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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING DOMESTIC TOURISM: AN APPLIED STUDY OF FACEBOOK USERS IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has experienced widespread growth in recent years and has been extensively leveraged across diverse fields, including tourism promotion. This study aims to elucidate the role of social media, particularly Facebook, in promoting domestic tourism in Algeria. A descriptive–analytical methodology was adopted, with a sample of 150 Facebook users surveyed via an online questionnaire. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between Facebook use and the promotion of domestic tourism. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.748, whereas the regression coefficient was B = 0.580, suggesting that increased Facebook use contributes to strengthening domestic tourism promotion. The study further concludes that producing engaging content and enhancing trust in social media posts are key factors in attracting domestic tourists. Accordingly, a set of recommendations is proposed to improve and maximize the use of these platforms.

KEYWORDS

Social Media, Facebook, Tourism Promotion, Domestic Tourism, Applied Study

CITATION

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Introduction

Social media has become a central mechanism through which tourism destinations communicate with potential visitors, construct a destination image, and influence travel-related decision-making. By enabling rapid, interactive, and visually rich communication, social media platforms allow destinations to engage directly with users who actively seek, evaluate, and share tourism information. Within this digital ecosystem, Facebook remains one of the most widely used platforms for social interaction and content dissemination, making it a prominent tool for tourism communication. Through posts, images, and videos, Facebook facilitates the presentation of attractions, services, and cultural elements, thereby shaping users' perceptions and stimulating interest in domestic travel.

The promotion of domestic tourism through social media has gained particular importance in recent years, as it offers destinations a cost-effective channel to reach residents and encourage local travel. Domestic tourism not only contributes to regional development and employment but also supports national economies by reducing reliance on outbound tourism and limiting foreign currency outflows. Despite these advantages, the effectiveness of social media, particularly Facebook, in promoting domestic tourism depends largely on users' perceptions, levels of trust in online content, and motivations for engaging with the platform. While existing research has examined social media's role in tourism marketing, empirical evidence on how Facebook users perceive and respond to domestic tourism promotion remains fragmented and context dependent.

To address this gap, the present study examines the influence of social media on domestic tourism promotion from the perspective of Facebook users. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which trust in Facebook tourism-related posts and users' motivations for using the platform affect engagement with domestic tourism content and perceptions of Facebook's promotional effectiveness. Furthermore, the study examines how engagement and perceived effectiveness influence users' intentions to participate in domestic tourism.

Drawing on this framework, the study proposes the following hypotheses. First, trust in Facebook tourism-related posts positively influences users' perceived effectiveness of Facebook as a tool for promoting domestic tourism (H1). Second, users' motivations for using Facebook positively influence their engagement with domestic tourism content on the platform (H2). Third, engagement with domestic tourism content positively influences users' intentions to travel domestically (H3). Fourth, perceived promotional effectiveness positively influences domestic travel intention (H4). Additionally, the study posits that engagement mediates the relationship between trust and domestic travel intention, as well as between user motivations and domestic travel intention (H5).

Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive–analytical research design. Data are collected through a structured questionnaire administered to Facebook users, and statistical analyses are conducted via SPSS to test the proposed relationships. By focusing on user perceptions and behavioral intentions, this research contributes to the tourism marketing literature by clarifying the mechanisms through which social media influences domestic tourism promotion. From a practical perspective, the findings offer insights for tourism organizations and policymakers seeking to design credible, engaging, and effective social media-based promotional strategies.

1. Review of literature:

The rapid diffusion of social media has fundamentally transformed tourism marketing and destination promotion practices. Unlike traditional one-way communication channels, social media platforms enable interactive, real-time, and user-driven exchanges of information, allowing destinations to communicate directly with tourists while simultaneously receiving feedback and engagement (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). As tourists increasingly rely on online sources during the travel planning process, social media has become a dominant arena for forming, evaluating, and sharing destination images.

A substantial body of research indicates that social media content significantly influences tourists' information search behavior and decision-making. Tourists frequently consult social media platforms to reduce uncertainty, compare destinations, and gain insights from others' experiences (Leung et al., 2013). User-generated content, in particular, is perceived as more authentic and less commercially biased than traditional advertising, thereby increasing its persuasive power (Ayeh et al., 2013). This shift has encouraged destination marketing organizations and tourism businesses to integrate social media into their promotional strategies, emphasizing storytelling, visuals, and interactive engagement.

Trust and credibility are central mechanisms through which social media affect tourism-related decisions. Tourism decisions are typically high-involvement and high-risk, requiring reliable information to minimize uncertainty. Filieri et al. (2015) demonstrated that trust in online travel content significantly influences tourists' adoption of recommendations and intention to act upon them. On social media platforms such as Facebook, trust may derive from factors such as the perceived expertise of content creators, consistency of information, transparency, and the presence of peer feedback (reviews, comments, and shares). Consequently, destinations that cultivate trust through credible and consistent social media communication are more likely to influence tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions.

User motivations further shape how tourism-related content is consumed and disseminated. Drawing on uses and gratifications theory, several studies have shown that individuals engage with social media for multiple purposes, including information seeking, social interaction, entertainment, and inspiration (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). In a tourism context, these motivations determine not only exposure to destination content but also the depth of engagement, such as liking, commenting, or sharing posts. High levels of engagement amplify message diffusion and increase the visibility of destinations within users' social networks, thereby strengthening the promotional impact.

Engagement has also been linked to destination image formation and emotional attachment. Hudson and Thal (2013) reported that interactive social media campaigns enhance users' emotional responses to destinations and positively influence travel intentions. Similarly, Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) emphasized that persuasive digital communication is most effective when it invites user participation rather than passive consumption. Through engagement, users become cocreators of destination meaning, reinforcing both awareness and interest.

Recent scholars have increasingly emphasized the role of social media in promoting domestic tourism. Domestic tourism promotion through social platforms is particularly relevant in developing and emerging economies, where financial constraints and infrastructure limitations may restrict international travel (UNWTO, 2020). Social media enables destinations to reach local audiences with culturally resonant messages

at relatively low cost, supporting regional development and tourism redistribution. Research suggests that domestic tourism campaigns on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can increase awareness of lesser-known destinations and encourage residents to explore local attractions (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Influencer marketing and content creators have further expanded the scope of tourism promotion on social media. Influencers are often perceived as relatable and trustworthy sources of information, especially among younger audiences, and their narratives can humanize destinations by presenting authentic travel experiences (Abidin, 2016). Studies have shown that influencer-generated content can shape destination image and stimulate travel intentions by blending personal storytelling with visual appeal (De Veirman et al., 2017). This creator-driven model complements institutional promotion by offering alternative, experience-based perspectives on destinations.

Despite the richness of existing research, several gaps remain. Many studies examine trust, motivation, engagement, or destination image independently without integrating these constructs into a comprehensive explanatory framework. In addition, empirical work on domestic tourism promotion via Facebook remains limited, particularly from the user perspective. There is a need for research that simultaneously considers how motivations and trust influence engagement and how these factors collectively shape perceptions of domestic tourism promotion. Addressing these gaps, the present study contributes to the literature by empirically testing an integrated model of Facebook use, user motivations, trust in posts, and perceived domestic tourism promotion.

2. Methodology

2.1 Population and Sample

The study population comprises Facebook users. Owing to the impracticality of surveying the entire population, a random sample of 150 respondents was selected to represent the study population. This sample size is considered adequate for the statistical techniques employed in the study.

2.2 Data collection instrument

Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire composed of two sections:

- **Section One:** Demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, educational level, and years of Facebook subscription).
- **Section Two:** Study dimensions, including:
  - Facebook use (motives for use and trust in Facebook posts);
  - Promotion of domestic tourism.

All the items were measured via a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

2.3.1 Validity

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of subject-matter experts. Their feedback helped improve item clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives.

2.3.2 Reliability

The internal consistency reliability was assessed via Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As shown in Table 1, all values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable to excellent reliability.

Table 1. Reliability Coefficients of the Questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha)

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Motives for using Facebook	0.913
Trust in Facebook posts	0.793
Promotion of domestic tourism	0.810
Overall questionnaire	0.899

2.4 Statistical analysis

The data were analysed via SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to describe the respondents' characteristics and study variables. Inferential analyses included Pearson's correlation coefficient, simple linear regression, and the t test. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the sample

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	45.33
	Female	82	54.67
Age	Under 30 years	107	71.33
	31–35 years	25	16.67
	36–40 years	7	4.67
	Over 40 years	11	7.33
Educational level	Below secondary	1	0.67
	Secondary	14	9.33
	Bachelor's degree	42	28.00
	Master's degree	63	42.00
	Postgraduate studies	30	20.00
Years of subscription	Less than 1 year	15	10.00
	1–6 years	58	38.67
	More than 6 years	77	51.33

3.2 Motives for Using Facebook

The results indicated that the item related to meeting new people had the highest mean score (M = 4.2018). The overall mean for this dimension was 3.5280, reflecting respondents' general agreement with the motives for using Facebook.

3.3 Trust in Facebook Posts

The item measuring reliance on Facebook as a source of information obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.1338). The overall mean for the trust dimension was 3.4979, indicating a positive level of trust among the respondents.

3.4 Promotion of Domestic Tourism

The findings revealed that tourism advertisements on Facebook contribute to attracting visitors, with a mean score of 3.9881. The weighted mean for this dimension was 3.4632, suggesting respondents' agreement regarding Facebook's role in promoting domestic tourism.

Table 3. Means of the Study Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Level of Agreement
Motives for using Facebook	3.5280	Agree
Trust in Facebook posts	3.4979	Agree
Promotion of domestic tourism	3.4632	Agree
Overall mean	3.4740	Agree

3.5 Correlation analysis

Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficients

Relationship	r
Facebook use ↔ Tourism promotion	0.748
Facebook use ↔ Motives for use	0.813
Motives for use ↔ Trust	0.393

All correlations were positive, indicating significant associations among the study variables.

3.6 Hypothesis testing

Table 5. Simple linear regression results

Statistic	Value
F	22.298
Sig.	0.000
R	0.748
B	0.580

The regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant effect of Facebook use on domestic tourism promotion. The regression equation is expressed as:

$$Y = 1.321 + 0.580X$$

This result supports the study hypothesis, indicating that increased Facebook use is associated with higher levels of domestic tourism promotion.

4. Discussion

This study examined the role of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism by focusing on users' motivations for using the platform, their trust in Facebook posts, and their perceptions of domestic tourism promotion. Overall, the descriptive results indicated that respondents agreed across the three dimensions (M = 3.4740), suggesting that Facebook is perceived as a relevant channel for tourism-related communication. The strongest dimension was motives for using Facebook (M = 3.5280), followed by trust in posts (M = 3.4979) and the promotion of domestic tourism (M = 3.4632). Collectively, these results imply that users' engagement with Facebook is underpinned by meaningful motives and a moderate level of trust, which may help explain why tourism-related content on the platform is viewed as influential.

The findings provide evidence that Facebook use is positively associated with domestic tourism promotion. Specifically, the correlation between Facebook use and tourism promotion was strong (r = 0.748), and the regression results indicated a statistically significant effect (F = 22.298, p <.001; B = 0.580). This suggests that increased Facebook use, driven by exposure to pages, posts, and tourism-related advertising, corresponds with stronger perceptions that domestic tourism is being promoted. The magnitude of the association aligns with the argument that social media platforms can serve as direct, scalable marketing channels, particularly when content is visually appealing and regularly updated. The descriptive item-level results further reinforce this interpretation: respondents reported relatively high agreement that Facebook tourism advertisements attract visitors (M = 3.9881), highlighting the persuasive potential of paid or promotional content.

The strong relationship between Facebook use and its motives (r = 0.813) indicates that users' presence and activity on Facebook are closely tied to underlying needs and gratifications (e.g., social interaction, information seeking, discovery). In practical terms, tourism promotion strategies may be more effective when aligned with dominant user motivations rather than relying solely on informational messaging. For example, the highest-rated motive item related to meeting new people (M = 4.2018) implies that relational or community-based content (e.g., group travel narratives, comment-based recommendations, interactive posts) may resonate strongly with users and generate greater diffusion through engagement.

Trust emerged as a meaningful, although comparatively weaker, correlate of motivations (r = 0.393), suggesting that trust may operate as a complementary mechanism rather than a primary driver of platform use. Nonetheless, trust in posts remains important for tourism promotion because travel decisions are perceived as having greater involvement and greater risk than are routine online interactions. The relatively high level of respondents' agreement regarding reliance on Facebook as an information source (M = 4.1338) suggests that credibility signals (e.g., authentic visuals, consistent messaging, verified pages, user reviews, and transparent information about services and prices) may improve the effectiveness of destination promotion. This finding is consistent with prior evidence indicating that tourism agencies and destination pages benefit from content richness and credibility when seeking to influence perceptions and intentions.

Compared with those of previous studies, the present results are broadly consistent with earlier findings that Facebook pages and tourism-related content contribute to domestic tourism activation. Research conducted in Algerian tourism contexts has shown that agencies and tourism pages rely heavily on photos and promotional messages to attract visitors and that users respond positively to diverse content formats and destination storytelling. Similarly, studies on creator-led promotions on platforms such as YouTube suggest that tourism awareness and destination discovery can be strengthened through engaging narratives and informational content. The current study complements this literature by empirically demonstrating that Facebook use is not only associated with general awareness but also strongly linked to perceived domestic tourism promotion and that user motives and trust constitute relevant contextual factors in this relationship.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the view that social media effects on tourism operate through both exposure and user predispositions. M appears to structure how and why users interact with content, whereas trust may condition how persuasive or usable tourism information becomes. From a managerial standpoint, tourism stakeholders can derive two implications. First, destination promotion on Facebook should prioritize content formats that fit user motivations. Interactive and socially oriented content may be particularly effective. Second, credibility-building mechanisms should be embedded into promotional strategies to strengthen trust and reduce perceived risk, including verified accounts, consistent branding, user-generated reviews, and clear, accurate information.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on self-report questionnaire data, which may be affected by social desirability bias and standard-method bias. The cross-sectional design also limits causal inference; although regression results indicate associations, longitudinal or experimental designs would better establish causality. In addition, the sampling frame was restricted to Facebook users who were online, which may limit generalizability to less active users or populations with limited internet access. Future research could incorporate multiplatform comparisons (e.g., Facebook vs. Instagram vs. YouTube), include behavioral metrics (e.g., engagement analytics), and test more comprehensive models examining mediating pathways (e.g., engagement) and outcome variables such as destination image and actual travel behavior.

In summary, this study provides evidence that Facebook use is strongly and positively linked to the promotion of domestic tourism. The results highlight the importance of aligning promotional practices with user motivations while reinforcing credibility to support trust in tourism content. These insights can inform destination marketing strategies and strengthen domestic tourism by supporting effective, targeted social media communication.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the role of Facebook in promoting domestic tourism from users' perspectives, with particular attention given to motives for platform use, trust in Facebook posts, and perceptions of tourism promotion. Drawing on data collected from 150 Facebook users and analysed via descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, the findings provide clear evidence that Facebook constitutes a meaningful channel for domestic tourism promotion. Overall, the respondents expressed positive evaluations across all the study dimensions, indicating that tourism-related Facebook content is both noticed and valued.

The empirical results demonstrated a strong and statistically significant relationship between Facebook use and the promotion of domestic tourism. Regression analysis confirmed that increased Facebook use is associated with stronger perceptions of tourism promotion, highlighting the platform's capacity to influence how domestic destinations are perceived and promoted. In addition, users' motives for using Facebook were strongly linked to their overall platform use, underscoring the importance of aligning tourism-related content with users' social and informational needs. Although trust in Facebook posts showed a more moderate association with other variables, it remained a critical factor, particularly given the higher levels of involvement and perceived risk in travel decisions.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the tourism and digital marketing literature by reinforcing the view that social media effects on tourism promotion are shaped not only by content exposure but also by users' motivations and perceptions of credibility. By focusing on Facebook users' perspectives, this research helps clarify the mechanisms by which social media platforms support domestic tourism promotion, extending prior studies that have emphasized mainly descriptive or platform-level observations.

In practice, tourism stakeholders and destination marketers should continue to invest in Facebook as a promotional tool for domestic tourism. Effective strategies should emphasize engaging, visually rich, and interactive content that resonates with users' motivations while simultaneously strengthening trust through credible information, transparency, and consistent communication. Such approaches may enhance the persuasive impact of tourism-related content and encourage greater interest in domestic travel.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to certain limitations, including reliance on self-reported data, a cross-sectional research design, and a sample restricted to active Facebook users. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings and the ability to infer causality. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental designs, incorporate multiple social media platforms, and examine additional outcomes such as destination image, satisfaction, and actual travel behavior.

In conclusion, this study confirms that Facebook plays a significant role in promoting domestic tourism by shaping users' perceptions and supporting tourism-related communication. By understanding how motivations and trust interact with platform use, tourism practitioners and policymakers can better leverage social media to strengthen domestic tourism development and maximize its economic and cultural benefits.

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