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Beyond User Gaze: How Instagram Creates Tourism Destination Brand?

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Abstract

This paper focused on how Instagram become a popular media to promote tourism site in Indonesia. Bali and Malang are the most well-known tourism destination in Indonesia, but now, conventional tourism promotion is not enough for promoting both of them. We found that everyone tried to promote their city with their own way. Therefore, we think Instagram provide a complete communication facilities, from tourism branding to user generated content photography. Using photo elicitation interview (PEI), we tried to describe the potential value of Instagram for promoting tourism site in Indonesia and describing how Instagram creating brand destination through photography side.

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1. Introduction

The importance of Internet for develop tourism destination was analyze by many researchers. It is not only indicating that Internet is using to promote tourism operators, such as hotels, tour and travel agents, restaurants and tourism industry networked, however it made possible for one person to communicate with people around the world to share information of tourism product. The emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them. It was since social media emergence as a medium of tourism promotion in tourism industry. Thus, the impact of social media in tourism industry has been greatly magnified to push the mobilization of tourists to consider the

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information in social media as their reference for travelling. Through this phenomenon, we argue that Instagram challenges the creativity of tourism actors in promote tourism destination over the world. This research sets out to investigate the potential value of Instagram for promoting tourism site in Indonesia and tried to describe how Instagram creating brand destination through photography side. The following sections develop the theoretical background to the article and follow by methodological approach, which is based on the travel photography and photo elicitation.

2. Theoretical Background

The presence of ICT's, for example website and social media, gives a lot of information about tourism destinations and its facilities such as places, properties, restaurants (Litvin & Hoffman, 2012). In addition through this media, tourists or consumer of tourism industry over the world could share their experience. It must consider here that in traditional concept of tourism destination promotion and marketing still point out the production of message, but in new concept it is noticed by the speed of the spread messages (Munar, 2012). Trusov et al. (2009) argue the same definition about the relationships among social media, tourism promotion and tourism marketing.

2.1. Instagram, User Generated Content and Online Photography

The function of Internet as a primary source of information of tourism destination is increasingly (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). The users are dependent on experience reviews written by other users in each of photos uploaded on Internet. The characteristics of online reviews is written by other users not only have the ability to increase or decrease the tourist visits, but also develop expectations of consumer to the tourism destination (de Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). In fact, Internet provides an opportunity for users to participate, develop and *update* any information. In marketing theory, it called user generated content where the user produce content of information by them selves. Several sites classify as user generated contents are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Instagram. These applications provide features such as *status update*, *check-ins*, *retweet*, *like*, *direct messages*, and *recommend* for user to update information. In the context of the tourism industry, the Internet has changed the consumer behavior of active consumers as well as marketers' tourist destinations. Manap and Adzharudin (2013) are stressing the roles of Internet to develop tourism destination and the same expression captured by Hanan and Putit (2014) where the contribution of social media as a push factor to promote destinations. Both of their arguments, it show that the tourism industry and the Internet provide a space to determine the decision-making traveled for tourists. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Internet is fundamentally changing the way of travel information search and the process of determining the travel destination (Morosan & Jeong, 2008). Instagram which is initially only serves as a media for online photography evolve effectively in advertising, promotion, marketing, distribution ideas/goods and providing information services fast, precise and accurate (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Doolin et.al, 2002; Sweeney, 2000). Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013) stated that the photographs are means the medium of "capturing" reality. It can illustrate here when a tourist capture phenomenon using their camera (phone camera) that means they are trying to send a reality as messages to him/herself. Instead of its function, it is also important to remember that photography contribute to opportunity for tourists to share their experiences with others (Groves and Timothy, 2001). The presence and combination of social media with the integrated mobile technology such as mobile phone make the capture activities become enjoyable and easier. In tourism context, the purpose of online photography is creating the good perception of audiences about tourism destination. Images are created by users will be produce, discuss and spread through the social media with the "silent" word of mouth model (WOM). In other words, the online photography facility as provided by Instagram, such as uploading photos, is a symbol of reality and user experience as a traveler. The contribution of Instagram's users showed a positive tendency is shaping tourism destination brand. This brand is created through eWOM (electronic-word of mouth), which involve consumer comments about products and services posted on Instagram (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011).

3. Methods

Most of tourist studies and Internet focuses on the subject's decision in determining the tourist destination (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2002). Here, as researchers, we attempt not only to reveal the reasons for the decision of choose a tourism destination but also how to understand in what why Instagram evolved as medium of promotion and tourism

destination branding. From marketing/marketers perspective, the study of tourism destination associated with the roles of direct actors of tourist industry such as hotels, restaurant, travel agencies and tours operators. They acted as agent of promotion for tourism corporates. In other words, Instagram provide the opportunities for many audiences to take a part as promotion agent of tourism destination. In order to gain such insight about the contribution of Instagram to create tourism destination brand through photography, we are stressing in-depth dialogues with informants as key important of this research. It means a research not only seeks of user's comments in Instagram but also the ways in such comments might affect their decision to travel. For this purpose, this study combined the used of in-depth dialogues/interviews with visual method and photo elicitation techniques.

The first step, by considering the track record in uploading photographs of tourist destinations; determine the two accounts in Instagram. They are accounts @explorebali and @malangtouristguide. Both of these accounts not only show significant differences about tourist destinations but also show they capability to see the contribution of Instagram to promote and create tourism destination brand. Account of @explorebali is a representative of well-known destination of tourism, however @malangtouristguide is a representative for the new tourism destination in Java tourism. We divided these accounts to make sure that the contribution of Instagram is essential factor in today's marketing tourism. Second step, we observed the traffic of the user activities in these accounts such as posting the photos, *like*, *comment*, and *hashtag*. It is important step to a research we tried to classify the data to several categories. In this step, we recorded, observed and sometimes discuss photo through the comments facility in Instagram. Therefore, we observed the traffic of these two accounts in two month. In the third step, we selected photographs based on nature, landscapes and tone categories. We have chooses ten photos per account where one object is accredited at least by two-dimensional photos. That means not all of photos in both of accounts will automatically be selected as the medium of elicitation photo interview. Last step of this research, we have chosen at random of ten students of visual communication class to be subjects in photo elicitation interview. We considered when we are choosing them as subjects because they know and understand the visualization of digital media including internet-based tourism promotion activities. Therefore, the analysis of photo elicitation is a reflexive process for the subject (Collier & Collier, 1986, Pink 2004, Jenkins, Woodward & Winter, 2008).

4. Finding & Discussion

As medium to capture Balinese tourism, @explorebali have 89.900 followers and following 17 other Instagram account that is concern to tourism development such as *explorebandung*, *explorejogja*, *exploremalang*, *explorejakarta*, and *explorelombok*. They build a network with other Instagram account with "explore" label. It indicates that the network with "explore" label is to capture and share tourism destination to the other users. This IG was founded in the middle 2014 and during that times they have been uploaded 342 photos. The first photo uploaded by this account is the photo of beach in Pulau Ceningan, an island in eastern Bali. These photos repost by the Explorebali admin from Instagram account of @rusdiumbara with the text "Nestled neatly between the larger island of Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Penida. Ceningan Island is the perfect staging point to visit both islands, while retaining the exclusive and relaxing tropical feel of all Ceningan Island has to offers". In that Instagram, admin explorebali also attached hashtag #travellingindonesia. From the text that they attached in that photo, they tried to give information about tourist destination in Bali. The text is also indicate that account emphasizes the aspect of sharing information rather than accentuate the function of promotion or marketing. However in the late of their post, some of photos uploaded by this account show a different function. It can shows from the photo was reposted in 78 weeks ago which is posted by @muthemu. In this photo, the user use @explorebali to promote the luxurious beach club in Lv8 Resort Hotel, Brawa Beach in Canggu Kuta Bali. The photo denote ultimate beach club concept through "enchanted night party with international DJ's and sexy entertainment" with the same hashtag. It is imply that the @explorebali is use for the other user to promote not only tourism destination but also tourism accommodation.

Vice versa, the second account that we observed is @malangtouristguide. The account is aimed to promote tourism destination in Malang, a small city in East Java. Founded in June 2015, the account has 527 followers and actively following 419 other Instagram accounts. Until today's 39 photos that have been uploaded. The account @malangtouristguide is declaring tourism travel planner in Malang. They are functioning Instagram as a medium to share tourism and traveller tips, culinary and cultural events in Malang. The @malangtouristguide is using a diverse

hashtag to get more followers. We identified several hashtag which is often used by this account likes #travellingindonesia, #indonesiagateway, #exploreindonesia, #thisisindonesia and #livefolkindonesia. The hashtags is quite famous among travellers who are seeking information about tourist destination. It means that admin of @malangtouristguide is consciousness that to develop their account to be tourism references they have to utilize various hashtags. In generally, we saw that the functions of hashtag in this account is related to the recent topics are public attention. One of the benefits in use hashtag when the users uploaded the photos are making easier to other users to find the tourist destination. The using of hashtag in a specific “folder” contributes to ease for searching the information of tourism destination in Malang. In addition, it is also chance for @malangtouristguide to get more followers and simultaneously opening real space for users to transform themselves into consumers or tourists. Therefore, the admin of @malangtouristguide have a power to control and operate the traffic of photos uploaded by other users.

Based on two months depth observation in two instagram accounts, @explorebali and @malangtouristguide, the research shows that instagram account is useful to encourage the promotion of the place into a tourist destination. We are stressing here to define about place and destination. The use of Instagram is supporting the establishment of Internet as contemporary promotion medium. Instagram provide four facilities in their application such as photography, geo-tagging, hashtag, and like. For many users, the facility of photography plays as principal role. It relies on visual effects, audio, narrative and imagination of the user. *Geo-tagging* facility make it easy for other users to point out the location where the photo was taken directly. It is make easy for the users or travellers to seek information about the location of tourist destinations that will be addressed based on the knowledge they had before. At least this effort shows that Instagram provide opportunities for new tourist destinations based on previous individual experience. In addition, *hashtag* is the important facility in Instagram. Hashtag is also the facility that supports the user to spread the photos to the other users. Our research shows that hashtag in @explorebali and @malangtouristguide accounts is function to allow users classify theme or topic more specific. With such characteristics, hashtag also serves to make easy for users to search for related information. We tried to classify hashtag functions in Instagram are (1) the media grouping for tourist content, (2) searching media of travel content, (3) expand the posting of tourism, and (4) promotion of tourism products. The fourth function hashtag gives strength to Instagram as contemporary promotion media. The other facility of Instagram is the function of feature *like*, in which serves as a marker of short response from Instagram users. This feature makes it easy for users to upload photos and get a quick response to see the number of likes that appears in the subject of the photo. All these functions make it easy for users to share information, in particular on tourism products. For tourists or travellers, fourth effects has been characterized by Instagram was able to create a pattern of decision making to choose tourism destination. Here, we see that the all of facilities offered by Instagram has the potential to support and create a destination brand, especially in tourism. On another note, by connecting physical and digital realms, Instagram enhances online presence and identity, and allows more effective interaction not only for personal reasons, but also for business purposes (Abbott et al., 2013).

4.1. Instagram and Self Promotion Tourism

Social networking has become an important communication method to connect individuals and organizations effectively. On a personal level, it is a popular online social platform to interact with friends (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). Users find social networking particularly useful in sharing information and getting connected with their friends (Sema, 2013). Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and also Instagram, are more than often used as a hub to meet and share ideas, thus making purchasing decisions about certain products (Barczyk & Duncan, 2011). Hence, there is a significant increase of companies, including small businesses, utilizing social networking sites to market products and communicate with their consumers (Leskovec et al., 2007).

Instagram is online photo-album that was launched in 2010 and it has grown steadily and strongly until today. As a mobile application, Instagram can access from Smartphone such as iPhone and Android platform. For example, the Apple Company provided this application in Apple Store and many customers can download it freely access, as well as Google Play for Android (Bergström & Bäckman, 2013). Three years after launched, Instagram estimated had 100 million users, and approximately four billion photos were uploaded and displayed (Abbott et al., 2013). In a more recent estimation, it is reported that around 75 million people are using Instagram on a daily basis, and approximately

16 billion photos are uploaded and shared with other users (Smith, 2014). Based on that data, Instagram is generally known as a novel photo-sharing social networking platform (Chante et al., 2014; Salomon, 2013). It is important to noted here the statement proposed by Hochman & Schwartz (2012) that application enables users to take photos or pictures, apply the different manipulation tools to transform the appearance of images, and share them instantly with friends on different social networking sites.

In tourism sector, Instagram has a role as an online photo-album that can be accessed by others and users can also use it as promotion channel. However, it is important to point out that the process of promotion in Instagram is different with conventional media such as print and electronic advertising. The strength of Instagram as “self-promotion aid” is its ability to change users become a potential marketer for each visual material uploaded. Based on our observation, we analyze that Instagram becomes one of favorite channel for promoting destination images by tourism operators. For example, the admin of @malangtouristguide admit that the emergent of their Instagram account is based on market demand of easy, faster and cheap tourism providers. Hence, this is clear to point out that the promotion by Instagram is different with conventional promotion. The conventional promotion needs high cost but lower impacts.

Under the principle of User Generated Content (UGC) in which interaction among users as their priority, Instagram provide two-way interaction directly. In the middle of 2015, Instagram launched the new feature called *Instagram Direct*. It including threaded messages and sending content from your feed as a direct messages. Instead of creating a new conversation every time you send a photo or video, your threads are based on the people in them. This makes it easier to go back and forth with the people you talk to the most. Instagram also provide facility to give a name for our groups, a quick camera feature to respond with a fast *selfie*, and larger-than-life emoji for when there are just no words. With Direct Message box, it's easier to connect around the things you love, such as place, nature, building, culture festival, and human nature. Being mainly a photo-sharing application, Instagram has excelled as an effective communication and marketing tool to display products with visual descriptions. Hence, it becomes a useful social networking platform instantly to individuals and companies. Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the belief factors about the use of Instagram at the personal level using qualitative approach.

4.2. Instagram and Image Formation

In the tourism context, Internet is an important source of information for travelers. Fernando (2007) suggests that UGC is the opposite to traditional forms of media and marketing since content is generated by the consumer rather than by the marketer. Tools such as blogs and social networking sites (such as Instagram) have meant that consumers are better informed than ever before – not only being able to add their own comments, but also being able to find another information and articles and ‘tag’ them with their own keywords for search purposes (Buhler, 2006). As social media, Instagram elaborate the power of visualization, individual response, and the additional facility like *geo-tagging*, video posting and Instagram direct. These facilities enable to act as low-cost of promotion channel to develop tourism destination. It is clear that many motivations for posting content depend on the person and the context. Munar's study (2012) shows the most popular use of social media initiatives to be advertising. The account of @explorebali shows on how users act as photographer and how they are visualizing the nature and cultural landscapes of Bali.

According to Beerli and Martin's model of formation of destination image, there are two determinant factors that influence the form of destination image (Beerli and Martin, 2004: 660). First factor is personal factors including motivation, vacation experience and the characteristic of socio-demography. Second factor is information source, it including the type of individual in disseminating information and intensity of visits to tourist destinations. Through both these accounts can be explained that both of them have potential value to continue, freeze and create a new image for destination tourism. For example, many photos that uploaded by user through @explorebali, some of them shows same characteristic as the old photographs. The old photograph means that some photo was reproduce with new filter and narration. Therefore, users can still identify that the object in the photograph is Bali, though the photographer tried to take photos from different angles. At this situation, the user tends to show motivation as a guardian image. The different findings we have encountered in the second account, where photos are produced tend to create a new image of tourism. We see that, in the second account, thoughts traveled the core of user actions in the promotion of tourist destinations. We saw that, tourism experience is the most valuable aspect to encourage user to promote tourism destination.

The study in both accounts shows that the image formation of tourism destination through not only by visualization of photography, but the process also involves a shared experience of users. In other words, the formation of destination branding through Instagram, there are a few steps that must be done. Starting from posting photos, share an experience, and of course get feedback from users' comments and discussion. From this standpoint, the process of formation of tourist brand image has occurred. However, in our opinion the formation of new image has not happened yet. For example, the account of @explorebali not produce the new something of Bali destination branding, they only reproduce and preserving the image that already formed. Nevertheless, the account of @malangtouristguide is still in the step to introduce Malang as a new tourist destination in East Java.

5. Conclusion

As Instagram platforms play an important an increasingly central role in social media, it is important that users or scholars alike begin to see that these platforms are not simply as interaction or communication tools. Here, our positions through this paper is to point out that Instagram should be understood as complex roles, which are entangled with the roles of economic, business and social configurations. Exploring the how Instagram makes contribution to develop a tourism destination, it makes clear that Instagram and users transformed as a new form. The purpose of this paper is to explore in depth the presence of Instagram as a new communication channel in the promotion of tourist destinations in Indonesia. Instagram is present as a medium that has a lot of personal facility that allows users to upload what is seen in the tourist sites so that it becomes attractive to be shared. Through *geo-tagging* facility individuals can find out easily tourist destination location without having to waste time asking for a lot of people. For example, the presence of vintage's effects, as one of the strength of Instagram, not only as an online photo album, while it can be used as a promotion media. It happened because Instagram have a sophisticated feature as photo editor. Users based social media or User Generated Content (UGC) provides a convenience access to user to access information and also disseminate it to public. User generated content (UGC) offer uniqueness that each user can be a marketer, such as a tourist destination. We agreed that the UGC stressed the importance of shared experience among users rather than the visual effects displayed in Instagram. Hence, We want to underline that the form of shared experience or interactions among users in Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are different. Various interactions such as *like*, *comment*, or even include *hashtag* as will sign of a particular object. The "hospitality" of Instagram as a private social media are still quite private makes it as a favourite channel used by tours operator to promote tourist destinations. In addition, the presence of Instagram is a supporting factor in establishing a tourism destination branding in public. Finally, We concluded that UGC through social media help promote awareness and creates interest towards a product and destination (de Bruyn & Lilien, 2008).

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