

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISTS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: THE CHINESE EXAMPLES

Professor, Dr. Lawal M. Marafa, Ph.D
Centre for Environmental Policy and Resource Management
Department of Geography and Resource Management,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Email : lmmarafa@cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract

The internet has moved into the age of Web 2.0, of which the most significant characteristic is the online interaction of users, mostly by way of social media. As one of the most important economic sectors in the world, the tourism industry has also been heavily influenced by Web 2.0 and, in particular, social media. This trend is significantly impacting tourists' behavior.

According to some scholars, tourists increasingly choose to use social media and its network to arrange their trips due to perceived value, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, etc. Social network's influence on tourists' behavior has also been found related to tourists' ages, education levels, etc. This is facilitated by the capacity of social media to disseminate word-of-mouth, search, and share information, experiences, etc.

In this study, an empirical method has been utilized to identify the role of social media in tourists' decision-making processes. Responses from tourists from China and, in particular, internet users and frequent travelers are taken as samples for this study. The results shed more light on their activities on social media as it relates to tourism and their overall decision-making process as they gradually become a major group of outbound tourists.

Keywords: China, E-tourist, Social Media, Tourist's Behaviour and Word-of-Mouth.
