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The Mediating Role of Customer Engagement in the Relationship between Digital Content Marketing on Social Media and Intention to Visit: A Conceptual Study of Domestic Tourism in Jordan

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Abstract

This research examines the correlation between online content marketing through social media and the desire to visit Jordan domestic tourism sites, mediated by customer engagement. Despite the extensive range of natural and cultural heritage in Jordan, domestic tourism has not yet realized its potential. Although digital media, especially social media, present enormous chances for stimulating interest in local travel, marketing on the ground currently focuses largely on the foreign tourist, thereby neglecting locals. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, the present study develops a conceptual model in which online content marketing is the external stimulus, customer engagement is the internal response mechanism, and intention to visit is the ultimate behavior consequence. The novel conceptual model emphasizes the role of culturally relevant, interactive, and engaging online content in enhancing customer engagement and affecting domestic travel intentions. This research makes a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature by presenting a conceptual framework to guide future empirical research and by offering strategic guidance for tourism marketers who wish to market domestic tourism in Jordan.

Keywords: Digital Content Marketing, Social Media, Customer Engagement, Intention to Visit, Domestic Tourism, S-O-R Model

Introduction

Domestic tourism is a significant contributor to the support of national economies, raises cultural awareness, and promotes local businesses, particularly in nations endowed with historical heritage and natural attractions like Jordan (Thi et al., 2024; Jordan News Agency,

2024). The last decade has witnessed a noticeable change in the pattern of tourism worldwide, where digital platforms have gained greater prominence, and social media has become an influential mechanism to shape travel intentions and behaviors (Islam, 2021). Digital content marketing utilizing social media has been very effective in engaging users and promoting domestic travel in most parts of the world (Dewi et al., 2022). In Jordan, though, conventional marketing methods remain prevalent, while the utilization of social media to promote local tourism remains fragmented and underdeveloped (Arabeyyat & Aldweik, 2024).

Although the country's tourism potential, ranging from historical sites to religious and nature-based eco-tourism, is high, domestic tourism in Jordan is yet to be exploited (Alzboun, 2019). Policies set by the government have mainly concentrated on foreign tourist attraction, with the locals being overlooked (Al Haija, 2011). Meanwhile, Jordanians are also turning more to digital media to obtain information and be inspired to travel, creating a growing discrepancy between available content and user demand (Yang & Kwon, 2024). On this note, content marketing via the internet using social media provides a special chance to interact with locals and promote domestic travel (Sustacha et al., 2023).

Customer engagement is a key mediator in the procedure of transforming digital content into real travel intention (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Content that captivates and resonates with consumers has the potential to establish emotional bonds, provoke interaction, and foster trust, therefore affecting their intention to travel to domestic destinations (Shahid et al., 2022). Accordingly, comprehension of the relationship between digital content marketing via social media and customer engagement—and the subsequent effects of such engagement on travel intention—will facilitate the advancement of domestic tourism initiatives in Jordan.

Since there has been limited scholarly focus on this particular setting, the present conceptual paper strives to examine the link between digital content marketing via social media platforms and domestic tourism in Jordan through the customer engagement construct as a mediating factor. The objective of this research is to develop a theoretical framework that can be utilized to direct future empirical investigation and assist tourism operators in implementing successful digital initiatives with specific focus on the local market.

The significance of this subject matter is in the fact that there is a pressing need to revive Jordan's domestic tourism industry by employing contemporary and effective measures (Darabseh & Al-Jamra, 2023). With growing globalization of tourism, nations such as Jordan feel compelled to digitalize to tap into the influence of the internet on travel planning choices. In particular, domestic tourism is a robust type of travel that sustains local economies during periods of global upheaval or travel bans, such as what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Digital Content Marketing of Social Media and Intention to Visit

The growth of social media has transformed the way destinations engage with prospective visitors, especially through the use of digital content marketing strategically (Sumaia Afren, 2024). It entails the development and distribution of engaging, instructive, and visually captivating content in order to capture the attention of audiences and shape travel behavior

(Hossain et al., 2024). In the tourism industry, digital content marketing on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube has emerged as an important means of promoting destinations and influencing tourist attitudes (Armutcu et al., 2023).

Digital content possesses the ability to stir a deep sense of interest and fascination by creating virtual experiences, unveiling hidden attractions, and focusing on unique cultural elements (Rungruangjit et al., 2024). When presented in a fashion that resonates with consumer taste—through narrative, higher-quality images, or familiar narratives—it has the potential to generate emotional bonds and enhance perceived value of traveling to a particular place. These beliefs are fundamental in fostering supportive attitudes that often lead to the intention to travel (Chen et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2022).

In most countries, content marketing online has developed from the traditional promotion messages into more interactive, user-focused communication (Nagy & Hajdú, 2021). However, in Jordan, online promotion of domestic tourism via social media remains relatively modest. Most online marketing efforts are geared towards international tourists, while locals receive less focused content that addresses their needs and travel preferences (Hasouneh & Abu Alzeat, 2020; Ayasra & Alrebei, 2021). This gap restrains the capabilities of social media in promoting local travel and the establishment of a solid domestic tourism culture.

The interaction of digital content marketing and predisposed visits is highly dependent on how well the content informs, engages, and motivates potential tourists (Sari et al., 2023). Quality content can potentially raise awareness, create interest, and influence decision-making by creating a positive impression of the destination (Susanto et al., 2024). Thus, using social media content specifically tailored for local consumers can act as a powerful means of resonating their urge to explore domestic attractions (Hussain et al., 2024).

Ultimately, online content promotion through social media serves as an effecttive catalyst towards consolidating the intention to visit by influencing attitudes, generating interest, and value addition. In order for Jordan to consolidate its domestic tourism industry, it is essential to ensure a more targeted and strategic approach to the utilization of social media content.

Digital Content Marketing of Social Media and Customer Engagement

In the contemporary online environment, social media platforms have become integral to the way organizations make sense of and engage with their audiences (Gazi et al., 2024). The application of digital content marketing on these platforms is more than just the offering of information; it is about establishing valuable interactions that increase a sense of belonging and engagement (Lopes et al., 2022). Customer engagement, in this scenario, is the degree of interest, emotional connection, and active participation users express for the content posted by tourism-themed pages or websites (Khairani & Fachira, 2021).

Digital content marketing is significant in maximizing user engagement. Visually pleasing, emotive content that is aligned with the user's interests and values stimulates activity such as likes, shares, comments, and direct interactions (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). These forms of engagement are measures of customer engagement and show the audience's potential to spend time and attention on the provided content (Eslami et al., 2022). This kind of interaction is able to enhance the users' connection with the destination, thereby increasing the chances

of their intending further actions, for example, planning a visit or looking for more information (Omeish et al., 2024).

Social media is a two-way platform where the audience is not only a passive recipient of information but also an active contributor (Kaye, 2021). Content in this sense, for example, about tourism, which calls for comment from the audience, gives behind-the-scenes details, or showcases user-generated content, is more likely to attract more engagement (Maha & Benabdelouahed, 2024). Through these, users are turned into co-creators of value, which raises the profile of destinations in their own social network (Buhalis et al., 2023).

In the domestic tourism context, the importance of engaging content is emphasized, as it has the potential to induce feelings of local pride, interest, and discovery spirit among locals (Agarwal et al., 2023). Content that reflects the cultural essence, off-the-beaten-track attractions, or community-based activities of a destination can resonate strongly with locals (Chu, 2013). This emotional engagement, underpinned by ongoing and genuine content, is central to building higher levels of engagement and promoting the profile of domestic destinations (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

One of the key features of digital content marketing in the travel industry is that it has the capacity to engage consumers effectively. High customer engagement levels work to increase the effectiveness, as well as the reach of marketing efforts, and also serve as an essential link between exposure to content and travel intention formation. Therefore, it is essential to give precedence to content that encourages interaction, participation, and emotional connection in a bid to enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing in the tourism sector.

Customer Engagement and Intention to Visit

Customer engagement is a central concept in the understanding of how individuals interact with digital content, particularly in the context of the tourism sector (Harrigan et al., 2017). It encompasses users' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement as a response to content distributed through social media platforms (Ajiboye et al., 2020). In domestic tourism, this engagement extends beyond response and entails active involvement, such as posting comments, commenting on travel content, participating in discussions, and expressing interest in local attractions (Al-Badi et al., 2017).

The relationship between customer interaction and visit intention is based on the affective and psychological bonds that develop through contact with content. Through interaction with tourism content, users commonly develop a sense of familiarity, anticipation, and personal relevance, particularly to the destination (Mohd Salim et al., 2024; Mou & Brito, 2024). This kind of interaction plays a critical role in developing positive attitudes and perceived value, which reflect their intention to explore and visit the highlighted destinations. The likelihood of the users forming an intention to engage with the content is increased since they identify more with it (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2024; Quynh et al., 2021).

Travelers who are highly involved do not necessarily feel that destinations are only where they travel to visit, but as experiences that reflect their own personal identity, values, and intentions (Gorji et al., 2023). This emotional connection increases the travel intention, as users perceive the destination to be within reach, pleasant, and worth visiting (Suban, 2024).

Moreover, engagement with customers on social media can provide a perception of social validation, where others' experiences and interactions affect users, thus further increasing their intention to travel (Song et al., 2023).

In the context of domestic tourism, consumer engagement serves as a key driver in reconsidering attitudes and motivating the discovery of local destinations (Bayih & Singh, 2020). As residents become actively engaged with content that highlights novel facets of their nation—whether cultural heritage, natural scenery, or local festivities—they are more likely to reconsider these destinations as valid and interesting choices for travel. This not only reenergizes the urge to travel but also promotes a more dynamic and interactive tourism landscape (Zakaria & Hua, 2024; Arumugam et al., 2023).

Thus, customer engagement is a primary stimulator of converting interest into intention. With active and emotive engagement with tourism content on social media, users are most likely to convert their online activities into actual travel intentions. Knowledge of this correlation is fundamental in formulating effective digital marketing strategies that can foster domestic tourism.

Customer Engagement as Mediator

As digital platforms continue to shape how tourism is promoted, it becomes increasingly important to understand how marketing efforts actually influence people's travel decisions (Veseli & Bytyqi, 2025). One key factor in this process is customer engagement. Acting as a bridge, customer engagement helps clarify how and why social media content influences someone's intention to visit a destination (Vinerean & Opreana, 2021). It connects what people see online with how they feel and eventually, what they plan to do—turning digital exposure into real travel interest (Paintsil & Kim, 2022).

When done well, digital content marketing grabs people's attention and invites them to interact (Umami & Darma, 2021). But what truly makes a difference is the level of engagement—how users react, connect, and stay involved with the content. For this reason, customer engagement is a key process that takes information from content and turns it into emotions and choices by users (Perez-Vega et al., 2021; Dessart et al., 2015).

Engaging with content through likes, shares, comments, and emotional reactions deepens users' connection to both the information presented and the destination being promoted (Ahmed et al., 2024). This interaction fosters a sense of trust and relationship with the content source, increasing users' openness to consider visiting the destination. As such, customer engagement functions as a crucial channel through which digital content marketing influences travel intention (Kanje et al., 2019; Sang et al., 2024).

In the domestic tourism context, this mediating function becomes increasingly vital. Domestic audiences may have a general knowledge of various locations within their country; however, they may not necessarily have the desire or affective urge to investigate these locations more closely. The engagement of these audiences with relevant and recognizable content on social media has the potential to evoke refreshed interest and alter attitudes, thereby influencing the probability of intention to visit (Farhana Nasir et al., 2020; Jamil et al., 2022; Rehman et al., 2022).

This conceptualization of customer engagement as a mediating variable has important implications for tourism marketers and content suppliers. What is underscored here is the need to not just develop quality content but also to craft it in a manner that favors active involvement. Customer engagement is then rendered as more than a passive result; rather, it constitutes part of the essential piece of the strategic jigsaw that connects digital marketing campaigns and behavioral consequences.

Theoretical Framework

The present research is founded essentially on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, a recognized framework for investigating consumer responses to marketing stimuli. Although initially formulated in the field of environmental psychology, it has since been widely used in various areas like consumer behavior, internet marketing, and tourism. The model offers a systematic way of understanding the effect of external stimuli on internal psychological processes and thereby resulting in behavioral outcomes.

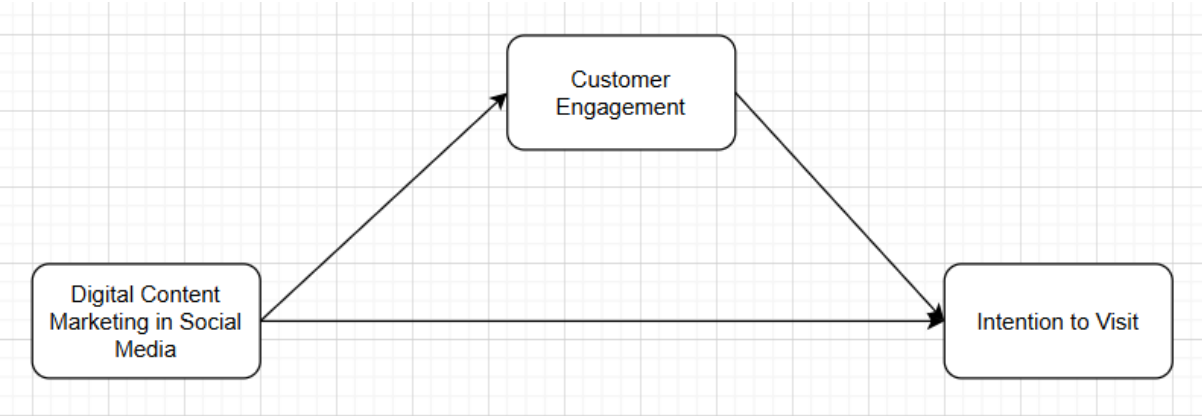
In this study, stimulus refers to digital content marketing in social media, which comprises various elements such as emotive images, educational updates, stories, and interactive features used in a bid to capture attention and convey messages about destinations. This kind of digital marketing forms environmental inputs that stimulate consumer attention and interest (Farhana Nasir et al., 2020).

In the S-O-R framework, the organism is the internal processes that take place within individuals as they respond to stimuli. The organismic state in customer engagement with this model is the engagement with social media posts, and that involves cognitive involvement, affective attachment, and behavioral interaction. The behaviors of engagement, including liking, sharing, and commenting, are reflective of the ways in which individuals unconsciously interpret and respond to the marketing posts they are exposed to (Jacoby, 2002).

The response component of the model is influenced by the behavioral outcome, which in the case of this study is the intention to travel to local tourism destinations. This intention is determined by the level of one's exposure to the digital content and the positive processing of the marketing stimuli they have been exposed to. A greater degree of customer engagement should result in a more positive intention to take action, for example, planning or contemplating a trip to the highlighted destination (Kim & Lennon, 2013).

With the S-O-R model, the study clarifies the underlying process by which online content marketing affects travel intentions. It accentuates the key mediating function of customer engagement, stressing that marketing activities are most impactful when they elicit strong internal responses from the target market. The model also buttresses the argument that behavioral outcomes in tourism are not at all an outcome of content exposure but a result of emotional and cognitive engagement with such content (Eroglu et al., 2001).

As such, the S-O-R model is a suitable theory for the present study because it provides a comprehensive framework for explaining the stimulus-effect connection in e-tourism marketing. It also highlights the requirement to consider both external marketing efforts and internal audience responses in efforts to influence travel choices.



Discussion of Results

Conceptual model showcased in this research emphasizes the central position of digital content marketing via social media in influencing tourists' visit intention, with customer engagement being the mediating mechanism. Informed by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework, the model illustrates how meticulously crafted digital content can evoke internal consumer reactions that subsequently become converted into behavioral intentions.

The theoretical model's expected result is that online content marketing, if developed with relevance, novelty, and interactivity, has the potential to be an effective catalyst for achieving users' attention and stimulating higher levels of engagement. Engagement in this context occurs in the form of customer behaviors like commenting on a post, uploading travel photos, or tagging friends. These attitudes are not superficial engagements, but rather a cognitive and affective investment in the information that research has shown to be positively linked to heightened intentions to engage in tourism (Shneikat et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2025).

Customer engagement is more than a metric for marketers; it is a behavioral and psychological conduit between exposure to content and intention to engage in travel-related actions. This understanding has significant implications for tourism marketers, especially for local travel. Local destinations often continue to be underappreciated not due to their aversiveness, but because they lack emotional meaning and motivation on the part of prospective visitors. Using online content that engages individuals and encourages interaction, tourism marketers have the ability to generate higher interest in local destinations (Vinh et al., 2020; Abukari et al., 2023; Satta et al., 2018).

The model further stresses that the desire to visit is not just influenced by information awareness or availability, but also by cognitive and affective processing that is applied by users to digital content. This acknowledges the necessity of moving from conventional marketing methods to more interactive and user-centered digital methods that emphasize interactivity (Aboalganam et al., 2025; Mandung, 2025).

Further, the model presented here calls for follow-up empirical studies to test the mediating effect of customer engagement. It welcomes scholars to explore differential impacts of various forms of content—visual, textual, or interactive—on engagement levels and subsequently on visit intention. These studies would contribute towards a better

understanding of digital influence in consumer decision-making, particularly during the post-pandemic tourism revival era, where domestic tourism has assumed increased significance (Rather & Hollebeek, 2021; Samsudin et al., 2024; Stadler et al., 2025).

As a conclusion, the discussion highlights that the improvement of customer engagement through effective digital content marketing is essential for the promotion of domestic tourism. This model provides a significant roadmap for both research and practice in the development of strategies for tourism promotion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This theoretical study aimed to explore the interaction between online content marketing via social media and travel intentions to local tourist destinations in Jordan, with consumer engagement as a significant mediating variable. Founded on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical model, the suggested framework explains that online content is a strategic stimulus with the potential to evoke consumer engagement, which has an impact on travel intentions.

The discussion has revealed that digital content marketing is more than just a method of information dissemination in its traditional sense; it is today a significant mechanism for influencing perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. If the content shared through social media is interesting, meaningful, and emotionally appealing, it invites users to engage with it—an engagement that reinforces their loyalty to the destination and enhances the chances of a visit being considered. In this regard, customer interaction is the key connection between marketing stimuli and consequent behavioral effects.

Theoretically, the proposed model contributes to tourism marketing scholarship by incorporating the mediating role of engagement in the digital content-consumer behavior process. It also validates the application of the S-O-R model into contemporary digital marketing contexts, particularly in domestic tourism, which remains underdeveloped in most emerging nations.

From a practical standpoint, it is essential for tourism marketers and destination management organizations in Jordan to make creating interactive and engaging online content a priority, content that both informs and emotionally resonates with the audience. Tactics like user-generated content, live engagement, visual storytelling, and culturally attuned messaging are likely to foster greater levels of engagement and, in turn, greater intentions for domestic travel. Additionally, social media websites should not just be utilized for visibility but also as pro-active tools for community development building and customer relation enhancement. Future studies are recommended to empirically test the model proposed, specifically using quantitative studies that examine the strength of the relationships among digital content, engagement, and behavioral intentions. Scholars can also look into examining moderating factors such as trust, cultural values, or technology readiness to advance understanding of these dynamics within Jordan.

Lastly, the study demands more focus on engagement in digital tourism marketing. By balancing digital strategy and consumer psychology, the marketer is in a position to promote

domestic tourism more effectively and assist in developing the local tourism sector in a sustainable way.

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