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The role of social networking marketing in activating domestic tourism in Algeria: Case study Numidia Tourism and travel agency in Batna city

Yassine Ghadjati

Laboratory Development of Algerian SMEs' Competitiveness in the Substitute Local Industries (DECOPILS), Hassiba Benbouali University of Chlef, B.P 78 C. Ouled fares Chlef 02180, Algérie
Email: y.ghadjati@univ-chlef.dz

Kaddour Bennafla

Laboratory Development of Algerian SMEs' Competitiveness in the Substitute Local Industries (DECOPILS), Department of Economics, Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, Hassiba Benbouali University of Chlef, B.P 78 C. Ouled fares Chlef 02180, Algérie
Email: k.bennafla@univ-chlef.dz

Abstract---This study aimed to demonstrate the effectiveness of social networking sites in revitalizing domestic tourism in Algeria, by enabling tourism and travel agencies to take advantage of social networking sites to support domestic tourism in Algeria. We relied on the descriptive-analytic method to address the topic, and the study was dropped on a sample of customers of the Numidia Tourism and Travel Agency-Batna, estimated at 100 tourists using social networking sites by relying on the electronic distribution of the questionnaire form for the purpose of data collection. The study found that there is an effective role of social networking in promoting and supporting domestic tourism in Algeria and that the low level of tourism culture perceived by the majority of domestic tourists is due to the weak role of tourism and travel agencies. For the benefit of the latter, the study recommended that they should include social networking sites in their marketing strategy and ensure that they have an effective and efficient presence on these sites in order to achieve the goal of supporting domestic tourism in Algeria.

Keywords---social networking sites, domestic tourism, tourism and travel agencies, Numidia Tourism and Travel Agency, Batna city.

Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries, including Algeria, have placed great importance on the domestic tourism sector. Despite the sector's ability to revitalize the national economy, it suffers from a major local recession due to poor spending, and the focus of tourism and travel agencies on foreign tourism has further aggravated the situation of the sector, which is suffering from a high rate of leakage of Algerian tourists abroad.

In the midst of these changes, the term social networking has caused a great stir in the academic community to the point of being categorized as a buzz word with new trends, especially in ICT-related sciences as well as marketing (Dhingra & Mudgal, 2019).

Some simple definitions of social networking sites have focused on the different nature of social messaging. (Russo et al., 2008) On the other hand, Magro defined social networking sites as dynamic environments that allow users to create profiles that reflect their personal or professional identity and build social relationships characterized by the freedom to add friends, join groups and follow pages available online.(Magro, 2012) Social networking sites also have several characteristics, the most important of which are :(Singh & Sethi, 2020)

- **Collaboration:** The relationships built through social networking foster collaboration among individuals. This collaboration manifests itself through the sharing of created content and the exchange of knowledge, depending on the scope of the collaboration, which can be open or closed. Wikipedia is a living example of open collaboration, which has allowed the production of an open web encyclopedia thanks to the collaboration of many contributors.
- **Connectedness:** Social networking technologies have enough power to keep users connected anytime, anywhere using a variety of devices such as computers, cell phones, etc. Encouraging connectedness by keeping users connected around the clock ensures that they can continue to interact and share information and ideas with each other.
- **Community:** The synergy realized from social networking builds strong human capital by developing community ties. Social networking ensures the growth and prosperity of communities and also allows cultural traditions to be preserved and passed on from generation to generation.

In contrast, domestic tourism has been associated with newer and less-studied topics from governmental bodies and tourism academics, especially in developing countries (Luvsandavaajav & Narantuya, 2021). Tourism is concerned with the travel and movement of people to places outside their usual environment for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes.(Shahwar & Khaliq, 2024) Tourism can also be categorized into external and internal tourism. External tourism includes the activities of tourists residing outside their country of residence while internal tourism includes the activities of tourists residing within their country of reference(Thommandru et al., 2023).

In this regard, domestic tourism is defined as all tourism activities undertaken by individuals residing in a particular country by traveling to destinations within its territorial jurisdiction.(Nyikana & Bama, 2023) Domestic tourism includes both short trips, day trips and vacations within an individual's own country.(Youell, 2010).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), about 9 billion domestic tourism trips were made in 2018 worldwide (UNWTO, 2023), and the volume of domestic tourism is six times larger than the volume of foreign tourism, which achieved 1.4 billion trips in the same year (UNWTO, 2020). Compared to foreign tourism, domestic tourism has received more attention at the international level due to the repercussions of the novel coronavirus. Despite its enormous economic value, academic research has focused on foreign tourism, especially in developed countries (NGONDO et al., 2024).

The preference for domestic tourism within the reference country is due to the interplay of a set of factors influencing the choice of the domestic tourist destination, most notably (Apriyanti, 2024) :

- The ease of access to domestic tourist destinations made it an ideal choice for holidays and vacations.
- The simplicity of travel planning procedures without preparing insurance documents, visas, and booking arrangements.
- Reduces costs and avoids additional expenses associated with currency exchange and exchange rate fluctuations.
- Fosters a sense of national pride and belonging by providing opportunities to explore local heritage.
- Provides comfort and security during health (COVID-19) and political (regional conflicts) crises.
- Supports the local economy by encouraging spending on local SMEs.

The continuous development of information and communication networking, including social networking, has contributed to changing the traditional methods adopted in marketing and tourism together, as it works to support domestic tourism by (Alghizzawi et al., 2018) :

- Providing the necessary information that tourists need about domestic tourist destinations and destinations.
- Guiding tourists towards making positive and informed decisions based on the experiences of domestic tourists.
- Simplify the process of booking various trips by providing easy, instant and secure payment channels for tourists.
- Ensure the wide dissemination of travel information and keep abreast of and adapt to new developments.

The ease with which tourism consumers (tourists) recognize the value of social networking is very clear, so it is not surprising that tourism suppliers (travel and tourism agencies) are moving towards adopting it in their marketing strategies on a large scale as one of the latest keys to success (Öz, 2015).

In this sense, Dellarocas suggested that SNSs provide travel and tourism agencies with unprecedented opportunities to understand and respond to consumer needs by analyzing the various comments and responses of virtual communities created online (Dellarocas, 2003). Therefore, digital travel and tourism agencies seek to integrate social networking applications into their websites to enhance the search experience and present various information related to comprehensive tourism offerings, itineraries, applicable prices and complementary services in an attractive way to tourist customers (Leung et al., 2013).

In Algeria, (Zaabat Sami, Sardouk Fatih, 2022) A study on the role of social networking in revitalizing domestic tourism in the state of Jijel, and it was found that tourism advertising was considered the most contributing means of tourism revitalization, while the impact of tourism publicity was weak. On the other hand, Facebook was the most used social networking site by tourists. The study (Samael Hassiba, 2022) highlighted the contribution of tourism and travel agencies to the promotion of domestic tourism activity, and concluded that the role of these agencies has not lived up to the expectations of tourists despite Algeria's possession of important natural, cultural, civilizational and archaeological assets. The hypothesis of the study revolved around the possibility of social networking marketing playing an effective role in promoting and revitalizing domestic tourism in Algeria. This study derives its importance from the crucial role that domestic tourism plays in diversifying sources of income and achieving economic stability as the best viable alternative outside the hydrocarbon sector. Hence, the aim of this study was to examine how to enable tourism and travel agencies to exploit Algeria's tourism assets and enhance their capabilities with the benefits of social networking, which constitutes a real pillar to revitalize the domestic tourism sector in Algeria, especially in light of the competitive global tourism environment open to digital transformations. Based on the above, the following key question can be asked:

How do tourism and travel agencies take advantage of the effectiveness of social networking marketing to revitalize domestic tourism in Algeria? What is the reality of this in the Numidia Tourism and Travel Agency in Batna?

1. Methodology

The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted in this study, which was conducted in the northeast of Algeria, specifically in the wilaya of Batna, which is located in the heart of the famous Auras region in Algeria, focusing on the tourist municipalities in Batna such as Timgad, Tazoult, Aris, and Mana, which are considered one of the most attractive areas for tourists, as they enjoy stunning natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage. In addition, the residents of these municipalities are known for their great passion for tourism, contributing significantly to the promotion of the region and the reception of tourists. According to local tourism statistics for 2023, these municipalities are major destinations for ecotourism and cultural tourism enthusiasts.

For these reasons, and over the course of three months (from June to August 2024), this research study relied on the study population consisting of clients of the Numidia Travel and Tourism Agency in Batna. It focused on individuals who had previously dealt with the agency as part of its organized domestic tourism

program in four municipalities (Timgad, Tazoult, Arris, and Menaâ), which caters to 1,800 domestic tourists annually. Emory & Cooper (1991) suggested that a sample size of 5% of the population is appropriate for a probability sample, such as a random sample. Therefore, the required sample size to be drawn from the study population of 1,800 individuals is: $5\% * 1,800 = 90$. A total of 100 electronic questionnaires were distributed and collected via social media platforms, with 96 questionnaires being accepted for analysis in this research, resulting in a final response rate of 96%. The excluded questionnaires were based on contradictory answers included in the questionnaire to eliminate arbitrary respondents.

A preliminary face validity test was conducted on the measurement tool by presenting it to a panel of judges, and based on their feedback, the tool was finalized and distributed to the study sample. It was divided into two sections:

- The first section: In addition to containing personal data of the respondents, it identified the most used and preferred social media platforms for tourism and travel purposes.
- The second section: Included the two main study variables with two sub-sections, consisting of a total of 20 statements.

2. Results

2-1 Statistical Analyses:

The questionnaire was based on 20 questions, equally divided between the two study variables. SPSS V29 software was used to calculate means and standard deviations to analyze the data based on the regression results, by examining the correlation coefficients between the independent and dependent variables at a significance level of less than 0.05.

2-2 Analysis and Discussion :

2-2-1 Characteristics of the Study Sample : The following table shows the personal data of the members of the study sample.

Table I: Personal data of the study sample members

Variables	Categories	Total of subjects (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	68
	Female	31	32
Age	From 20 to 29	17	18
	From 30 to 39	58	60
	From 40 to 49	14	15
	years and older 50	07	07
Educational Qualifications	Below High School	09	09
	university degrees	72	75
	Master's Degree And Higher	15	16
Income level	Just under 20,000 DA	10	10
	From 20,000 to 40,000 DA	37	39

Variables	Categories	Total of subjects (n)	Percentage (%)
	From 41,000 to 60,000 DA	29	30
	More than 61,000 DA	21	22
Professional Status	Unemployed	05	05
	Student	09	09
	Employee	62	65
	Self-employed	11	12
	Retired	09	09
Most used social networking site today	Facebook	48	50
	YouTube	22	23
	Instagram	15	16
	Twitter	07	07
	Other site	04	04
Favorite social networking site for travel and tourism	Instagram	41	43
	YouTube	24	25
	Facebook	15	16
	Twitter	06	06
	Other site	10	10

Sources: Output SPSS

A review of the data in the table above reveals the following:

- According to the gender variable: The percentage of males (68%) turned out to be the dominant category and larger than that of females (32%). In other words, it can be said that the number of males (65 males) is almost twice the number of females (31 females). These proportions are due to the interplay of several social, economic, and cultural factors that encouraged males to move for tourism and travel and restricted the movement of females.
- According to the age variable: Respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 made up the largest percentage of the total respondents (60%), followed by those aged between 20 and 29 (18%), those aged between 40 and 49 (15%), and those aged 50 and above (07%). Therefore, it can be said that the majority of the respondents are less than 39 years old (78%).
- According to the educational level variable: All members of the study sample have at least an intermediate educational level, as the majority (75%) have a university level, followed by those with postgraduate degrees (16%) and then those with a high school level or less (09%). This result is quite logical if we know that the majority of respondents are more aware of the importance of using social networking in their daily lives.
- By income variable: Respondents with incomes between 20,000 and 40,000 DA (39%), compared to (30%) for respondents with incomes between 41,000 and 60,000 DA, while respondents with incomes above 61,000 DA reached (22%), with respondents with incomes below 20,000 DA constituting the lowest level (10%). This means that the majority of middle-income respondents have sufficient financial ability to afford the costs of tourism and travel compared to low-income respondents.

- According to the variable of occupational status: the employees category had the largest percentage (65%) as they have a monthly salary with a paid annual vacation to cover the costs of tourism and travel, followed by the self-employed category (12%), followed by students and retirees with the same percentage (09%), while the unemployed category came last with a close percentage of (05%). This is a very logical result given that planning for tourism and travel requires sufficient financial stability for the vacation period.

- According to the most used social networking site: Facebook came first as the most used social networking site by the respondents (50%), followed by YouTube (23%), Instagram (16%) and X (Twitter) (07%). Finally, other sites such as: Telegram and TikTok with a low percentage (04%). This is a logical result given that the relative variation in the use of social networking sites is due to the varying level of popularity among different age groups.

- According to the best social networking site for travel and tourism: Of the 96 respondents in this study, 41 individuals chose Instagram as the best social networking site providing educational and entertaining content about tourism and travel (43%), followed by YouTube (25%) with 24 individuals, followed by Facebook (16%) with the vote of 15 individuals, while 10 individuals chose other sites such as: Tripadvisor, Pinterest (10%), while the rest of the respondents preferred X (Twitter) (06%). This is a logical result, given that displaying high-quality views of tourist destinations requires an ideal platform that provides comprehensive visual tourism content that can be quickly interacted with, while allowing users to share their experiences and benefit from the experiences of other users.

2-2-2 Hypothesis Testing:

The study hypothesis was tested using appropriate statistical methods, indicating that “marketing via social networking can play an effective role in activating domestic tourism in Algeria.” The results were as follows:

Table II: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error in the Estimate
1	0,774	0,600	0.596	0.142

Sources: Output SPSS

The table (II) above shows that the correlation coefficient (R) indicates the strength of the relationship between the independent variable (social networking marketing) and the dependent variable (domestic tourism activation). Generally, the closer the R value is to 1, the stronger the relationship. Thus, an R value of 0.774 suggests a strong and positive relationship between social networking marketing and domestic tourism activation in Algeria.

The R Square value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (domestic tourism activation) that can be explained by the independent variable (social networking marketing). With an $R^2 = 0.600$, this indicates that 60% of the changes in domestic tourism activation can be explained by social networking marketing, which is a relatively high explanatory level. The adjusted

R^2 value (0.596), which is very close to the R^2 value, further enhances the confidence in the accuracy of the model variables.

Additionally, the Standard Error of the Estimate (0.142) indicates the model's precision in predicting values. The lower this value, the more accurate the model is in forecasting actual outcomes.

Table III: ANOVA table for simple linear regression

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2,860	1	2,860	136,387	0,001
	Residual	1,908	95	0,021		
	Total	4,768	96			

Sources: Output SPSS

It is evident from Table III above that the significance level is 0.001, which is less than the 5% significance threshold. This indicates that the statistical model is highly significant. Moreover, the F-value is 136.387, which is greater than its critical value of 6.90 at a degree of freedom of (1-96) with a corresponding significance level of less than 0.05. This confirms that the F-value is statistically significant, indicating a strong, statistically significant relationship between social networking marketing and domestic tourism activation in Algeria.

Table IV: coefficients for simple linear regression

Unstandardized Coefficients				Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,143	0.309	/	3,703	0,01
	Social networking Marketing	0,758	0.065	0,774	11,678	0,01

Sources: Output SPSS

The results from Table IV above indicate that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for social networking marketing is estimated at 0.758, meaning that for each unit increase in social v marketing, we can expect an increase of 0.758 units in domestic tourism activation. Additionally, the Beta value of 0.774 signifies that social networking marketing has a significant impact on the dependent variable. The T-value of 11.678, with a corresponding significance level of less than 0.05, indicates that social networking marketing has a substantial effect on domestic tourism activation.

Thus, the main hypothesis, which states that "social networking marketing can play an effective role in promoting domestic tourism in Algeria," is accepted.

3. Conclusion

In light of the growing interest of tourists in social networking sites (SNSs) and the multiplicity of their use, it is necessary to open new horizons to promote the

growth of the domestic tourism sector in Algeria by relying on the real support provided by these virtual sites. In addition to their widespread use, the interactive capacity of SNSs among tourist users allows the creation of a tourist culture rich in trustworthy information obtained in the context of the mutual exchange of experiences, which is a strong incentive to raise awareness of the importance of domestic tourism among local tourists, with an unconditional invitation to participate in the success of the policy of promoting the growth of the domestic tourism sector in Algeria.

Therefore, it is imperative that travel and tourism agencies do not remain isolated from the realization of this national endeavor. They should accelerate the pace of joining the gestures of supporting domestic tourism in Algeria locally by enhancing their capabilities by including social networking in their marketing strategies to increase their positive impact by stopping the leakage of domestic tourists abroad, which represents a serious addition to the support of domestic tourism in Algeria. A set of findings was reached, which can be summarized as follows:

- Domestic tourism in Algeria is highly valued by the majority of males compared to females, mainly due to the influence of social factors.
- Compared to foreign tourism, domestic tourism in Algeria requires lower costs, which is commensurate with the financial strength of the middle-income group, which constitutes the largest part of the volume of domestic tourism, especially with the financial deficit recorded by the low-income group accompanied by their inability to spend on tourism.
- An increase in the daily rate of social networking use to the point of indispensability, as it has become an essential part of the lifestyle of modern societies touched by digital transformation.
- There is a tendency to view animated tourism content presented in the form of 360° images, videos, live broadcasts, stories, etc. on social networking sites at the expense of static tourism content (articles, reports, text posts, tweets, photos, 3D images), which affects the appearance of tourism content with the required level of attractiveness and interaction in support of domestic tourism in Algeria.
- A significant decrease in the level of tourism culture among the majority of domestic tourists as a result of the lack of information and insufficient knowledge balance achieved outside the promotional efforts of tourism and travel agencies that are missing and unavailable on social networking platforms.
- The existence of a local preference for domestic tourism in Algeria at the expense of shifting the destination to foreign tourism, especially during the period following the COVID-19 global health crisis.

In light of the previous findings, several recommendations can be made for travel and tourism agencies, which should:

- Customize tourism programs suitable for female preferences that take into account the principles of Algerian society by offering inspirational content that includes successful female tourism experiences through social networking.

- Provide tourism offers that suit the characteristics of the middle-income group, while offering options that help attract low-income earners by activating mechanisms to pay the costs in monthly installments or receive a price reduction bonus if they bring another person to benefit from the tourism offer, for example.
- Exploit the opportunity of the daily presence of social networking users by ensuring an active and effective presence on these platforms while making sure to activate official pages by interacting and updating them continuously.
- Focusing on the visual and animated form of the tourism content provided by relying on the advantages of Facebook, Instagram and YouTube as the most used and best sites in terms of good follow-up of all developments related to tourism and travel.
- Intensify promotional operations in support of domestic tourism by focusing on the effectiveness of social networking to help increase the level of tourism culture and raise awareness of Algeria's tourism assets.
- Capitalize on the opportunity to favor domestic tourism by ensuring that the needs and aspirations of domestic tourists are met by offering local tourism offerings that are more competitive than their foreign counterparts.

By following these recommendations, the role of travel and tourism agencies in supporting domestic tourism in Algeria can be improved by relying on the effectiveness of social networking, which contributes to achieving sustainable economic growth guaranteed by the development of the domestic tourism sector in Algeria.

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