

How Does Social Media Affect Sustainable Rural Tourism?

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ABSTRACT

For this report, we have covered the introduction of the research, the problems as well as the objectives and goals of the research which is to examine the role of social media on rural tourism using the TPB model. Furthermore, we also discussed about how social media affects the sustainability of rural tourism. In order to gather data and analysis, we have conducted a survey via Google Form to get different opinions and perspectives from the respondents. For our research, we conducted the Google Form among City University students. We also have identified our variables for our research which is the independent, dependent, and moderating variables. We have used applications such as SmartPLS and SPSS to gather all the data and analysis. With all the information gathered, we finally have sufficient data and analysis to support our findings.

Keywords: *tourism; social networking sites; theory of planned behavior; sustainability*

I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the tourism industry is one of the most important industries to a country in the world. The tourism industry has shown that the performance of the industry is always in good condition for a country, this is because the tourism industry can help increase the income of a country and others. According to Sayyed Khalil and Elham Vahabi (2018) stated that rural tourism is one of the subdivisions of tourism that has provided integrated and strong rural development capabilities by preserving values and beliefs, adding employment opportunities. In addition, rural tourism can increase the income of locals and develop infrastructure facilities. Basically, we were assigned to do research on rural tourists given by Prof. Ilham who lectured us on the subject Business Research Methods (EIB 20503) and this assignment was given in the second week of learning this semester. There are several factors that make the theme of rural tourism has been chosen by Prof. Ilham to be studied by students. Among them is the issue of Covid-19 which has caused many industries to stop the organization, including the tourist industry and what is the effect that has been experienced by the incident. Therefore, we need to choose one topic on rural tourism to do research and discuss.

For information, our group has decided to discuss “How social media affects sustainability in rural tourism”, this is because we are living in the gen-z era now. Stefanski (2022) mentioned that the gen-z generation is a group that is skilled in technology that uses social media to get entertainment, find inspiration, release stress and so on. There are several social media platforms favored by the group nowadays such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and others. Undoubtedly, social media is a good platform for someone to share information. But it will

also have a negative impact on the new generation who are addicted to social media, this is because they will put social media as the main thing for them. As a result, social media will cause the new generation not to appreciate things like rural tourism which involves the culture of a country, rural life, art, and many others.

Based on our research, there are several issues about rural tourism that have been discovered. As we mentioned before, the whole world was shocked by the news of the Covid-19 outbreak that hit the whole country causing entry and exit activities to be blocked for 2 years. The tourist industry is one of the industries most affected by the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak. Rasidah Hamid (2021) stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has had the effect of a 78% drop in international tourist arrivals, causing the country to lose US \$1.2 trillion in exports from tourism and 120 million tourist jobs to be laid off. One of the most vulnerable sectors on the globe is tourism. The current COVID-19 outbreak has far-reaching implications for the whole industry, including worries about renewable energy, carbon emissions, economics, and health-care risks. Tourism-related service businesses have been affected.

Tourist spending in the first half of the year was slashed by more than half because of the Covid-19 virus epidemic. In comparison to the same period last year, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri said that the number had declined by 68.2% and 69.8%. Malaysia has suffered a loss of RM45 billion in tourist spending in the first half of the year due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Due to curfews and full-scale sanctions measures directed by the government in many cities, it has resulted in the hotel and tourism industry has become a very risky endeavor to those involved in the industry. In addition, the food industry such as restaurants, cafes and bars are also experiencing the same thing as the tourism industry where they have had to cease operations.

Next, rural tourism is also often associated with the issue of natural disasters. There are several impacts on the livelihoods of affected victims of great value with issues of population increase, global warming, and environmental degradation. For information, the sustainability of a tourist destination in rural areas depends on the abilities of tourists, host communities and others. Therefore, it helps to gain more knowledge on how to manage natural disaster issues effectively. Ranau-Kundasang in Sabah is a popular tourist destination and a major vegetable production area in the state. Unfortunately, Sabah has been the focus after a 6.0 magnitude earthquake, and it is the strongest earthquake ever in Malaysia. There were 18 deaths recorded because of the quake. According to Kamarudin (2020) mentioned that there are many local tourist sites and upland agricultural regions have been closed temporarily for restorations, but many have yet to reopen owing to significant and lasting infrastructural damage.

Based on a survey conducted with local stakeholders, Table 1 has shown that the majority of respondents who are businessmen are homestay operators which is 45%. On the other hand, owners, and employees in non - agricultural projects also support the development of local rural tourism at 40%. Tourist guides, farmers, and small and medium enterprise (SME) owners also responded with a value of 15%. Therefore, a country needs to put rural tourism as something important to help people maintain their businesses and employment opportunities that they have.

Social media has changed the tourism business and tourists' social networking (SNS) use may affect their behavior in sustainable rural tourism. This is a concern in the study specifically for rural tourism. Social media is an important platform nowadays, this is because the whole world uses social media for certain purposes such as to find current information, to work, and others. There are several importance or benefits of social media to rural tourism. Kakkar & Tripathi (2020) explained that social media can help to study about customer satisfaction and behavior with various methods such as eWOM, big data, and online review (as cited in Nusair, 2020).

Hence, social media plays an important role in rural tourism to study the problems that need to be addressed by a place to raise the image. Basically, this social media platform can be used to talk about the experience and share opinions about the advantages and disadvantages experienced at that time. For example, social media platforms such as Facebook can be used to ask the opinions of people around the world. According to Cho et al. (2014) mentioned that "people use social media to socialize and build relationships, as well as to keep up with news and get information." As a result, the use of social media can help address the problems faced by a tourism center with the help of information provided by the public.

Moreover, Pavlíčka & Királ'ová (2015) stated that social media helps visitors communicate not only with the desired destination, but it also allows to communicate with visitors who have had the experience of visiting the same location before. Therefore, with social media can make it easier for visitors to find the necessary information such as necessities that need to be brought, and others. With the use of social media, it can allow visitors not to experience any confusion or other problems when reaching the destination, they want to visit. Graham (2005) mentioned that social media is anything that allows people to engage, produce, and share content (as cited in Királ'ová, 2015). As a result, social media will make it easier for visitors to be prepared for comfort while at the place of visit.

II. LITERATURE OF REVIEW

According to Joo et al. (2020), the research project uses the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) Model by Ijek Ajzen. The TPB model made in 1985 is a psychological theory which links beliefs to behaviour and has three main components which are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. It is worth noting that the TPB model is derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) model by Martin Fishbein and Ajzen in 1980.

Research shows that behavioural intention does not necessarily lead to actual behaviour hence why Ajzen adds the component "perceived behavioural control" to TRA making TPB a better theory to predict actual behaviour. Mapping out the theory selected is important to identify the utmost important points of the research. The TPB theory discusses about the influences of attitude, perceived behaviour control and subjective norm as a main theme to correlate with intention and the actual usage or actions.

The influence of social media plays a great role for the findings of this research. The intensity of Social Networking Sites (SNS) use and trip experience sharing can be a great moderating variable for this research. As for

the variable that is dependable on others is the intention to visit rural tourism which is the Dependent variable of the study. Whereas the Independent variables that is based of the TPB model are Attitude, Perceived Behavior Control and Subjective Norm.

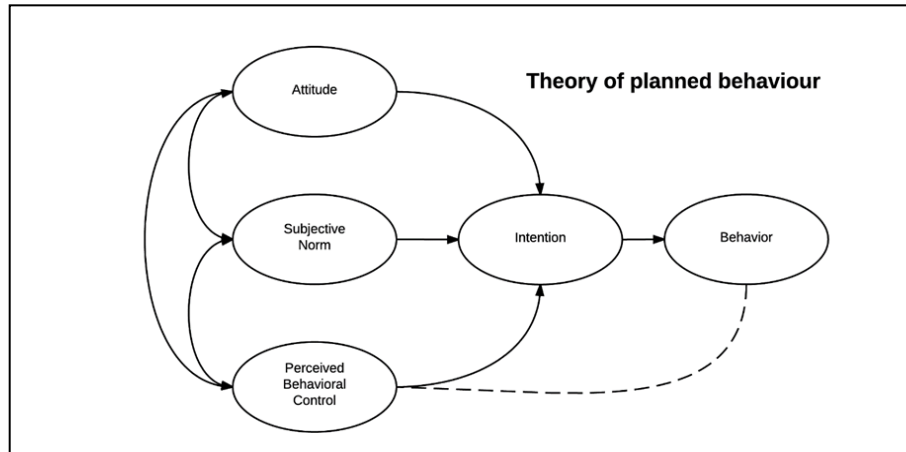


Figure 1. Theory of Planned Behavior

Previous studies have given many great insights into the topic we have chosen. However, there are certain successes and failures that needs discussion. According to Joo et al. (2020), the main limitation on her study was sample problem. The survey method used in the study relied on self-reports despite the survey conducted nationwide among huge companies. Rural tourism in Korea was not really popular to the point where tourists were not heavily experienced in rural tourism and cannot be a part of the survey. Only highly interested people who were willing to experience rural tourism that took part in the survey. Participants of the survey were merely simulating the scenario of being a part of rural tourism and not actual tourists. Secondly, a more extensive study model could have been made to include more variety of variables that can be examined.

III. METHODOLOGY

The first stage is Problem & Objective identification which is "Social media has changed the tourism business and tourists' social networking (SNS) use may affect their behavior in sustainable rural tourism. This is a concern in the study specifically for rural tourism, while the objective is to examine the role of social media use on sustainable rural tourism using the TPB model. This stage also explores the theory of the study which is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model 1885 by jek Ajzen and the summary of the study. Secondly, the literature review focuses on the Framework of the study which in this case the group research project has a framework based on a theoretical model. Thirdly, Methodology focuses on how data is collected. in my case, data is collected via an online survey through random sampling, Fourthly, Data gathering & analysis is where applications like SmartPLS or SPSS are used to translate the raw data gained from the survey into a more presentable output Moving on, Findings &: Discussions is where a model of the study is made, and the conclusion of the study is discussed. Finally, Decision-making analysis is where an evaluation of the group project is done and the whole project can somehow determine

the actual representation of the discussed topic. in this case, | can see what the implication of rural tourism for our generation are.

For our research nature, we will be using quantitative methodology. This is to to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. Now moving on, we will be talking about the research paradigm. The philosophical foundation of a research effort is formed by research paradigms. The way various schools of study (such as the sciences vs the humanities) conduct research is influenced by research paradigms. Once a research philosophy has been established, a technique may be selected.

For our case, we will be using Positivism as our research paradigm. Positivists believe that there is just one reality that can be measured and comprehended. As a result, they're more inclined to do study using quantitative approaches. Positivism usually proposes a theory that may be proven or rejected by statistical data analysis. Positivism is more concerned with the presence of a link between two variables than with the reasons for it.

Next, A research hypothesis is a distinct, explicit, and testable claim or prediction regarding the likely outcome of a scientific research study based on a specific attribute of a population, such as anticipated disparities between groups on a given variable or correlations between variables. One of the most significant tasks in organizing a scientific quantitative research study is defining the research hypothesis. Because the design of the research study and the intended research design are frequently dictated by the stated hypotheses, a quantitative researcher generally specifies an a priori expectation about the study's outcomes in one or more research hypotheses before performing the study.

The sampling method used in this research is simple random sampling. The reason for this method being used to conduct our research is because it can produce an accurate data and the data represents the entire population of our study. The questionnaire was distributed to 130 respondents from City University Business students.

For the data collection, we distributed our completed questionnaire to 130 students from City University Business student through an online platform, Whatsapp. The questionnaire consists of four part – demographic questions, Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. For the demographic questions, we asked respondents to fill in their age, gender, and race. In Part 2, the questions asked are regarding the items for the research. Next, Part 3 is about the respondent's opinion towards rural tourism.

Our research is conducted among City University students where we have distributed our questionnaire to 130 students. Our questionnaire was developed using Google Form. For the procedure, each group member has contributed their ideas for the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed under the guide of our lecturer by finding and extracting information from the internet such as journals and thesis. The work was divided equally to each group member.

Once the questionnaire has been checked and approved by our lecturer, we then converted the questionnaire draft into Google Form. Once the questionnaire was complete, each group member shared the link of the

questionnaire to other City University students. Since we cannot interview the students face-to-face, we have distributed the questionnaire through WhatsApp. Each member was required to collect 43 respondents. We managed to collect a total of 130 respondents in a few days. After we got the number of responses that we need, we then collected the data from the questionnaire.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

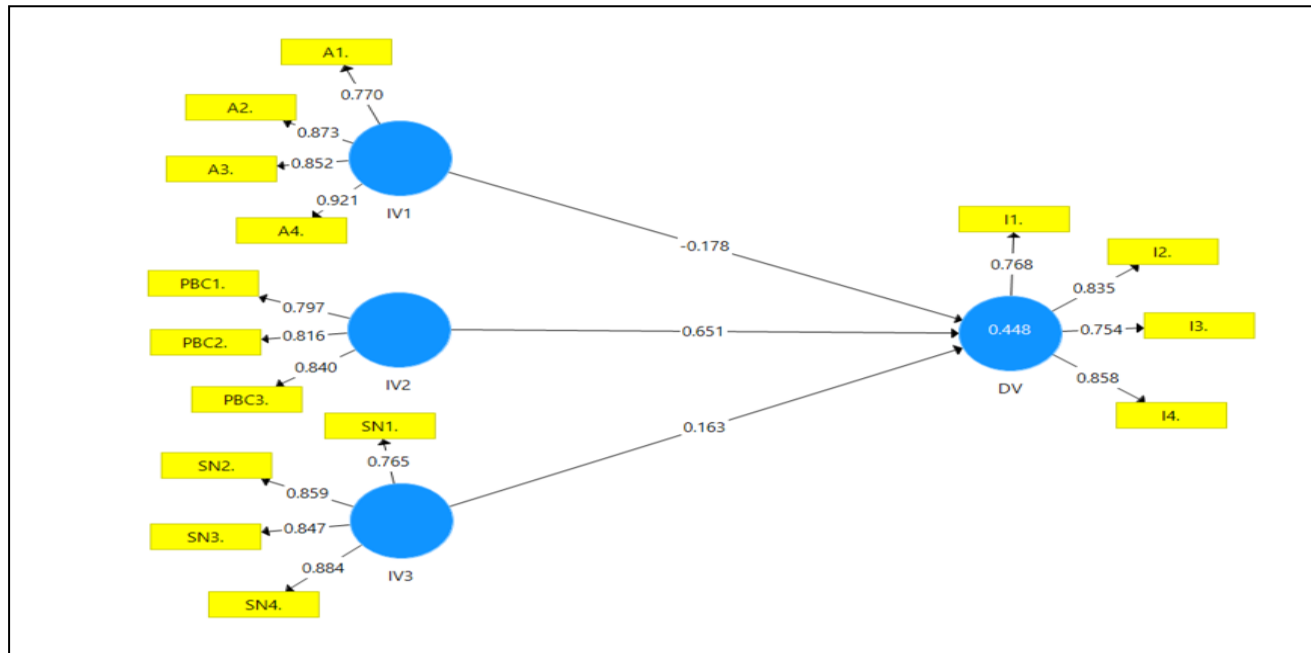


Figure 2. SmartPLS results on the Tested and Validated Research Framework

The Attitude which has the factor loading of 0.770 for the first item, 0.873 for the second item, 0.852 for the third item and 0.921 for the fourth item. This would then translate to a path coefficient of -0.178 to the DV of the research. The IV2 is the Perceived Behavior Control which has the factor loading of 0.797 for the first item, 0.816 for the second item and 0.840 for the third item. The path coefficient is 0.651 to the DV of the research.

Furthermore, the IV3 is the Subjective Norm which has the factor loading of 0.765 for the first item, 0.859 for the second item, 0.847 for the third item and 0.884 for the fourth item. The path coefficient is 0.163 to the DV of the research.

The DV of the research is Intention to visit Rural Tourism which has the factor loading of 0.768 for the first item, 0.835 for the second item, 0.754 for the third item and 0.858 for the fourth item. All of the aforementioned path coefficient translates to a R-square of 0.448 for the model. Based on the factor loadings of the Variables, no elimination process is needed since all of the items have a factor loading more than 0.5. However, there is an adjusted model of the R-square that adjusts based on the number of independent variables of the model which is 0.435.

According to Joo et al. (2020), The data must satisfy the three permissible levels for safe convergent validity. To begin, all factor loadings should exceed 0.7. Second, the composite reliability (CR) value should exceed 0.7. Each latent variable's average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5. Both factor loadings and composite reliability has to exceed 0.7. AVE has the lowest value of 0.648. The alpha value for Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.7. In addition, rho_A must be more than 0.7. The outcomes of the statistics of the measurement analysis suggests that the model can be studied.

Based on the path coefficient, IV1 or Attitude has a negative relationship on the DV which means, as it goes lower, the DV gets higher. Whereas IV2 and IV3 has a positive relationship with the DV which means the DV goes higher as IV2 and IV3 increases.

As conclusion on the research hypothesis can be made; firstly, it would seem that attitude does not necessarily affect the intention to visit a rural tourism site. Secondly, Perceived behavior does affect the intention to visit rural tourism sites. Lastly, subjective norm does somewhat affect the intention to visit rural tourism sites.

V. CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research done by us is not a direct support to the adopted journal of Joo et al. (2020) but it gives a detailed insights to what students feel about the current state of rural torusim. The questionnaire consists of 25 questions that have been distributed and answered by business students at City University with a total of 130 respondents. Based on the results that we received, most of the students were aged 22 years old. There were 59 males and 71 females who participated in the questionnaire. The research also shows that social media plays a commanding role for tourists in deciding how good rural tourism can be. In short, there is no doubt that social media is a good platform for people to share their experiences, but it will also have a negative impact on the new generation who are addicted to social media.

In terms of the R-square of the model, it is shown that the adjusted R-square translates into a 43.5% which means that the research objective or hypothesis remains true to 43.5% of the sample of the study. However, it is worth noting that most of the sample of the study are students that haven't gone to rural tourism sites due to the lack of budget but are interested to visit them soon. It can be theorized that the students might not think social media use might affect the experience of rural tourism, but study done by Joo et al. (2020) reaffirms that social media use can actually have adverse effects towards rural tourism as a whole.

This research looked at the impact of social media on rural tourism using the TPB model, however it had a few problems. First of all, is the limitations on the quantitative approach. The positivism research paradigm ignores ordinary interpretations of social phenomena. In addition, it also misses the mark when it comes to determining deeper underlying meanings and explanations. Another drawback of quantitative research is that positivism cannot account for how social reality is created and maintained, or how individuals understand their own and others' actions.

It has been discovered that quantitative language testing study simply investigates and estimates language abilities, competency, score, and so on. Another flaw in quantitative research is that it tends to capture a snapshot of a phenomenon: It measures factors at a certain point in time, regardless of whether the snapshot was taken when you were looking your finest or when you were looking unusually disorganized.

Furthermore, only two variables were investigated for the moderating effect: the duration of social media usage and the sharing of experience. These are just two parts of a larger puzzle. In addition, other factors that influence behavioral intention and motivation, such as fear, danger, mood, or prior experience, are not considered. While it takes into consideration normative influences, it ignores environmental and economic aspects that may impact a person's decision to engage in an activity. Perhaps in the future, a more comprehensive research model with a wider range of representative factors to analyze could be constructed.

Our recommendation on this matter is to capture qualitatively the experiences and viewpoints of study partners who have had mixed or bad encounters, as they are less likely than enthusiasts to volunteer to engage in studies like ours. Similarly, more study may be done to look at the (very uncommon) experiences of marginalized and underrepresented groups in research. Furthermore, more study is needed on how to accurately capture the effect and consequences of public participation in research.

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