

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMIS) ON TRAVEL MOTIVATION, PERCEIVED DESTINATION IMAGE AND TRAVEL INTENTION IN MALAYSIA

FAIZAH SHAHUDIN¹
JASMINE HOW HUI YI²
Xiamen University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Undeniably, the travel and tourism sector have a substantial economic influence on worldwide economic growth. With the emergence of social media, the tourism industry has discovered a fruitful avenue for reaching potential consumers. Social media has become one of the most powerful tools for travel companies, hotels, and airlines to reach a massive audience who are eager to consume travel content. Thus, SMIs (Social Media Influencers) have become increasingly relevant in a variety of industries, including tourism. The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of SMIs on the Malaysian tourism industry, with a focus on two major research areas: the effects of SMIs on Malaysian tourists' behaviour and travel motivation, and the factors of SMI marketing that influence such behaviour and motivation. In this study, a comprehensive view of the impact of social media use and travel motivation on Malaysian tourists' perceived destination image and travel intention to visit Malaysia with 233 participants were presented. The findings from this study could facilitate private and governmental sectors in developing the tourism industry. Regression Analysis, Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson Correlation, and Descriptive Analysis were utilized. Based on the findings, SMI was proven to be an efficient tool for tourism promotion in terms of influencing people's travel intention and destination image. In addition, travel motivation exhibits a significant positive influence on perceived destination image. Overall, the recommended model of this study offered some insight on the benefits of utilizing social media and SMIs in the Malaysian tourism sector. supported by Technology Advanced Model (TAM), which integrated the use of social media and influencers in promoting tourism. The findings may be regarded as one of the emerging empirical attempts to evaluate tourists' adoption of SMIs as reliable informative sources.

Keywords: social media influencers, tourism behaviour, travel motivation, destination image, Travel intention.