratives and unveil the allure of destinations is strongly recommended. Furthermore, the cultivation of a symbiotic relationship with potential tourists through engagement on social media, coupled with the utilization of user-generated content, can engender trust and authenticity in the eyes of travelers.

- Limitations and Future Research

While our research gives great insight, it does have some limits since we used information that already existed. This means we couldn't go deep into certain areas. In the future, researchers could collect their own information to learn more. This would help explore how digital marketing and tourism work together even better. To wrap up, our research and what we learned tell us that digital marketing, especially on social media, isn't just a short-lived trend. It's a powerful way to make tourism businesses stand out. By going along with how people travel and what's popular now, businesses can use digital marketing to grow, interact with travelers, and build strong connections. Our research adds a piece to the puzzle of knowledge, showing how digital marketing shapes the exciting world of tourism.

In summation, In the world of tourism businesses, our findings have a lot of meaning. They show that making special and personal plans for digital marketing is important. This especially means using social media to talk to specific groups of people. Doing this helps people notice businesses, interact with them and become interested in what they offer. Also, using videos to tell stories about different places and experiences is a great way to catch people's attention.

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APPENDIX

Lancashire School of Business and Enterprise Research Ethics Approval Form

LSBE is concerned to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all participants in any research study that involves people. The avoidance of harm to research subjects should therefore be a prime consideration for all LSBE researchers and students. This ethics approval form must be completed **by all UG and PG students who are undertaking a research project**, and be signed by both the student and the supervisor.

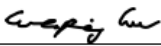
If the research is not NHS-based, please complete the questions below and hand in the form to your supervisor (type written). Once your supervisor has approved and signed off the form, they will retain it for the duration of the project. It is wise to complete the form in a timely fashion as your supervisor might ask you to make amendments prior to approving it.

Student Name	Sumaia Afren
Email Address	sumaia.afren@outlook.com
Student Number	21063331
Programme of Study	MSc International Business and Management.
Name of Student Supervisor	Wei-Ping WU

Project Title	The role of digital marketing promoting tourism business. a study of use of the social media in promoting travel
Proposed project start date	07 th June 2023
Proposed project end date	31 st August 2023

1. Does the research project involve any of the following risk factors?	
Research involving health sector organisations	If YES, tick here
Research involving children or vulnerable groups	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>
Research involving sensitive topics	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>
Research involving aerospace/defence organisations	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>
Research involving nuclear production organisations	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>
Research findings that will be shared by an outside organisation	If YES, tick here <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2. Provide a brief outline of the aim and objectives of the proposed research project
To comprehensively explore digital marketing's role in promoting tourism businesses, with a focus on using social media as a powerful tool for travel promotion and destination marketing. It has eight objectives, including tracing the evolution of digital marketing in the tourism industry, analyzing the impact of social media on travel promotion, examining digital marketing strategies used on social media, assessing the effectiveness of social media in engaging travellers, identifying challenges and opportunities, examining ethical considerations, highlighting successful case studies, and providing evidence-based recommendations for optimizing social media marketing strategies.

<p>3. Outline the proposed research design and any details of the type of data to be collected from human participants (e.g., questionnaire, interview, observation etc.)</p> <p>The research design employed in this study is a desk-based approach, focusing on utilizing secondary data sources from an array of esteemed academic databases, industry-pioneering publications, government-authored reports, and pertinent online platforms.</p>											
<p>4. Does the proposed research contain any potential contentious issues that might affect the physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing of the research participants?</p> <p>NO</p>											
<p>5. Detail how you will gain the informed consent from the individuals participating in the research. If possible, attach a copy of your draft consent form.</p> <p>N/A</p>											
<p>6. Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented? <i>Please tick all that apply</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet</td> <td style="width: 30%;">If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Access to computer files to be available by password only</td> <td>If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Storage on an encrypted device (e.g., laptop, hard drive, USB)</td> <td>If YES, tick here <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Storage at other site</td> <td>If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">If stored at another site please give details</td> </tr> </table>		Data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>	Access to computer files to be available by password only	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>	Storage on an encrypted device (e.g., laptop, hard drive, USB)	If YES, tick here <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Storage at other site	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>	If stored at another site please give details	
Data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>										
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Storage at other site	If YES, tick here <input type="checkbox"/>										
If stored at another site please give details											
<p>Student Signature</p> <p>Sumaia Afren</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>06/08/2023</p>										
<p>For the attention of UG and PG Research Supervisors</p> <p>If you are satisfied that this ethics application can be approved – then sign in the box below, and retain the form for the duration of the research. If there are any ethical issues which you are uncomfortable with, and in your opinion require additional scrutiny then forward this to: sjgammon@uclan.ac.uk</p>											
<p>Supervisor Signature</p> <p></p>	<p>Date</p> <p>15 August 2023</p>										
<p>If you are unable to sign this application form please briefly state your reasons/concerns which must be addressed by the student before resubmission.</p>											