

The Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers on Promoting Marine and Coastal Tourism in Galle District, Sri Lanka

Sasmini B.G.V., and Kajanthi, V.

Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Business Studies, University of Vavuniya.

Abstract

In recent years, digital marketing has experienced rapid growth, transforming how tourism experiences are promoted and consumed worldwide. With the global rise in sustainable travel trends and digital marketing innovations, social media engagement has emerged as a promising approach to encourage responsible tourism behavior. In the context of tourism, social media influencer credibility is being increasingly adopted to influence travelers' travel intention. This study investigates the Influence of Social Media Influencers' Credibility on Travel Intention towards Marine and Coastal Tourism in Galle District, Sri Lanka. It aims to evaluate how these mechanisms affect tourists' travel intention. The study also seeks to identify which specific credibility elements exert the strongest influence on travel intention. A quantitative research method was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed to 170 respondents, consisting of both local and foreign tourists. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure responses related to awareness, engagement, and behavioral intent. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were used to reach participants through social media platforms and travel guides. Data were analyzed through Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Regression Analysis using SPSS software. Findings revealed that all five social media influencer credibility factors, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, entertainment Value, expertise, and novelty, positively influence travel intention. The results highlight the potential of social media influencers in digital marketing to promote destinations to travel behaviors in Sri Lanka. This research contributes to bridging the gap in the literature concerning the application of social media influencers, offering practical insights for marketers, travel guides, and policymakers aiming to boost tourism through interactive digital strategies like social media influencers.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Social media influencers' credibility, Tourism, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Entertainment Value, Novelty, Travel Intention.*