INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE TRAVEL INTENTION AMONG UTAR AND UiTM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' TRAVEL INTENTION TO SOUTH KOREA

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Abstract:

Promoting travel destinations on social media is a common way of travel companies to promote the business as well as the company. This method attracts many youths who interested with travel to have the motivation and intention to travel to the destination. With the development of South Korean media entertainment industries, many youths 'addicted' in South Korean dramas, movies, and song. Social media as well as South Korean media entertainment industries lead Malaysian youths to have the intention to visit Korea. This study is to examine the effectiveness of social media apps in travel intention among Malaysian university students, and to explore the factors that lead Malaysian university students to have the motivation to travel to South Korea. Besides, to examine how social media and travel motivation influence Malaysian young adults is one of the objectives in this study as well. The significant of this study is showing the effectiveness of social media in influencing young adults in traveling. Besides, it could help the travel organizations to planning a strategy to attract young adults on social media.

Keywords:

Social Media, Travel Intention, Travel Motivation

Introduction

Social media is a convenient source for people to search for information, especially while planning for a trip or travel (Chung & Koo, 2015). There are many video contents and articles about travelling on social media, so young adults are likely to have travel intentions after browsing these contents on social media apps. Based on cultivation theory and uses and gratification theory (U&G theory), this study aims to explore how social media influences travel intention among university students by using a quantitative research method.

In this digital age, social media has been an essential part of people's daily life. According to Whiting & Williams (2013), social media is a tool that makes information sharing convenient. For example, people can read the news on social media instead of newspapers. According to Chung & Koo (2015), due to the diversity and information types found on social media platforms, people tend to rely on social media, especially young adults and adolescents. This condition is conspicuous in these few years, numerous social media apps are rising, and more and more young adults are using social media apps to obtain information.

For example, TikTok (a short-form video app) released in 2016, as of 2019, the app gained 4 million Malaysian users, and most of the users' majority is under 30 (Ting, n.d.). TikTok is not the most popular social media app among Malaysian young adults. According to Kemp (2019), the most popular social media app in Malaysia during 2019 is YouTube, followed by Facebook, Instagram, and the last is Twitter.

The usage of YouTube among Malaysians is 93%, followed by Facebook with 91%, Instagram with 70%, and the last is Twitter, which 44% (Kemp, 2019). Through these social media apps, young adults obtain information regarding their curiosity, especially their ideal travel destination. The video creators and bloggers always create and upload travel vlogs or travel experiences on their social media channels, and those videos and articles attract young adults to have the intention to travel to the destination. For example, the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) Malaysia always upload videos about South Korea to attract travellers, the organization have collaborated with Malaysian YouTuber or influencer to promote travel cultural and travel destination in South Korea. KTO Malaysia has collaborated with a group of YouTuber named PongPong. This YouTuber is very famous among the Chinese group. In the video, PongPong mixed K-Pop hit song 2019 in a three minutes' video (PongPong, 2019).

Literature Review

Cultivation Theory

The concept of cultivation theory is people have long-term exposure to the media, and they perceive the world's image in media is the same with the reality, and this affects their attitudes as well as their behaviour (Potter, 1993). In 1969, George Gerbner proposed cultivation theory (Potter, 1993). Initially, this theory is to test the impact of the television viewing to the audiences, and it believed that people spend more time on the television, they will more believe that the image in television is same as the real-life (Segrin & Nabi, 2002). There is a significant relationship between people's perceptions and the media. The more people consume the media; the more people's perceptions change. According to Chu (2018), television formed a typical symbolic environment and shaped a belief regarding the reality in people's mind.

Cultivation theory has three assumptions, which are television is dissimilar from other forms of mass media fundamentally and practically, television formed society's way of thinking and relating, and the impact of television is limited (Chu, 2018). For the first assumption, television has differences with other forms of mass media such as newspapers, radio, and etc. It has visual and sound. So, people have not necessarily had the literate and all of the people could understand the content on the television. Also, it is suitable for every age stage of people. The second assumption is television formed society's way of thinking and relating means that television shaped people's thoughts and thinking through fostering the beliefs regarding the reality in the people's mind (Gerbner, 1998).

Uses and Gratification Theory

According to Ruggiero (2000), the concept of Uses and Gratification theory is to know people how to find the media to satisfy their needs, and to understand what is the reason that leads people to look for the media and satisfy their needs. Also, it is investigating the reason that affects the satisfaction of people (Koo et al., 2016). Besides, this theory concentrates on what people do with the media and why people use the media (Katz, 1959). Furthermore, U&G theory focused on how people choose the media to satisfy their needs and to reach their specific objective such as to increase knowledge, to relax, to have interaction and connection, and etc. (Ruggiero, 2000). This theory is different from other theories. It regarded that people could choose the media to satisfy their needs and wants based on their desire (Ruggiero, 2000).

U&G theory consists of the expectation and evaluation of the people. The expectation will lead to a result, which people hope to gain what kind of experience in the activity (Koo et al., 2016). For example, people's expectation is food. Therefore, the result is that he or she has the consideration to eat the food (Koo et al., 2016). The evaluation has a positive or negative effect on the result (Koo et al., 2016). This theory is used in the context of entertainment, informativeness, and irritation; these three elements will influence the people's behaviours, especially their attitude and satisfaction (Luo, 2002). Other than that, people always use the internet to obtain satisfaction.

They obtain satisfaction through entertainment, information, and interactive online (Ruggiero, 2000). Therefore, according to Ruggiero (2000), entertainment is necessary when people have the desire for media enjoyment, which means people obtain media enjoyment or satisfaction through the entertainment media.

Social Media and Tourism

Social media is the website or applications which provide a platform for the users to create and share the content (Obar & Wildman, 2015). More and more social media are rising, and people use it as a tool to promote their business, especially tourism organizations (Chu, 2018). According to Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides (2012), the travel information on social media such as the official tourism website, is more effective and reliable than traditional media. Social media could divide into six categories, which are blogs, social networking sites, virtual social worlds, collaborative projects, content communities, and virtual game worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, each type of social media has its' characteristics and features, for instance, Facebook is under social networking sites, it could send a direct and instant message to others (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

Many travellers and tourists seek travel information in social media, so social media is an essential source for those travel lovers to search for the information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Social media could shape people's behaviours and attitudes, so it is an important role to influence people to travel (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). Besides, people will have a belief while they are exposed to the social media, which they are satisfied with the information regarding the travel destination, and this is how the motivation formed (Koo et al., 2016). Furthermore, it will influence travel intentions. Social media could influence the travel intention, also, obtaining more information about the travel destination will have stronger travel intention and travel desire (Gartner, 1994). Besides, it is a crucial element to affect the people's travel intentions as well as their behaviour and attitude, the information on social media could influence the intention of people to visit the travel destination (Chu, 2018).

Travel Intention & Travel Motivation

The intention is referring to people who have a plan they want to achieve (Koo et al., 2016). Travel intention refers to people who have a travel plan they want to achieve, which visit the ideal travel destination (Chu, 2018). It is an essential factor that will influence people's decision making on travelling (Chu, 2018). According to Baloglu (2000), travel intention is shaped by few elements, people's perceptual or cognitive and affective evaluation, the amount and type of the information sources have used, and socio-psychological travel motivation. The meaning of people's perceptual or the cognitive and affective evaluation is the image of the travel destination; this is an essential factor that will affect people's travel intention. Besides, the stimuli and the consumers' factor will affect the travel intention of people as well (Baloglu, 2000).

The stimuli are the information about the travel destination, and the consumers' factor is referring to travel motivation. Besides, the intention is formed by the belief, the belief will stimulate the travel intention, and it will become an action (Koo et al., 2016). Also, the positive effect could influence people's travel intention (Jang et al., 2009). People's travel intentions could be affected by positive information because it could create a desire for the people, who have the desire to travel (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). The desire is affected by the belief, which is something like the perception regarding the destination image (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Next, the amount and type for the information will influence the people's travel intention as well (Chu, 2018). People will do research and seek for the information before they visit a place, and this will either direct or indirect influence on the travel intention of people.

Meanwhile, travel motivation refers to the satisfaction of people who expect they could achieve their target during travelling (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Motivation could influence the action and decision making of people (Caber & Albayrak, 2016). Also, it is the reason for people to visit a destination. When people's needs are activated, they will have the travel motivation, for example, when people feel stress in their working environment, they will have the travel motivation which is to escape the stress (Lee et al., 2016). Travel motivation could divide into two categories, which are socio-psychological motives and cultural motives (Crompton, 1979). Socio-psychological motives are related to the psychological status, and culture motives are associated with the interest of the destination. Socio-psychological motives could divide into seven types, and cultural motives could divide into two classes (Crompton, 1979).

The seven types of socio-psychological motives are escaped from the stale environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, reputation, regression, improve the relationship of family, and increase the social interaction (Chu, 2018). The two types of cultural motives are novelty and education (Chu, 2018). The novelty and education are one of the essential factors that lead people to have travel motivation (Jang et al., 2009). Besides, socio-psychological motives and cultural motives are known as push and pull framework (Fodness, 1994). Push is related to people's psychological states, which their travel motivation is to escape sadness, to relax, or to have social interaction. Pull associated with the interest of the people, which their motivation is to have an interest in the destination.

Methodology

This study took place at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) during the January trimester 2021. Besides, this study was conducted on 24 February 2021 to 24 March 2021 (1 month). The data collected from students at both universities, UTAR and UiTM. Both universities are located in Perak, Malaysia. This study used a snowball sampling method to recruit respondents from both universities for collecting data. Krejcie and Morgan's calculation was used in the study to determine the sample size. The population size is 197000 university students from both universities. According to the table of Krejcie and Morgan's (Table .1), the actual respondents in the study is 384. It should be 192 Chinese students, and 192 Malay students. The formula of Krejcie and Morgan's formula is $s = N^2NP(1-P) \div d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)$ (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

A set of questionnaire surveys designed for this study to investigate the objectives of the study. Besides, the relationship between the three variables examined through the sections of the questionnaire survey. This set of questionnaire surveys will adapt from Chu (2018), 'The influence of social media uses and travel motivation on the perceived destination image and travel intention to Taiwan of the Thai people'.

The analysis of the data collected used IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software to analyse the data. For the data analysis, reliabilities, descriptive analysis, and bivariate Pearson Correlation used in this study. According to Chu (2018), the result of the effectiveness of social media in travel intention is proved, the social media has a significant influence but weak correlation to people's travel intention, r = .173, p < .01 (Chu, 2018). Besides, her study also proved that travel motivation has a positive influence on people's travel intention r = .307, p < .01 (Chu, 2018).

Finding and Analysis

This study had conducted a questionnaire survey with 384 respondents from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Kampar and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Perak. The respondents were between 18 – more than 24 ages, and they answered the questionnaire survey regarding their social media apps usage as well as their travel intention to South Korea. Based on the respondents' answers, the reliability test, the descriptive test, and the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables were tested. This questionnaire survey was collected 384 replies from UiTM and UTAR students, however, around 12 replies were invalid answers since they are from other races (Indian, Iban, Kadazan, etc.), other universities (TARUC, UTM, UPM, and etc.), and have already graduated from university. Therefore, the analysis will not include those invalid responses.

Frequency of Social Media Use

University students prefer YouTube as the platform to get travel information, it is occupied by 29% (n = 251), followed by Facebook, it is lower 1% from YouTube, it is around 28% (n = 243) of university students using Facebook to get travel information. Furthermore, around 27% (n = 229) of students using Instagram to obtain travel information, 8% (n = 72) of students using TikTok to get travel information, and 6% (n = 54) of university students using Twitter to get travel information. Apart from these five social media apps, around 2% (n = 13) of university students use different social media apps to obtain travel information: Reddit, Little Red Book, travel blog or website, and etc.

The usage of social media apps to obtain travel information is different from using social media as usual. More university students prefer using YouTube to get travel information. This result is expected since YouTube is the most famous social media in Malaysia, also, the evaluation of travel information on YouTube has shown why university students prefer using YouTube as their primary source to get travel information. The key factors that lead university students to use YouTube to obtain travel information are that the travel information on YouTube is clear and easy to understand, and provides attractive content, accurate information, and detailed information. According to Szmuda et al. (2020), the researchers proved that most of the YouTube videos provided clear information, accurate information, and detailed information. Besides, YouTube videos with clear, accurate, and detailed information could attract more people to view the video (Szmuda et al., 2020). And this is why YouTube has become the most famous source to search for travel information by university students.

There is an exciting finding that Instagram is the most famous social media used by university students, however, it is not a famous platform for looking at travel information. Instagram has provided a platform that can satisfy people's sharing behaviour, however, it does not provide quality information content. The information on Instagram majority is focused on entertainment, therefore it could understand that Instagram is only focused on regular use but not for looking travel information. Another interesting finding is that even though YouTube is the most famous social media app in travel information, Chinese university students prefer Facebook as their primary source to search for travel information. It is different from Malay groups; Malay students are preferring YouTube. And this result is similar to Chu (2018) study, 'The influence of social media uses and travel motivation on the perceived destination image and travel intention to Taiwan of the Thai people', the respondents in Chu's study always use Facebook as their primary platform to search for travel information (Chu, 2018).

The main reason Facebook became the primary source for Chinese students is that Facebook provides clear and easy, accurate and detailed information. As mentioned above, precise, accurate, and detailed information content is easier to attract viewers and reach a good view. Besides, another reason is Chinese group students regarding travel information on Facebook are fast-updating.

Social Media Use in Travel Information

TikTok is not the best choice of respondents to obtain travel information. 62.4% (n = 232) of respondents are never use TikTok as the platform for searching for travel information, only around 13.7% (Always use: n = 19, Use very often: n = 32) of respondents are always used and often use TikTok as their primary source to obtain travel information.

YouTube is the most famous platform among university students to get travel information. Around 63.2% (Always use: n = 122, Use very often: n = 113) of students are always using and very often use YouTube to look for travel information, and it is only around 7.8% (n = 29) of university students never use YouTube to get travel information. The reason for the result is that university students are considered YouTube is a reliable platform for travel information. Around 74.7% (Agree: n = 176, Strongly agree: n = 102) of students reflected that travel information on YouTube is accurate. Besides, around 59.4% (Agree: n = 121, Strongly agree: n = 100) of students strongly agreed and agreed that YouTube's travel information is fast-update. Furthermore, most of them are considered travel information on YouTube is attractive, clear and easy to understand. Moreover, around 71.2% (Agree: n = 130, Strongly agree: n = 135) of university students are reviewed that YouTube's travel information is detailed. These factors make YouTube become popular among university students when they are looking for travel information.

Besides, Facebook is one of the popular platforms among university students to obtain travel information. Around 60.8% (Use very often: n = 125, Always use: n = 101) of university students are reflected that Facebook is their primary platform to get travel information, and it is only around 14.5% (n = 54) of university students are reflected that they never use Facebook to get travel information.

Travel Motivation

Most of the respondents' travel motivation is to relax. It is around 75.3% (n = 280) of respondents are reflected that to relax from a travel trip is their motivation to travel, and only 0.5% (n = 2) of respondents do not agree relaxation could motivate them to travel. Other than that, another travel motivation is 'to increase prestige and show a higher lifestyle'. 46.5% (Agree: n = 107, Strongly agree: n = 66) of respondents agreed that showing a better lifestyle is one of their motivations to travel, however, there are around 27.6% (Disagree: n = 53, Strongly disagree: n = 50) of respondents disagree to this motivation, also, around 25.8% (n = 96) of respondents are being neutral.

Not only that, 61.5% of university students are reflected that 'improve the social interaction and meet new people' is their travel motivation, 32.5% (n = 121) of respondents are strongly agreed, and 29% (n = 108) of respondents are agreed. In contrast, only 19.4% of university students do not consider the statement is their travel motivation, 8.9% (n = 33) of respondents strongly disagreed, and 10.5% (n = 39) of respondents disagreed.

Next, another travel motivation in questionnaire surveys is 'to have a new and adventurous experience'. Around 62.6% (n = 233) of university students strongly agreed with this statement, and around 28.8% (n = 107) of university students agreed with it. In total, around 91.4% of respondents supported this statement, and it is only around 1.1% (n = 4) of university students strongly disagreed with the statement, and only around 0.3% (n = 1) of students disagreed with the statement.

Last of the travel motivation is 'to learn new things for educational benefit'. This travel motivation gained support from 76.4% of respondents. Around 43.3% (n = 161) of respondents strongly agree that learning new things can motivate them to travel, and around 33.1% (n = 123) of respondents agree that their travel motivation is to learn new things. In contrast, there

is only around 7.8% (Disagree: n = 17, Strongly disagree: n = 12) of respondents are reflected that learning new things is not their travel motivation.

'To relax' and 'to have new and adventurous experiences' are more attractive to Chinese and Malay university students to have a travel trip. Besides, 'to learn new things for educational benefit', 'to explore and evaluate myself', 'to escape from the perceived normal life', and 'to improve the relationship of family' might influence university students to travel. However, 'to increase the social interaction and meet new people', 'to regress to a less complex, less changeable, and less technologically advanced environment', and 'to increase prestige and show a higher lifestyle' might not be efficient to influence the university students to travel to other countries. Getting new experience during travel is the most important factor that leads people to have the travel intention, people's travel intention is easier motivated by new experience (Jang et al., 2009). This statement has proved in this study, one of the important factors leading university students to have travel intentions is to get new and adventurous experiences.

Destination Image of Korea
Most of the respondents reflected that their first impression of South Korea is the country famous in K-Pop as well as the K-Drama. Besides, they also reflected that the beautiful scenery and natural attraction is their first impression when they think about South Korea. Furthermore, around 83.6% (Agree: n = 143, Strongly agree: n = 168) of respondents considered South Korea a pleasant country to visit, also, they considered South Korea as an exciting and interesting country to visit. Besides, they reflected that they would think about Korean culture when South Korea comes to their minds since it is interesting and attractive. Additionally, around 79.3% (Agree: n = 136, Strongly agree: n = 159) of respondents regarded a nice climate as their first impression towards South Korea. They also regarded that South Korea as a relaxing country and it has provided good tourist facilitation. Also, they regarded South Korea as an arousing country to visit.

Travel Intention
29.8% (n = 111) of university students prefer to visit South Korea in future, followed by Taiwan, around 20.2% (n = 75) of university students want to travel to Taiwan in their future. Next, 14.8% (n = 55) of university students would like to travel to China in the future, and the last is Singapore, it is only around 2.4% (n = 9) of respondents hope they could visit Singapore in future. However, around 32.8% (n = 122) of university students not preferring the countries in the options, they prefer Japan, Thailand, New Zealand, Iceland, etc. Apart from the other countries, both Chinese and Malay university students are more preferring travel to South Korea. The reason university students hope to travel to South Korea is the beautiful scenery and buildings of South Korea. Based on the data, scenery and buildings are the most attractive factor that leads university students to travel.

Conclusion
It is found that social media has influenced the travel intention of university students. However, it is not surprising that social media has little influence on travel intention since it was already mentioned in previous studies. Besides, another finding is that travel motivation can influence university students' travel intention, even though it is only a weak influence. The three main motivations are 'to relax', 'to have a new and adventurous experience', and 'to learn new things for educational benefit'.

There is a limitation that has affected the study, the most critical limitation is the unbalanced data. The study collected too much data from Chinese university students but less data from Malay students, this led to the result of data becoming not accurate. Even though the result still could analyse and interpret smoothly, the result is more biased towards Chinese groups. The reason for having unbalanced data is during the pandemic, and in the case of not being able to across the state, it is hard to collect data from UiTM students, the researcher could only send the questionnaire survey through the UiTM portal, social media groups and pages, such as Facebook and Twitter. However, the outcome is ineffective.

Even though the limitation is affecting the study, there are still some implications in the study. The study recommended the travel organizations upload Korea travel information on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. These three social media are the most famous in Malaysia. Besides, if want to attract more Malay groups, it is suggested to upload and post travel videos of Korea on YouTube with accurate and detailed information because it is found that accurate and detailed information is the most important thing that leads people to have the intention to view. Also, if want to attract Chinese traveller groups to visit Korea, it is suggested to upload and post Korea's travel information on Facebook. The study found that Chinese groups people love to use Facebook to obtain travel information, also, travel organizations have to ensure the travel information of Korea they upload should be accurate and detailed.

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