Digital Marketing Impact on Tourism Destination in Malaysia: The Role of Social Media Reviews

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Abstract

Malaysia boasts a plethora of picturesque and unspoiled locations that serve as ideal settings for recreational pursuits, while also offering a rich tapestry of cultural diversity that entices visitors to explore the country. Tourists from around the world are captivated by the diverse cultural activities and iconic landmarks that embody the rich heritage and ancient civilizations of Malaysia. Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, and economic dimensions, involving the displacement of individuals to foreign countries or destinations beyond their customary surroundings, driven by personal or business/professional motivations. This adaptability is crucial to guarantee customer happiness, safety, and overall enjoyment. Consequently, travellers have increasingly relied upon websites as primary sources for acquiring pertinent information, while also utilizing social media platforms for various purposes. Therefore, this study explored the three main important facets of social media reviews including quality, quantity, and credibility reviews. A total of 140 responses were recorded through a self-administered questionnaire survey. Findings found a significant effect of the reviews on travellers' purchase decision. The findings of this research will provide the tourism industry with a deeper comprehension of the influence exerted by social media reviews on their business operations and its importance in influencing travellers' decisions.

Keywords:

1   Introduction

Social media serves as a communication platform that can influence individuals in their decision-making process about tourism destinations. This influence is exerted through the sharing of tourism-related experiences, photographs, videos, and other pertinent information on social media accounts. The exchange of information and recommendations among individuals, including friends and family, plays a crucial role in the decision-making process. Therefore, the daily utilization of social media by internet users contributes to the formation of customers' buy intention decisions. Customers disseminate good or negative feedback using social media platforms. According to the findings of Sharma and Rehman (2012), the presence of good or negative information regarding a product or brand on social media platforms exerts a substantial impact on customers' purchasing behaviour.

Given the rapid growth of social media as a prominent information source, individuals are increasingly turning to these platforms to seek out information, explore alternative options, and assess and ultimately make decisions. Consequently, the emergence of social influencers and media sources has seamlessly replaced traditional marketing and information channels, such as television and radio commercials. The proliferation of social media platforms has had a significant impact on the tourist sector, hence contributing to the economic expansion of many cities (Amaro et al., 2016; Choe et al., 2017; Chong et al., 2018; Gretzel, 2018; Yoo et al., 2011; Zarezadeh et al., 2018). According to Buhalis and Law (2008) and Gretzel (2018), tourists have observed a significant transformation in their travel planning and destination selection processes due to the widespread influence of social media.

 However, it is important to conduct a comprehensive investigation of all the key elements of a journey in order to understand the impact of social media on decision-making in tourism. This includes examining how tourists utilize different social media platforms for various travel decisions, such as selecting a destination or choosing a hotel (Schuckert et al., 2016). Studies have investigated the impact of online consumer evaluations on hotel services (Browning, So, & Sparks, 2013; Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva, & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Park, Xiang, Josiam, & Kim, 2014; Tsao, Hsieh, Hsieh, & Lin, 2015). Nevertheless, there are many limitations to their findings, highlighting the necessity for additional research. Specifically, their study failed to investigate the influence of social media evaluations on the decision to purchase tourism destinations. Furthermore, it is worth noting that no research has been conducted on this topic in Malaysia.

This research examines three primary factors in social media reviews, including the quality of reviews, the number of reviews, and the credibility of reviews, in order to forecast the decision of purchasing a tourism destination. In the context of social media, the provision of restricted indicators of peer acknowledgement and the divulgence of personal details such as an authentic photograph, name, and the physical location and

online standing within a community significantly impact customer reactions to messaging (Forman, Ghose, & Wiesenfeld, 2008). Moreover, previous scholarly works have extensively explored the significance of numerical ratings provided by readers in reviews and their impact on the process of making purchase decisions (Poston & Speier, 2005), the costs associated with searching for information (Todd & Benbasat, 1992), and the sales of products (Duan, Gu & Whinston, 2008).

1.1 Problem Statement

In the past, the travel and tourist industry relied heavily on word-of-mouth marketing in comparison to other industries, mostly due to the intangible and perishable nature of its services. The decision-making process of visitors in selecting a place is often influenced by their social networks, including friends and relatives (Crompton, 1992; Hyde & Laesser, 2009). Therefore, the sole means of acquiring additional information regarding the tourism product is either through personal experience by utilizing the service, if accessible, or by seeking insight from individuals who possess prior familiarity with the service. Consequently, shoppers increasingly rely on personal sources, such as recommendations from friends, in order to make purchasing decisions.

While online consumer ratings in travel-related social groups provide convenient access to information for travellers, the task of effectively evaluating and discerning meaningful information is a challenge. According to the findings of Frias, Rodriguez, and Castaneda (2018), a significant number of individuals possess a restricted capacity for processing a considerable volume of information, potentially resulting in the phenomenon known as information overload. Therefore, the identification of dependable reviews holds significant importance in the realm of online tourist marketing. This is because online platforms that provide more valuable evaluations have the ability to deliver better value to customers and enhance their trust in making informed purchase decisions (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). In a study conducted by Song and Yoo (2016), it was determined that the role of social media is significant in influencing visitors' buying decisions during the selection stage.

Hence, it is imperative to investigate the factors influencing social media evaluations that are sought after or capable of enticing travellers to choose their preferred tourism site, particularly in Malaysia. Several recent studies have emphasized the significance of comprehending the online review process in order to gain a deeper understanding of consumer decision-making (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Baker et al., 2016; Filieri et al., 2019,2021; Hernández- Méndez et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Pop et al., 2021; Tseng, 2017). Within the realm of tourism consumption, internet reviews hold significant value as they offer valuable insights into the evaluation of destination and service consumption experiences by tourists (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Bigne et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2018).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Purchase Decision

The concept of purchase choice involves the evaluation of marketing techniques in order to predict future sales and market share (Morwitz, 2014). Additionally, it refers to the transactional behaviour displayed by customers following their evaluation of goods and services (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Numerous variables influence the decision-making process about purchases. The phenomenon of word of mouth has a substantial impact on the purchase intentions of consumers (Tariq, Abbas, Abrar & Iqbal, 2017). The purchasing behaviour of consumers can also be influenced by the nature of the goods under consideration (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). In addition, buying intentions are influenced by personal behaviour, attitudes, and unforeseen circumstances (Kotler, 2003). An escalation in promotional endeavours is likely to result in an augmentation of purchase decisions. Hence, the level of brand awareness and consumer familiarity with a brand will have a direct impact on customers' purchasing decisions (Tariq et al., 2017). However, Yu et al. (2018) posited that the purchase decision is a subjective process that may be seen by examining consumers' propensity to acquire goods or services. To enhance brand recognition, the utilization of celebrity endorsements or endorsements from social media influencers has proven to be a more efficacious strategy for promoting products or services, as it concurrently fosters brand loyalty and influences customer purchasing decisions.

2.2 Social Media Reviews

Social media reviews encompass assessments of items or services that are disseminated on social media platforms, predicated upon the firsthand experiences of customers. Various methods can be employed to assess and evaluate a subject, such as utilizing a star categorization grading scale, accumulating positive or negative feedback, providing descriptive narratives, or incorporating visual elements like tags, images, and recommendations. According to Simms (2012), social media platforms are being utilized as a prominent source of information within the tourism industry. The pervasive utilization of social media platforms in individuals' daily lives has extended its influence on the realm of travel, impacting habits and skills in this domain (Wang et al., 2016).

The advent of social media evaluations has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of the purchase decision-making process. According to a study conducted by Ashikul et al. (2020), the utilization of advertisements pertaining to tourism on various social media platforms has a beneficial impact on customers. Furthermore, an effective viral marketing plan facilitates the expansion of the tourist base, as each contented visitor will disseminate positive suggestions to their acquaintances. According to the study conducted by Rehab and Khaled in 2019, typically, individuals engage in reciprocal communication on social media sites, wherein they exchange their positive or negative encounters pertaining to specific hotels or travel places. Consequently, the utilization of social media platforms by prospective travellers is facilitated during different phases of a journey, encompassing pre-travel, during travel, and post-travel periods (Varkaris &

Neuhofer, 2017). Following their actual journeys, a subset of tourists engages in the practice of disseminating their travel experiences via social media platforms such as Facebook. Fardous et al. (2017) indicate that individuals may also communicate their own experiences and perspectives about the destination, either in private conversations with family and friends or through public platforms. This serves as an additional information resource for prospective travellers in subsequent instances. Therefore, the present investigation gives rise to the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a relationship between social media reviews towards purchase decision.

2.3 Online Quality Reviews

The concept of online review quality can be characterized as the persuasive influence of comments conveyed through an informational discourse (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). Park, Lee, and Han (2007) have provided a definition of online review quality, encompassing the attributes of relevance, clarity, sufficiency, and objectivity in the material. Occasionally, individuals may encounter random information that lacks comprehensibility, hence posing challenges in garnering trust and belief in the associated comments (Ratchford, 2001). The acceptance of communication channels that provide online evaluations is likely to be influenced by the quality of information when customers are seeking information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). This is the reason why, according to Lin et al. (2013), online evaluations that are fair, clear, and sensible, while also considering other opinions, have the potential to positively affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

This finding aligns with the research conducted by Cacioppo and Petty (1984), which suggests that a review including transparent and informative reasoning has greater credibility compared to a review that relies heavily on emotional content. Hence, the credibility and persuasiveness of social media evaluations are enhanced when they are authentic and specific, as opposed to being vague or overly enthusiastic. Prior research has indicated that the perceived instructiveness of reviews is more influential in shaping purchase decisions compared to basic reviews (Park et al., 2007; Park & Lee, 2008). Consequently, the present investigation posits the subsequent hypothesis:

H1a: There is a relationship between quality of social media reviews towards purchase decision.

2.4 Quantity Reviews

The provision of substantial information by current users contributes to the bolstering of customers' confidence in their purchasing decisions, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of errors and exposure to risks (Buttle, 1998). Furthermore, the proliferation of reviews and discussions on online platforms provides additional evidence to support their increased visibility (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). This assertion is corroborated by the research conducted by Lee et al. (2008), which suggests that the quantity of information that customers receive can influence their purchasing decisions regarding products and services. In a study conducted by Park, Lee, and Han (2007), the researchers examined the relationship between the quantity of online consumer

evaluations for a product and its popularity and potential sales success. The findings indicated that a higher number of online reviews likely served as an indicator of product popularity and potentially contributed to its success in terms of sales. Furthermore, the quantity of reviews serves as an indicator of the market success and level of popularity of a product (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Lee & Lee, 2009).

According to Park, Lee, and Han (2007), a substantial volume of user reviews might influence consumers to rationalize their purchasing choices by associating a large number of comments with potential quality. This serves as a risk mitigation tactic that ultimately enhances the likelihood of making a purchase. Furthermore, consumers require reliable sources of information to bolster their confidence and minimize the likelihood of making mistakes or encountering risks while choosing a vacation destination. Ultimately, it is possible for customers to observe a positive correlation between the quantity of evaluations and the level of item ubiquity and centrality, as shown by Lee (2009). Therefore, the quantity of reviews plays a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions. If travellers perceive reviews on social media as untrustworthy or erroneous, it is probable that their inclination to select a certain tourism site would decrease. Thus, this study presents the following hypothesis:

H1b: There is a relationship between quantity of social media reviews towards purchase decision.

2.5 Credibility Reviews

The assessment of shared information quality is heavily reliant on the standard of credibility, which is considered to be of utmost importance (Bae & Lee, 2011). The concept of information credibility pertains to the manner in which recipients perceive the trustworthiness of a source (Erkan & Evans, 2016). According to Ladhari and Michaudi (2015), online reviews are often regarded as trustworthy and impartial sources of information. Levy and Gvili (2015) assert that contemporary corporations place significant emphasis on electronic word-of-mouth, particularly customer reviews, due to its substantial impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Furthermore, Uysal, Perdue, and Sirgy (2012) conducted a study which found that the majority of travellers perceive social media as a dependable tool for searching and organizing their travel arrangements, as it offers a diverse range of information. Despite the fact that travellers' reviews are commonly used as sources of travel-related information, the issue of source credibility has gained significant attention in both research and practical applications. This is primarily due to issues around the trustworthiness of online travel reviews (Park, et al., 2014). The need of customers to acquire information regarding the product they are interested in is heightened as they perceive an increased level of risk associated with the selection of accommodation, particularly when the transaction is conducted via e-commerce (Jardim & Sant'Anna, 2007).

The reliability of information significantly influences customers' purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of today's widespread use of the internet for product and service research. This holds true whether consumers make immediate online purchases or defer their purchases to offline channels. According to Park et al.

(2014), the disclosure of personal profile information, including interests and vacation locations, can be utilized as a means of evaluating the reliability and pertinence of online evaluations. This implies that individuals who provide information on subjects of interest can cultivate trust and credibility among their peers. Hence, it can be observed that customers exhibit a preference for information that possesses a high level of trustworthiness prior to engaging in any purchasing decision. Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is put forth:

H1c: There is a relationship between credibility of social media reviews towardspurchase decision.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive quantitative research design is used in this study. The survey targeted Malaysian adult who had visited and planned to travel at least to one tourismdestination around Malaysia. Local tourists were selected as there has been little empirical research about the effect on this group in Malaysia. Therefore, primary data collection is essential to identify and analyze local tourists' purchase decision. We also chose local tourist as respondent to provide insightful knowledge to this study and they are familiar with the tourism destination in Malaysia.

3.2 Population & Sampling Details

A researcher could refer to a population as a group of people or an area of interest that they study for their research. Adults who are currently residing in Malaysia made up the selection of participants for this study. According to Ismail and Lai (2015), the tourism industry in Malaysia is one of the most important contributors to the economy of the country. Furthermore, according to Rahman (2014), the tourist industry in Malaysia has developed into an important service sector that helps contribute to the country's overall economic development.

A study that was conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia in the year 2020 revealed that there was a total of 131.7 million domestic visitors reported in the year 2020. As a result of Malaysia's well-known status as a multi-racial nation, the nation observes a significant number of public holidays that are predominately in the form of religious or ethnically-based celebrations. These holidays include the Eids, the Chinese New Year, and Deepavali in addition to the school vacations. Because of these holidays, Malaysians are able to travel within the country. At the same time, it is thought that the indications of visitors include motivation and a positive recommendation from word of mouth (Isa et al., 2014).

The present study employed a convenience sample approach and employed a purposive sampling technique for the acquisition of data. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique wherein researchers select their sample based on its convenience, without employing any specific probability-based criteria. According to

Kish (1995), numerous scientific disciplines that employ convenience sampling have limited concern for the representativeness of their samples. Convenience sampling is a method of data collection that involves selecting individuals from a community based on their convenient availability to the researcher, taking into consideration factors such as the size of the population, cost, and time constraints (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The utilization of convenience sampling allows for the expeditious and cost-effective collecting of data, while purposive selection is employed to ensure that the selected sample accurately represents the intended population under investigation.

The concept of sample size refers to the necessary subset of a population that allows for drawing conclusions with a sufficient amount of information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Power analysis is a statistical method employed to determine the appropriate sample size for a certain study. The sample sizes are modified in order to determine the likelihood (power, β) of obtaining a statistically significant result (at a chosen Type I error, α) for a specific population effect size. This is achieved by conducting power analysis, as described by Cohen (1988). For the purposes of our research, we selected individuals who are 18 years of age or older, residing in Malaysia, and have either travelled or intend to go to local tourism destinations within a 12-month period from the date of the survey. For the purposes of this study, a sample of 381 individuals residing in various regions of Malaysia was selected using a random sampling technique. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size indicates that a minimum of 381 respondents would be adequate for achieving statistical representation of a population exceeding 50,000 individuals. The participants were invited to complete a survey by means of an email and a WhatsApp link to an online questionnaire.

3.3 Instrumentation

This study employs a self-administered questionnaire utilizing Google forms to examine the correlation between social media evaluations and travel destinations in Malaysia for data collection. Consequently, the dissemination of the questionnaire was conducted entirely online with the objective of obtaining a minimum of 381 responses. The construction of the questionnaire adhered to the standardized format of questionnaire design. The hyperlink to the questionnaires, sourced from Google Forms, was disseminated indiscriminately to adult respondents in Malaysia who had either travelled or want to travel to any tourism destination inside Malaysia. This distribution was conducted through various online social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Participants were also prompted to distribute the survey questionnaire to their family members and acquaintances.

The primary difficulty encountered in this study pertained to the process of formulating questions using the Google form and worksheet framework. The research questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section A included inquiries pertaining to continuous variables, namely quality evaluation, quantity review, credibility review, and purchase decision. The measurement of all items in Section A was conducted using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale was utilized to assess the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the

responses. On the other hand, Section B encompasses the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as inquiries that were assessed using four items derived from the work of Filieri and Mcleay (2014).

Table 1.0: *Measures of the study variables*

Study Variables	No. of Items	Type of Scale
Social Media Reviews		
Quality review	4	A five-point Likert-scale from (1) " Strongly
Quantity review	3	Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree"
Credibility review	4	
Purchase Decision	4	A five-point Likert-scale from (1) " Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree"
Demographic & Work ProfileInformation	8	Selection of nominal & ordinal scales

4   Findings

4.1 Response Rate

Out of 381 questionnaires, a total of 159 questionnaires were returned. 14 responses were discarded due to uncertain answers and some were left blank. Another 5 responses were omitted due to the fact that they never or do not have any plan to travel in Malaysia within 12 months before or after the survey date.

4.1.1   Respondents' Demographic Profiles

Respondents' demographic and travelling profile which include gender, age, marital status, state of residence, monthly income, social media sources, frequency of travelling and travelling history were presented in the following Table 2.0.

Table 2.0: Respondents' Demographic

Profile	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Travelling history (within 12 months)	Yes	140	97
	No	5	3
Gender	Male	85	61
	Female	55	39
Age group (years)	18-30	47	34
	31-40	63	45
	>40	30	21
Marital Status	Single	40	29
	Married	70	50
	Married with children	30	21

State of residence	Selangor	67	48
	Johor	9	6
	Malacca	3	2
	Negeri Sembilan	7	5
	Perak	4	3
	Penang	5	4
	Kedah	8	6
	Perlis	1	1
	Terengganu	8	6
	Kelantan	10	7
	Sabah	1	1
	Sarawak	3	2
	Kuala Lumpur	14	10
	Putrajaya	0	0
	Labuan	0	0
Travelling Frequency (in a year):	1 to 3 times	91	65
	4 to 5 times	35	25
	6 to 10 times	14	10
Monthly income (range):	RM1,000 - RM3,000	49	35
	RM3,001 - RM5,000	56	40
	RM5,001 - RM10,000	28	20
	More than RM10,000	7	5
Social media reference	Facebook	106	76
	Instagram	87	62
	Twitter	38	27
	Tik Tok	83	59
	Youtube	72	51
	Pinterest	8	6
	Others	13	9

According to the data shown in Table 2.0, it is evident that a total of 140 participants had either travelled or have intentions to travel in Malaysia within a period of 12 months prior to or following the date of the survey. An additional five participants said that they either had no intention or lack any plans to engage in travel within Malaysia over the 12-month period preceding or after the date of the survey. As a result, the responses provided by these five participants were excluded from the analysis due to their failure to meet the survey's criteria. In terms of gender, male respondent is 61% which equals to 85 respondents while female respondents are 55 taking 39% from total respondents.

The age group of 31 to 40 years old constituted the largest proportion of respondents, accounting for 45% of the overall sample size (n=63). The age range of 18 to 30 years old is the second biggest proportion among the total respondents, accounting for 34% (n=47). In conclusion, the demographic group that exhibited the

lowest level of participation in the survey was individuals aged 40 years and above, accounting for 21% (n=30) of the overall respondent pool. In terms of marital status, 50% (n=70) of respondents are married while another 29% (n=40) are single. There are also respondents that are married with children, took 21% (n=30) from total respondents.

The majority of participants in the study were from three states in Malaysia: Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Kelantan. Specifically, 48% (n=67) of respondents were from Selangor, 10% (n=14) were from Kuala Lumpur, and 7% (n=1) were from Kelantan. The survey results indicate that the representation of respondents from Perlis and Sabah is minimal, accounting for only 1% of the total sample size (n=1). Conversely, no respondents were obtained from Putrajaya and Labuan. As per the data shown in Table 2.0, out of the total number of respondents (n=91), 65% reported travelling 1-3 times a year, while 25% (n=35) indicated travelling 4-5 times annually. A mere 1% of the respondents, including a sample size of 14 individuals, reported engaging in travel between 6 and 10 times within a single year. Based on the collected data, it was found that 40% (n=56) of the respondents reported a monthly income falling within the range of RM3,001 to RM5,000. A total of 49 respondents, accounting for 35% of the sample, reported earning a monthly income ranging from RM1,000 to RM3,000. Additionally, 28 respondents, representing 20% of the sample, reported earning a monthly income between RM5,001 and RM10,000. Finally, a total of 7 respondents, accounting for 5% of the sample, reported a monthly income above RM10,000.

Facebook was the platform most frequently selected by respondents as their reference before travelling; this choice accounted for 76% (n = 106) of the total responses, whilst 62% (n = 87) respondents utilize Instagram. The next platform, TikTok, is utilized by 59% (n=83) of respondents, and Twitter is utilized by 27% (n=38) of respondents. Pinterest was the social media platform that respondents utilized the least before arranging their vacation, with only 6% (n=8) of respondents using it.

4.2 Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

In order to establish whether or not the data that was obtained was reliable, the measurements of each variable were examined for reliability as well as internal consistency. As a result, the questions were measured with the use of the Reliability Analysis. According to Pallant (2007), the Cronbach's coefficient alpha is the most used statistic, particularly for determining how well an instrument measures its own internal consistency. The values of the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for all of the study's independent variables ranged from 0.839 to 0.457, revealing a wide range of possible values for the coefficient. Quantity of reviews has the greatest coefficient value of any independent variable, with a value of.824, followed by quality of reviews, which has a value of.777. The credibility review has the lowest value of all of the coefficients, with a value of.717. As a result of the Cronbach's Alpha value being more than.50, these values have proven that all variables can be accepted. It is also acceptable to use the dependent variable because the dependability coefficient is.762.

Table 3.0: *Reliability Coefficient Values of Study Variables*

Variables Coefficient (α)	Number of Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Quality review	4	.777
Quantity review	3	.824
Credibility review	4	.717
Purchase decision	4	.762

4.3 Correlation Analysis of Study Variables

Pallant (2007) asserts that the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analysis is employed to assess and investigate the correlation relationship and direction among variables in a given study. The interpretation of the analysis yields a range of coefficients, with values ranging from $r=.10$ to .29 considered little, $r=.30$ to .49 considered medium, and $r=.50$ to 1.0 considered large (Pallant, 2007). A correlation coefficient of .90, however, indicates the existence of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2006).

According to Pallant (2007), it is important to acknowledge that the magnitude of the sample size significantly affects the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient, whether it is denoted as "r" or "rho." A modest correlation can achieve statistical significance when the sample size is large, namely when it exceeds 100 (N>100). Pallant (2007) argues that correlations of modest or moderate magnitude, which fail to reach statistical significance at the conventional threshold of p<0.05, can nonetheless be considered acceptable when based on a limited sample size.

Table 4.0*: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Matrix of Social Media Reviews andPurchase Decision*

Scale	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. Quality Review	1.00				4.22	.588
2. Quantity Review	.59**	1.00			4.11	.781
3. Credibility Review	.74**	.67**	1.00		4.29	.592
4. Purchase Decision	.78**	.82**	.83**	1.00	4.19	.646

Note: N=140, ***p<0.01*

Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposed there is a relationship between social mediareviews and purchase decision towards tourism destination in Malaysia. Accurately, theconcern is how frequent social media reviews are used and how important the reviewsare for people to select and decide on their travel destination in Malaysia. Thishypothesis is strengthened by the study made by Abramyk (2020) that found out morethan 93% of consumers make their purchasing decisions by considering online reviews. As shown in

Table 4.0 above, a Pearson product-moment correlationcoefficient was computed to assess the relationship between social media reviews and purchase decision. There is a relationship between quality reviews and purchase decision, r=.78(p=0.000), hence the alternate H1a is accepted. Based on findings presented, Hypothesis 1a (H1a) proves that thereis a positive relationship between quality review and purchase decision on tourism destination in Malaysia with the mean score of 4.22 which is relatively high. This outcome indicates the fact conducted by Chaffey et al. (2009) that positive reviews could significantly contribute to the increased number of hotel bookings.

This hypothesis (H1b) concern on whether the social media quantity review will affect the purchase decisions for tourism destination in Malaysia. As stated in the Table 4.0, quantity review recorded the lowest mean score yet still has a positive relationship with a mean score of 4.11. The relationship between quantity review and purchase decision is significant. They arepositively correlated (r=.592, p<0.01), hence the alternate H1b is accepted.

This hypothesis (H1c) examines whether the social media quantity review will affect the purchase decisions for tourism destination in Malaysia. As stated in the Table 4.0, quantity review recorded the lowest mean score yet still has a positive relationship with a mean score of 4.11. Credibility review and purchase decision is having a positive correlation (r=.83, p<0.01), hence the alternate H1c is accepted.

5   Conclusion

Consumers are inclined to select evaluations that possess reliable content and lack prejudice while making purchasing decisions. The process of assessing the credibility of internet reviews can be defined as the act of customers evaluating the veracity of such evaluations (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Previous research has also demonstrated that source credibility may be conceptualized as consisting of two distinct dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Furthermore, Winter et al. (2015) proposed that in order to mitigate bias in social media reviews, the inclusion of both positive and negative aspects in reviews holds greater significance in evaluating the trustworthiness of online reviews compared to reviews that only present one-sided perspectives.

According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), individuals who engage in travel utilize various social media platforms to share their trip experiences, interact with others, establish connections with individuals from other locations, and make online purchases of travel-related goods and services. The decision-making process of potential tourists can be significantly influenced by social media, as it allows them to access and engage with content and opinions shared by other travellers. These interactions have the potential to shape, guide, and ultimately impact the initial and final decisions made by individuals (Fotis et al., 2012). According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), there is a prevailing tendency among social media users to place greater trust in user-generated content shared by peers and influencers, as opposed to official content disseminated by tourism departments or commercial suppliers. The present study has conducted an examination of the consumer decision journey within the tourism domain, specifically focusing on

the influence of social media reviews during the evaluation stage of selecting a tourism destination in Malaysia. This research has provided insights into the intricate aspects of this phenomenon.

The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the correlation between social media evaluations and the decision-making process of purchasing tourism destinations in Malaysia. The findings of this study indicate that all three research questions and hypotheses were successfully addressed and confirmed, respectively. The results of the study indicate that there are substantial associations between quality review, quantity review, credibility review, and the purchasing choice of tourism destinations in Malaysia. The credibility review had the highest degree of correlation. The selection of this indicator signifies the heightened importance placed by travellers on the reliability of evaluations in social media platforms. In contrast, quality evaluations have a somewhat diminished significance, as travellers must first establish trust in the reviews themselves prior to considering the information and material contained within them. In addition, all of the hypotheses yielded statistically significant results and have been validated in accordance with the stated objectives. Therefore, our study aligns with the proposed concept and models that suggest social media reviews have a favourable impact on the decision-making process for purchasing tourism destinations in Malaysia.

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