

# Trust on Social Media Content Among Travelers

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## Abstract

DMO need to take advantages of social media as a primary ways to draw tourist to visit destinations. Visitors' use and trust social media content creation of pre-visits and post-visit to the island. It is seen as a trustworthy for travel planning. Social media are used to promote activities, programs, events and local culture for tourist to experience. 132 self-administered surveys at Nipay Bay, Pangkor Island, Malaysia was analyzed. Convenience sampling was used to collect survey data. Descriptive statistic and regression was used to analyze the result. The regression result showed that 74.8% variance of the social media trust was explained by these social media consists of Instagram, Google, Facebook, Online travel guide, TripAdvisor, Twitter. The regression model was significant,  $F(6,125) = 61.770$   $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .748$ . This proved that social media must be used collectively by DMO to promote the island as an alternative way to promote a destination branding.

**Keywords:** Social media, user-generated content and trust.

## 1.0 Introduction

The use of social media networking has risen dramatically for travel, business communication, social commitments, sharing information, purchasing, consulting, donations and many others (Hamid, Romiza, & Cheng, 2013). The communication that took place via social media generally revolved among close family, friends and co-workers mainly using a smartphone (Malaysian Communications And Multimedia Commission, 2015). According to Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, (2016) reported 80% of internet user in Malaysia visited social media, with 96.5% claimed that they owned a Facebook account with 50% of them accessed accounts on a daily basis. On average, one user registered for four types of social media account. 41.6% of these social media followers were mostly connected for four hours or less using it as a preferred source of information. Nine out of ten Internet users go online to get information they needed in Malaysia. This showed that the Internet has transformed and shifted the local values from inert information receiver to the dynamic information seeker.

This transformation culture of using the social media to develop a pre-trip plan has also showed progress development in travel industry recently among tourist (Hosseini et al., 2015). Further, destination management organization (DMO) embraced social media as a powerful strategic plan. It is a dynamic business processes and is seen as one of the new ways of online earnings

besides reducing operation cost (Uşaklı, Koç, & Sönmez, 2017; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Ye, Law, Gu, & Chen, 2011). Industries are advised to use of social media aggressively as international electronic marketing (Wu, Law, & Zhang, 2012; Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010) through user-generated content as a tool to increase service quality delivery.

### **Pangkor Island, Malaysia**

Social media content inscribed Pangkor Island, a small beautiful Island' was historically a favorite resting place for fishermen, sailors, merchants and pirates. It is a low-key village feel and beachside activities make it an agreeable place to escape. Some of the most attractive features are the beautiful beaches and coral reefs, water based activities, duty-free shops, mangrove swamps, parks, a variety of wildlife and ecotourism activities (Selamat, Chelamuthu, & Suhaili, 2016) all of which play a major part in making small islands around Pangkor Island as a popular destination. To see a different side of Pangkor, visitors can stroll through villages like Sungai Pinang Kecil (SPK), with a pungent fish farm to its north, or colorful Gedong Bay. Tourists also have an option for gazing the lifestyle of fishermen along with their activities that are available in the three fishermen settlements namely Sungai Pinang Besar, Sungai Pinang Kecil and Kampung Teluk Kecil. The activities in these villages include visiting traditional houses built on stilts, boat making in Sungai Pinang Besar and visiting the fish factory in Sungai Pinang Kecil (Selamat et al., 2016).

## **2.0 Literature review**

### **Social Media**

Social media is a collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, that interact and share content creation and develop collaboration. It is a website and electronic applications devoted to forums, blogs (e.g. Travel blog), microblogging (e.g. Twitter), social networking (e.g. Facebook), social bookmarking, media-sharing (e.g. Flickr, YouTube), wikis (e.g. Wikitravel), review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor) and voting sites (e.g. Digg) are among the different types of social media. Mobile devise is the most convenient way to access social media sites (Namho & Chulmo, 2015). This feature makes social media very user friendly for global interactions at any point of time and location.

At present, social media plays a significant role in marketing and tourism promotion in the travel industry internationally. Social media is a group of internet based application that exists on the Web 2.0 platform. These functions provide opportunities for user to interact not only within their communities but also with industries. Currently, hoteliers interact actively with customers through websites such as Flickr, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for business purposes. DMO use social media to share business information to develop destination branding (Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015), media relation (Yoo & Kim, 2013) internet marketing and electronic commerce (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2010). Social media allows community to engage similar interest, thus makes DMO able to provide specific desired and deliver attention to these specific groups of tourist. However, DMO must maximize their information value, reliability via social media to increase customers' trust. Uşaklı, Koc and

Sonmez, (2017) advised, DMO must use social media aggressively to improve customer service, increase customer engagement and decrease customers' complications to increase competitiveness in the market.

Social media helps travelers in travel planning and decision making (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) such as accommodation, food, expenses, transportation and safety while they are on holiday. Content-generated from social media provide ideas and guides to travelers on what to expect while travel. These prepare travelers for the 'best' and the 'worst' moments earlier. Thus, reduces their risk and ensures safety while traveling. Social media also organize and counsel travelers for a smooth and pleasant trip to ensure splendid journey. Moreover, travelers can seek guidance interactively and instantly from social media communities.

### **Trust on Social Media Content**

To create and uphold trustworthiness in delivering travel information thru social media for DMO takes longer time and challenging efforts. Not everyone using social media comfortable to share their content creation with everyone. Study by Munar and Jacobsen (2013) on the credibility of information using social media at Mallorca, Spain conclude that Scandinavian tourists' were reluctant to share their content creation on travel review sites with others. This "Lurkers" group only wishes to access and retrieve information from social media for personal travel decision making. However, this study concluded that are variations of trust between social media category and age group among social media user. TripAdvisor review sites appeared to be the most trustworthy sources of information. Respondents older than 35 years old regard microblogging sites and DMO sites to be the most trustworthy. Return visitors viewed social media were more trustworthy that first-time visitors to Mallorca. However, return visitors found that DMO social websites were not to be reliable to be used, but, majority use social media for future trip plans to Mallorca.

In addition, social cues and technology adoption add an impact on social media trust among visitors. On the other hand, Zeng & Gerritsen, (2014) claimed that user generated content (UGC) such as photographs and videos in social media are trusted more credible then travel companies. Besides that, Rushton, (2016) found that users trust on social media, travel information lies in the type of information that visitors are looking for. An evidenced by research on consumers trust between UGC and advertising by MacKinnon, (2012) found that 65% of the respondents trust eWOM on the internet higher than advertisement information which was reflected as bias. From those respondents, 66.3% of the consumer trusted UGC and respect information from UGC for decision making on purchasing.

Drawn from a study by MacKinnon, (2012) on UGC trust, the main objective of this study is to identify the level of trust by domestic visitors using social media content to Pangkor Island, Malaysia during one week school holiday in September 2017.

### **3.0 Methodology**

A non-probability sampling technique was used since there is an unknown number of a population being selected. Besides, there is a lack of sampling frame to accurately classify tourist that visited the island. Applying on convenience sampling was the most suitable technique for this survey study among domestic tourist that visited Nipah Bay, Pangkor Island, Malaysia. Only departing tourists were surveyed as they would be in a better position to express their views based on their experiences with the destination. The visitors were approached and briefly explained the purpose of the research, and subsequently they were invited voluntarily to participate in the survey. The respondents fill up the survey using iPad to ensure the safety of the information being stored online. A total of 137 completed questionnaires was collected from respondents. SPSS version 23 has been used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistic and regression analysis were used for this research.

The research instrument was reviewed by two panel expert to ensure the content meet the study. A pre-test was done to ensure that the questionnaire was reliable and valid before distribute to the actual respondents. The Instrument consists of (a) type social media, (b) trust on social media content, (c) demographic and trip characteristics. A 7 point Likert scale was used in this survey. Each item on the instrument requires respondents to define their degree of usefulness. The scale ranged from a response of "1" indicating "Strongly Disagreed" to "7" representing "Strongly Agreed" (Lee & Lings, 2008). A 7-point Likert scales was chosen because it gives the respondent a wider range of the likely hood to response, maximizes the variance and avoid clutter in the data set (Eutsler & Lang, 2015). Section A of the questionnaire consists of seven items, were adopted and adapted from Gursoy, Del Chiappa, and Zhang, (2016). Section B of the questionnaire consists of two items, were adopted and adapted from Del Chiappa, Alarcón-Del-Amo, and Lorenzo-Romero, (2016) on social media trust. Section C consists of six items of respondents' trip characteristics and six items of demographic characteristics.

### **4.0 Data Analysis and Result**

Normality test was checked and outliers were clean to avoid problems in the data set. 5 cases were deleted due to outliers, left with 132 cases that were analyzed. The percentage of females was higher than males with 66.1% and 33.9%, as the female was keen to respond as compared to males. The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 58 years old and above and the majority of them were aged between "20 – 37"(61%) and "38 – 47" (39%). It was further observed that 34.7% of the respondents were on their first visit, 65.3% were repeaters among which 36.2% had visited the island twice and were on their third visit. 57% visited Pangkor with the family group, 34.1% with friends and relatives. 95.5% came to Pangkor for pleasure purposes, mainly for relaxation (54.7%), outdoor recreation (18.2%) and family activity (15.9%). Weekends (72.4%) are their preferred time to be at Pangkor Island and 40% prefer during school holidays.

Before testing multiple regression statistics, several statistical assumptions need to be met. Those assumptions be made up of (a) regression coefficients consists of (i) estimates, (ii) confidence intervals of 95%, (iii) model fit, (iv) R squared change, (v) descriptive, (vi) part and partial correlations, and (vii) collinearity diagnostics, (b) residuals consists of (i) Drubin-Watson, (ii) case wise diagnostics beyond 3 standard deviation. Table 3, displayed a high tolerance value for all tested predictors in the model. The zero-order, partial and partial correlations between the predictors showed low values, which confirmed low levels of multicollinearity. All of the statistical assumption and normal probability result showed that these assumptions were met. A multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to answer the objective. Table 1, showed that  $R^2=.748$ . This means that 74.8% variance of the social media trust is explained by these social media, which are Instagram, Google, Facebook, guide, TripAdvisor, Twitter. It can be concluded that these six social media types is a predictor for social media trust. However, these six types of social media alone cannot predict social media trust alone. There are other types that were not tested. The overall regression model was significant  $F(6,125) = 61.770$   $p<.001$ ,  $R^2=.748$  (Table 2). The amount of unique variance predictor for were statistically significant for four types of social media, which are Google ( $p=.035$ ), Online travel guide ( $p=0.001$ ), TripAdvisor ( $p=0.14$ ) and Instagram ( $p=.000$ ). Facebook ( $p=.073$ ) and Twitter ( $p=.055$ ) were not significant (Table 3). This fact rises probably because respondents view Facebook and Twitter share some similarities of functions in communicating about traveling at Pangkor Island.

## **5.0 Discussions**

With the expansion of the global tourism industry, Pangkor Island is one of many island destinations that are competing intensely in the international market space. This study was undertaken to look at the influence of trust on social media among domestic visitors to a small Pangkor Island, Malaysia. The result of this study discovers several new body knowledge for the DMO to re-strategies their destination market. Social media are seeing as a new way applying e-commerce to promote tourism offerings at a reasonable cost. It is suitable for new and small destination operators. The result showed that social media highly influence visitors to revisit, but must be used wisely with clear shared UGC declares to the reader. DMO needs to have an open mind with interactive communication while using social media to deliver higher service quality to maintain repeat customers. Each individual expresses their happiness, anger and sadness in social media. But not everybody wills to share this negative opinion openly. Therefore, DMO staffs and frontline crew must be trained intensively about handling service complaints and respond quickly customers' request to ensure meeting customers' expectation. In short, this result proves that tourist do have trusted on social media UGC. Whatever the viewpoint shared with UGC social media, visitors carefully select a destination before drawing a conclusion in decision making.

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**Table 1 Regression Model for Visitors Trust on Social Media**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
					F Change	df1	df2		
1	.865 <sup>a</sup>	.748	.736	.619	61.770	6	125	.000	1.722

a. Predictors: (Constant), Instagram, google, Facebook, Online travel guide, TripAdvisor, Twitter  
 b. Dependent Variable: trust2

**Table 2 ANOVA Model for Model for Visitors Trust on Social Media**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	141.871	6	23.645	61.770	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	47.849	125	.383		
	Total	189.720	131			

a. Dependent Variable: trust2  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Instagram, google, Facebook, Online travel guide, TripAdvisor, Twitter

**Table 3 Coefficient Model for Visitors Trust on Social Media**

Model		Unstand. Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Conf. Interval	
		$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$	t		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.712	.669		1.063	.290	-.613	1.037
	Google	-.137	.064	-.101	2.127	.035	-.264	-.009
	Facebook	-.170	.094	.102	1.811	.073	-.356	.016
	O. travel guide	.275	.080	.228	3.415	.001	.116	.434
	TripAdvisor	.213	.085	.173	2.501	.014	.045	.382
	Twitter	.172	.089	.146	1.940	.055	-.003	.348
	Instagram	.495	.102	.488	4.839	.000	.293	.697

Notes:  $R=.865$ ,  $R^2=.748$ , adjusted  $R^2=.736$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $df=125$ ,  $n=131$   $F$  statistics=61.770, and Sig.=.000.

a. Predictors: (Constant), Instagram, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Google, Facebook, Online travel guide  
 b. Dependent Variable: trust

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