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Understanding Social Media Influence In Reviving The Trishaw Or *Beca* As A Popular Tourism Attraction In Melaka.

Siti Hajar Abd Aziz¹, Ahmad Nur Azam Ahmad Ridzuan², Mohd Sufiean Hassan³, Muhammad Syamim Mohd Aslai⁴ and Dania Syafiah Mazyilan Edy⁵

Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka¹, Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak², Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka³, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka⁴, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka⁵

shajar_aziz@uitm.edu.my, ahmad558@uitm.edu.my, mohdsufiean@uitm.edu.my, 2020472596@student.uitm.edu.my, 2020460426@student.uitm.edu.my

Abstract—Social media has quickly become an important medium to promote tourism products, such as accommodations, food and beverages, cultural attractions, and entertainment destination. In Melaka, one of the oldest and unique tourist attractions is the trishaw ride or fondly known as *beca*, a bicycle with a sidecar, powered entirely by the cyclist, which was a popular mode of public transportation in the immediate years following the end of the Japanese Occupation during the year 1942 to 1945. The recent Covid-19 pandemic which enforced movement and travel restrictions saw a decline in the popularity of trishaw rides and deprived the operators of their source of income. While the tourism sector struggles to recover, the operators struggle to continue their tradition of riding trishaw and to keep the cultural heritage alive. This project aimed to study the influence of social media to revive the popularity of trishaw rides in Melaka and help boost the tourism sector. Using purposive sampling and videography as tools, the initial finding shows that social media can be useful to help promote trishaw rides. Respondents agreed that this transportation was still relevant and could help tourists do their sightseeing of popular heritage spots in Melaka, instead of doing it by foot, hence enhancing their cultural appreciation of the Melaka heritage.

Keywords— cultural appreciation, cultural heritage, social media, tourism, videography

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past, tourists have read travel journals, newspapers, and books to gather the knowledge they require to make trip arrangements. However, in the last 15 years, online travel information websites have taken the position of these conventional media. Tourists too received information from experiences shared by individuals on social networking websites on the internet. Trip motivation resulting from cultural wants and wishes has numerous sources, including promotion (advertising and brochures), other people's opinions (family, friends, and travel agents), media reporting (newspapers, magazines, and television news), and popular culture (motion pictures, entertainment content) [1].

With the growing numbers of digital users, social media was seen as a very effective tool of marketing even in tourism as it “does not lie in what you say, but how you say it, considering the marketing channels and creativity of the message” [2]. It was argued that the traditional mass media techniques are less effective in the environment as the internet powered-website and social media give access to large amounts of information on destinations, arrangements, and hotels to tourists.

This project set out to investigate the social media influence that may play in this process of reinvigorating the appeal of *beca* rides in Melaka and advancing the travel industry. The trishaw ride is popularly known especially by locals *beca* is one of Melaka's oldest and most distinctive tourist attractions. A common form of public transportation in the years after the Japanese Occupation, a *beca* is a bicycle with a sidecar powered solely by the rider.

Being part of the national heritage, and considered a valuable resource to the nation, the *beca* operators have been recognized as informal tourist interpreters in enhancing the quality of tourists' experiences. Naturally, as both domestic and foreign tourists

frequently visit historical sites while on vacation in Malaysia, it is important to focus on heritage value, one of the tourism industry's fastest-growing niche market areas [3].

There has been a debate about the identity of *beca*, a distinctive feature of Malaysian heritage. As Melaka's trishaws are decked with bright colours and have non-Malaysian characters unlike trishaws in other states, some thought that these decorations could also be unique features to differentiate them from other trishaws in Malaysia. Traditionally, *beca* operators would play *dondang sayang* tunes, which are traditional ballads that originated in Melaka, *ghazal*, which are poems set to music, and other Malaysian melodies, while the *beca* were decorated with designs showing the local flora and fauna as well as nature motifs [4].

The recent Covid-19 outbreak which imposed movement and travel restriction on tourists into Melaka has deprived the operators of their main source of income who struggles to keep the trishaw-riding tradition alive while battling to do so [5]. Many had to do odd jobs such as doing repairs or joining the delivery services to survive.

As social media emerged as the main tool for most communication purposes, researchers seek to understand the influence of these digital platforms in promoting tourism and heritage products among tourists, which includes the *beca*. One research finding suggests that one of the main motivators for potential tourists in visiting the chosen destination is related to a need for a sense of belonging and connection to the destination's image [6].

This could suggest that the intrinsic values of a destination such as enjoyable tourism experiences could be one of the reasons behind their sharing practices on social media. These experiences include communicating facts related to the destination and its attractions [7] as well as communicating their feelings about their travel experiences, thus becoming "valuable articulations of sociability and emotional support" [8].

These are easily achieved as social media allows networking and interactivity among acquaintances, friends, and family members, and allows any digital users to stay connected and received updates from any individuals, companies, places, or even products and brands.

The role, influence, and impact that social media has on tourism, especially on how people look for and share information including how tourists and travel-related enterprises engage in travel are undeniable. Social media is altering how tourists and tourists find, read, trust, and collaborate to develop information about travel destinations and service providers. [7]

When it comes to promoting culture, it was suggested that the quality of travel information services, as well as cultural exposure through diverse media, played an essential role in attracting tourists' interest and needs about the destination of their choice [9] [10]. This too determined the types of cultural tourism destinations for tourists seeking cultural experiences [11].

II. METHODS

When selecting variables for the sample population, the researchers use a non-probability sampling technique known as purposive sampling, sometimes known as subjective sampling. The researcher's judgment and comprehension of the context are essential to this sampling process [12]. Digital video technology can be very useful in enhancing learning thus giving meaningful educational experiences, at the same time providing new and sophisticated ways to enhance learning [13]. The use of videography as a method to collect and explore visual data was enhanced using videography as a tool. The data collection in this study was done by interviewing eight participants on site of the *beca* tourism venue in Melaka, while the responses were analysed using a thematic analysis technique to achieve the objectives.

III. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

All respondents agreed that social media has a significant influence on tourism promotion of attractions in Melaka, particularly the *beca*. It has had an important role to boost the tourism industry in Malaysia since the outbreak of Covid-19. This is achieved because social media can provide and receive updates from others. A greater number (80%) expressed that posting photographs and videos on social media such as Instagram and TikTok could be effective in encouraging tourists to try the *beca* rides, while other respondents emphasized that much more effort is needed to make sure this social media promotion could be effective.

Respondents generally agreed that *beca* rides are a unique attraction in Melaka and social media postings showing interesting cultural experiences in Melaka could be a positive way of promoting these tourism products. The majority agreed that *beca* is still relevant to Melaka tourism and could help tourists do their sightseeing of popular heritage spots, instead of doing it by foot, hence enhancing their cultural appreciation of the Melaka heritage.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study correlated with other studies on the positive relationship between social media and tourism activities. Social media's ability to connect with friends, families, and those outside their network acted as traditional word-of-mouth marketing in a digital way, thus it has a considerable amount of influence on tourism activities. Social media especially Instagram could be an effective way to promote *beca* as the cultural heritage product of Melaka. It was suggested that tourists to Melaka play a more effective role to help revive the *beca* as a popular tourism product in Melaka and help improve the cultural appreciation of the Melaka heritage.

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