



The Impact of Online Marketing Strategies on International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia

Xing HONGCHAO^{1*}, Oyyappan DURAIPANDI², Tao YU³, Xu YIBIN⁴, Ye BIHAI⁵

¹ Independent Researcher- China

* Corresponding Author Email: xing2@gmail.com - ORCID: 0000-0002-5241-0111

²Independent Researcher- China

Email: oyyappa2n@gmail.com - ORCID: 0000-0002-5247-7812

³Independent Researcher- China

Email: tao2@gmail.com - ORCID: 0000-0002-5243-2313

⁴Independent Researcher- China

Email: xu2@gmail.com - ORCID: 0000-0002-5242-1212

⁵Independent Researcher- China

Email: 2ye@gmail.com - ORCID: 0000-0002-5241-0111

Article Info:

DOI: 10.22399/ijcesn.3744

Received : 03 November 2024

Accepted : 27 December 2024

Keywords

Industry Journals
Passengers
Marketing Experts
Web Marketing
Social Media Analytics

Abstract:

Creative web marketing, travel habits are changing everywhere these days. Malaysia is a well-known tourist destination because to its beautiful landscape, rich culture, and busy travel industry; this article tries to find how different online marketing strategies influence visitor count. To compete with other well-known travel destinations worldwide, Malaysia is concentrating more its online presence, content strategy, and digital marketing to attract and keep tourists from all across the world. Among these techniques include working with influential people, actively on social media, applying search engine marketing (SEM), and website optimization. Industry journals, passengers, and digital campaign performance can be collected from official tourism reports and online marketing platforms internet traffic logs, social media analytics, and tourist statistics both types of data provide insights from various sides. This was a mixed-methods analysis. The results clearly show a correlation between focused online marketing and the rise in international visitors over the past 10 years. Young individuals who feel familiar with technology are more accessible to social media and influencer marketing operations, according to important studies. Especially for guests from China, Europe, and neighbouring Asian countries, this is rather relevant. Among the primary issues the study highlights are inconsistent brand message, inadequate usage of customized content created for specific customer needs, and digital channel saturation. The country is already rather much dependent on digital technology. This paper clarifies for marketers and tourist authorities how digital technology has altered travel trends all across the world. Malaysia may increase its competitiveness in the competitive field of international travel by enhancing and expanding its digital outreach projects.

1. Introduction

The spread of digital technology and the predominance of online platforms, the travel sector has undergone a radical worldwide makeover. Using creative marketing techniques is essential to draw in and keep international guests given the always rising degree of competition among holiday locations all

around. Malaysia began promoting itself online in an attempt to get more visitors from all across the globe. The nation is well-known for its kind residents, stunning landscape, and great diversity of culture. Search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing (SMM), celebrity participation, video content development, and interactive website design include among the several digital tools and activities under the broad heading "online marketing

strategies". Digital technology's capacity to segment audiences, distribute materials in real time, and produce original, tailored itineraries has helped travel firms, tourism boards, and hotel chains among others[1]. As more and more people utilize digital platforms for trip planning, reviews, and booking, a well-considered online presence and content distribution strategy might have significant effect on tourist behaviour. For Malaysia's tourism industry, online marketing was very vital for keeping visibility and competitiveness during the recovery period following the epidemic. Online marketing stressing ecotourism choices, unique experiences, and cultural events might assist to explain the increase in interest from foreign visitors. Furthermore becoming essential elements in proving the trustworthiness and appeal of a location are digital word-of-mouth and user-generated material. Though great success has been made, further study is being done to find how well online marketing techniques translate digital interaction into actual visitor attendance. Among the several challenges still influencing the results are different degrees of stakeholder technological adoption, restricted access in specialized areas, and inconsistent digital branding. It is impossible to underline sufficiently the thorough research of the relationship between internet marketing methods and the volume of foreign visitors. Then influence next marketing and policy decisions. This study aims to ascertain the degree of success online marketing has been able to provide for the travel industry in Malaysia. Shall thus examine how digital activities affect the decisions taken by foreign visitors in order to achieve this. The knowledge acquired by this research help to open the path for the creation of more focused, effective, sustainable tourism-related marketing initiatives[2].

2. Background of the Study

Though tourism is still very important for Malaysia's economy, it presents many job possibilities, significant foreign exchange income, and the potential for cross-cultural communication. Recent years have seen great upheaval in tourism; the digital marketing revolution is mostly responsible for these developments on a worldwide level. Many elements have helped to bring about these developments. The abundance of mobile devices, social media, and internet access has fundamentally changed the way travellers explore locations, select activities, and interact with websites[3]. This change occurred over a few years recently. Using the ever more effective weapon of digital marketing, national tourism boards and their business sector partners may highlight holiday sites and shape visitors' opinions and

actions. This is justified by the notable expansion in internet marketing as a tool. Malaysia is vying with surrounding countries that are charging more to draw in international visitors, even if it boasts a rich cultural legacy, varied ecosystems, and many tourism sites. Consequently, companies and government organizations engaged in tourism have been increasingly using internet marketing strategies to increase awareness, establish a reputation for the region, and inspire involvement from possible visitors. One might attribute the influence on other internet systems on the internet itself. Under this category (SEO), influencer connections, targeted ads, social media marketing, and interactive websites meant to provide user-oriented, real-time information. Still, this is hardly an all-inclusive list. Internet marketing is quite beneficial in order to satisfy tech-savvy guests visiting overseas. This is so because it guarantees accurate targeting, is cost-effective, and enables dynamic interaction with worldwide audiences. User-generated content—such as reviews, blogs, and travel vlogs—shapes people's opinions and aspirations around travel as well. User-generated material is thus rather important. Apart from being advertising tools, digital platforms affect the decision-making process a visitor goes through. Inspired and planned initially, these choices start with a reservation and carry on with contemplation on the event later. Research on the real influence of digital marketing tools on the volume of foreign visitors to Malaysia is still lacking even if these technologies have been applied somewhat widely[5]. Based on business reports and anecdotal data, the two have a clear correlation. Still, thorough empirical study is required to measure this influence and identify which internet tools are most helpful. Such results have a big influence on how resources are allocated, how competitive locations are, and how promotional efforts match visitors' always changing preferences. This study seeks to offer evidence-based recommendations meant to improve the effectiveness of tourist marketing in a world growingly connected by digital technology. The primary goal of this study is to evaluate the relationship between the volume of foreign visitors to Malaysia and internet marketing techniques. This study focus Malaysia as the focal point[6].

3. Purpose of the Research

The continuous impact of digital platforms on individuals' travel behaviour helps to improve this awareness even more. The main objective of the study is to make general conclusions on the efficacy of the tactics by considering how they affect international tourist recruitment, Malaysia's reputation as a travel destination, and, finally,

individuals' choices to visit there. Finding the elements that inspire more people to routinely come and utilize the website is the main aim of the research. Through choosing its approaches, the research can do this. Researching the marketing techniques used by hotels, travel companies, and government departments handling visitors help one to do this. Think the outcomes clarify how to make data-driven marketing decisions, thereby helping Malaysia's tourist sector to prosper over time. This is absolutely important considering the fierce global competitiveness.

4. Literature Review

The advent of online marketing has caused significant changes in the global travel business. These changes have resulted in various patterns of international visitors for nations including Malaysia. They have also helped to drive increasing Malaysian travel. Thanks to digital platforms that provide for targeted advertising activities, destinations have become more visible and regularly visited. These sites cover social media, search engines, influencer relationships, and travel review sites. These projects are driving increasing numbers of visitors accessing these sites. The impressions visitors of Malaysia have shown and their plans to travel outside have shown a favourable association as well as commercials using visually rich narrative with locally adapted material. Empirical studies have shown that online reviews, user-generated material, and SEO all greatly help to define the reputation and image of a site. By use of focused marketing plans and mobile-friendly websites, Malaysia has been able to raise its appeal in drawing foreign visitors. More people from all across the world are so swarming to Malaysia to visit. Even with ongoing challenges like strong competition and shifting digital trends, intelligent internet marketing helps to assist Malaysia's tourism industry's expansion and rise of international tourist arrivals. This is true even if foreign visitor count is rising steadily[7].

5. Research Question

What is the impact of influence marketing on international tourist arrivals in Malaysia?

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25. The odds ratio and 95% confidence interval were used to ascertain the strength and

direction of the statistical link. The researchers developed a statistically significant criterion at $p < 0.05$. A descriptive analysis was performed to determine the key characteristics of the data. Quantitative approaches are often used to evaluate data obtained from surveys, polls, and questionnaires, as well as data modified by computational tools for statistical analysis.

6.2 Sampling

Research participants filled out questionnaires to provide information for the research. Using the Rao-software programme, researchers determined that there were 830 people in the research population, so researchers sent out 930 questionnaires. The researchers got 900 back, and they excluded 20 due to incompleteness, so researchers ended up with a sample size of 880.

6.3 Data and Measurement:

A questionnaire survey served as the principal tool for data gathering in the study. The survey had two sections: (A) General demographic information and (B) Responses on online and offline channel variables assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. Secondary data was obtained from many sources, mostly on internet databases.

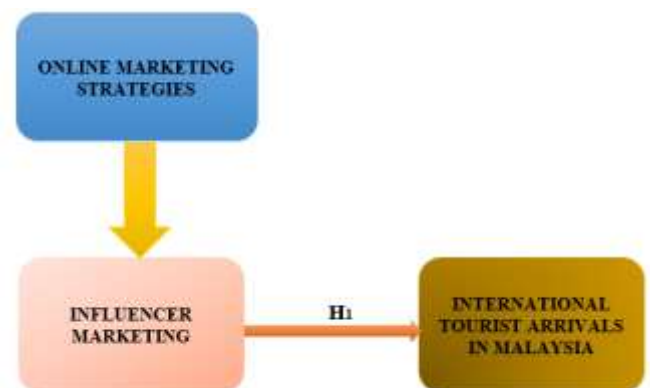
6.4 Statistical Software:

The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS-Excel.

6.5 Statistical Tools:

To grasp the fundamental character of the data, descriptive analysis was used. The researcher is required to analyse the data using ANOVA.

7. Conceptual Framework



8. Result

Factor Analysis

A common use of Factor Analysis (FA) is to uncover latent variables within observable data. In the absence of definitive visual or diagnostic indicators, it is customary to use regression coefficients for evaluations. In FA, models are crucial for success. The subjective of modelling are to identify errors, intrusions, and discernible correlations. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test is a method for evaluating datasets generated by multiple regression analyses. The model and sample variables are confirmed to be representative. The data indicates redundancy, as seen by the figures. Reduced proportions improve data comprehension. The KMO output is a numerical value ranging from zero to one. A KMO value ranging from 0.8 to 1 indicates a sufficient sample size. The below quantities are considered suitable, according per Kaiser: The subsequent approval standards established by Kaiser are as follows:

A lamentable 0.050 to 0.059, insufficient 0.60 to 0.69

Middle grades often span from 0.70 to 0.79.

Exhibiting a quality point score between 0.80 and 0.89.

They are astonished by the range of 0.90 to 1.00.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Sampling Adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic: 0.770

The outcomes of Bartlett's test of sphericity are as follows: The degrees of freedom for the chi-square test are around 190, with a significance level of 0.000.

This confirms the veracity of claims made just for sampling purposes. Researchers used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess the significance of the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin metric indicates that a result of 0.770 reflects sample adequacy. The p-value from Bartlett's sphericity test is 0.00. A positive outcome from Bartlett's sphericity test indicates that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

This illustrates that claims made for sampling reasons are valid. Researchers used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to assess the significance of the correlation matrices. A sample is deemed good based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria when the result is 0.770. The p-value derived from Bartlett's sphericity test is 0.00. The correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, as shown by a statistically significant outcome from Bartlett's sphericity test.

Independent Variable

Online Marketing Strategies

Generally speaking, "online marketing tactics" are a spectrum of digital strategies used by various companies to promote their products, grab the attention of target markets, and boost web engagement. This study underlines the need of using several strategies with an eye toward online marketing[8]. These strategies might help us reach many important objectives in the tourism sector: increasing awareness, impacting travel decisions, and changing the tastes of foreign tourists for certain sites. This strategy mostly consists on SEO, PPC, influencer partnerships, content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, video advertising, and pay-per-click (PPC) ads. Thanks to their versatility, travel agencies and boards may target specific groups with customized messages, change campaigns depending on performance criteria, and track customer activity in real time. By using these strategies, countries like Malaysia might raise their global recognition, strengthen their brand identification, and flourish in the very competitive global tourist scene. These strategies simplify this operation. Apart from the technology applied, the uniqueness, relevance, and timeliness of the material provided regarding the internet greatly influence the effectiveness of online marketing activities. Online marketing techniques remain a major component of drawing in foreign visitors as consumer behaviour moves more and more towards digital platforms for holiday planning and decision-making[9].

Factor

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing—a strategy used by internet marketers—involves the promotion of products, services, or places by means of people with significant social media following, therefore fostering brand awareness and sales. One wants to highlight the location, good, or service. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are a few social media sites

Table: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.770
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

one might employ for this aim. Influencer marketing in the travel industry substantially helps attitude development, interest stimulation, and travel choice promotion among different audiences from all across the world. Influencers have every single day to share the knowledge regarding actual travel experiences. Their means for this include visual narrative, blogging, and current information access. For the intended audience, this presents a more relevant and trustworthy source of information than more conventional forms of advertising[10]. The credibility of influencers and their degree of participation in a certain scenario may greatly affect consumers' opinions about a specific area. One can attain this. By means of targeted interaction with digital content producers such as travel bloggers and vloggers, tourist boards and hospitality companies may attract specialized audiences, raise knowledge of their domains, and strengthen close relationships. Working with people that create digital content help one to achieve these objectives. Influencer marketing's capacity to humanize venues, provide recommendations on par with peers', and create emotional ties with possible visitors gives it great persuasive power. Influencer marketing has the power to increase awareness from possible guests, raise conversion rates, and improve brand loyalty in very competitive tourism markets like Malaysia's. This is true in cases when the marketing strategy is followed suitably[11].

Dependent Variable

International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia

In Malaysia, "international tourist arrivals" is the overall count of foreign nationals visiting the nation within a certain period for vacation, business, or another purpose. The whole number of international visitors to Malaysia is stated under this word. Many depend on this indication as a dependent variable in order to evaluate the efficacy of national marketing efforts, the appeal of Malaysia as a tourism destination, and other pertinent metrics. Attracting and keeping visitors from all across the world is the aim, hence this statistic shows how successfully regulations, advertising, infrastructure, and service quality have worked. A lot of elements influence the volume of visitors that swarm a certain place[12]. Among these elements are government stability, accessibility, global travel patterns, destination branding, and web marketing strategies. In this era of digital technology, the value of participating in online activities in influencing travel behavior is becoming more and more evident. Different channels might help the involvement in issue: social media, personal contacts with influential

individuals, and targeted digital marketing opportunities. An influx of foreign guests who stay for an extended period of time improves gains in national income, cultural understanding, and employment possibilities. Therefore, monitoring this fluctuation helps clarify visitor growth patterns and supports strategic planning meant to raise Malaysia's profile in the very competitive global travel sector. Strategic planning thus develops from the observation of this fluctuation[13].

The relationship between Influencer Marketing and International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia:

The relationship between the increase in foreign visitors to Malaysia and the use of influencer marketing techniques shows the rising relevance of digital influence in the travel sector. In recent years, customers have come to appreciate a new type of advertising called "influencer marketing". People's impressions of a website, their attitude towards it, and their degree of faith in it may all be influenced by it. Thanks to a lot of social networking sites such YouTube, Instagram, and TikHub, these skills are now within grasp. The efforts of travel bloggers who have pushed Malaysia forward to visitors from all across the world have been much appreciated[15]. Mostly by sharing their first-hand reports on air, they have produced aesthetically pleasing narratives, highlighting some of Malaysia's most well-known tourism destinations. This success not have been achieved without the increased awareness of a small number of the sites. The findings indicate that purposefully integrating people who are culturally appropriate and have a strong following might help visitors' impressions and behaviour to be better. Using influencer marketing is a fantastic approach to boost both local and regional tourism. Since influencer marketing targets people all across the world. Among other important drivers of this trend are the popularity of experiences-based travel and the simplicity of access to knowledge made available by digital platforms. These initiatives must be well-designed, tested with the target population, and routinely assessed to guarantee they stay efficient and dependable[14].

On the basis of the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between Influencer Marketing and International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia.

“H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Influencer Marketing and International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia.”

“H₁: There is a significant relationship between Influencer Marketing and International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia.”

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	346	9655.517	1032.014	.000
Within Groups	492.770	533	9.356		
Total	40081.390	879			

This inquiry provide significant findings. The F value is 1032.014, achieving significance with a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 alpha level. This indicates that the hypothesis “H₁: There is a significant relationship between Influencer Marketing and International Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia.” is accepted, whereas the null hypothesis is rejected.

9. Discussion

The always shifting relationship between digital engagement and travel behaviour in today's tourism industry reflects both influencer marketing and the flood of international visitors to Malaysia. This link shows how dynamically the relationship between holiday planning and internet usage changes. Influencer marketing is a major strategy in destination branding as it meets the growing trend of travellers from all across the world seeking for reputable, aesthetically pleasing, and peer-approved information before making any decision. This is so as more and more people are looking for confirmed knowledge. Influencers could inspire people to perceive a place differently, excite their interest, and foster their faith in it. This is particularly true for powerful individuals with a strong internet following and great knowledge in a given sector. For people who are especially visible online, this is especially true. Promoting lesser-known cultural events, local attractions, and less-known locations in Malaysia has been mostly dependent on travel bloggers. Consequently, not only the well-known sites but also visitors from all across are flooding Malaysia. Younger, more tech-savvy audiences are more likely to be interested in influencer-generated material as it usually presents a tale more tailored and immersive than conventional marketing. One further advantage of influencer produced content is this. Studies reveal that people's travel vlogues, blogs, and well-chosen Instagram stories all affect their holiday destination choice. This is especially true when these kinds of materials are mixed with trends in aspirational or experience travel. For Malaysia's tourism industry,

which mostly depends on foreign tourists to strengthen the nation's economy, developing strategic alliances with powerful members of both the local and international communities might be quite rewarding. On the other hand, the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on several moderating elements like the authenticity of the material, the degree to which it fits the tastes of the target audience, the cultural relevance of the influencer, and the consistency of the brand's message. A location's over commercialization or the way powerful people promote it might potentially affect a decline in interest or mistrust among potential guests. Moreover, given the long-term survival of tourism advertising is of great relevance. Part of this is ensuring the surroundings or culture can manage the tourist flood without ruining them. Generally speaking, the discussion clarifies that while influencer marketing does a good job of drawing international visitors to Malaysia, it all comes down to following a well-considered strategy, spotting the appropriate demographic to target, and creating content in a way that doesn't compromise ethical standards. Data-driven marketing plans could include influencer marketing operations for next initiatives aiming at increasing Malaysia's appeal as a worldwide travel destination. Malaysia compete on a worldwide level more successfully.

10. Conclusion

One of the main determinant of the general volume of foreign tourists to Malaysia is influencer marketing. Nowadays, Malaysia's tourist sector might interact with a worldwide audience in a more real and intimate manner than ever before. This helps them to increase people's degree of geographical awareness and influence their choice of travel. The impact and popularity of the people creating digital material now make this feasible. Promoting Malaysia's distinctive cultural and experiential qualities as well as changing people's impressions of locations depend on influencers in great part. Conventional advertising techniques might be one likely reason behind the variations noted in Malaysia. The success of this strategy depends on the authenticity, relevance, and fit of the selected content for the target clientele of the influencers. Incorporating influencer marketing into a country's travel plan significantly raises the possibility that the destination stay popular on a worldwide basis. The global travel sector's move towards a more digital and experience-based strategy accounts for this trend. Nevertheless, there are major moral and managerial obstacles that affect the long-term survival of Malaysia's tourist industry as well as the

preservation of Malaysian consumer product originality.

Author Statements:

- **Ethical approval:** The conducted research is not related to either human or animal use.
- **Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

References

- [1] Amaro, S., Duarte, P. and Henriques, C. (2020). Travelers' use of social media: a clustering approach, *Annals of Tourism Research*.
- [2] Angeli, F., Grimaldi, R. & Grandi, A. (2021). Directions and paths of knowledge flows through personnel mobility: A social capital perspective.
- [3] Arat, T. Baker AM, Donthu N & Kumar V (2022). Investigating how word of mouth conversations about brands influence purchase and retransmission intentions.
- [4] Bhattacharya, S (2023). *Journal of marketing research*.
- [5] Bhattacharjee, A. & Sanford, C. (2024). Influence Processes for Information Technology Acceptance.
- [6] Bigne E, Ruiz C & Curras-Perez R (2021). Destination appeal through digitalized comments. *Journal of Business Research*.
- [7] Browning, V., So, K. K. F., & Sparks, B. (2023). The Influence of Online Reviews on Consumers' Attributions of Service Quality and Control for Service Standards in Hotels.
- [8] Buhalis, D. & Law, B. (2022). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet-The state of tourism research. *Tourism Management*.
- [9] Buttle, F. (2024). Word of mouth: understanding and managing referral marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*.
- [10] Cacioppo, J.T. & Petty, R.E. (2023). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, *Advances in Consumer Research*.
- [11] Chaffey, D., Ellis-Chadwick, F., Mayer, R., & Johnston, K. (2021). Internet marketing: strategy, implementation and practice. *Pearson Education*.
- [12] Chen N, Dwyer L & Firth T (2020). Residents' place satisfaction and place attachment on destination brand-building behaviours.
- [13] Cheung, C.M. & Thadani, D.R. (2021). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: a literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support System*.
- [14] Chevalier, J. & Mayzlin, D. (2023). The Effect of Word of Mouth on Sales: Online Book Reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- [15] Choe, Y., Kim, J. & Fesenmaier, D.R. (2024), Use of social media across the trip experience: an application of latent transition analysis, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*.