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Tourism
Marketing
in East and Southeast Asia

Edited by Dimitrios Stylidis, Seongseop (Sam) Kim and Jungkeun Kim

CABI

Tourism Marketing in East and Southeast Asia

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Tourism Marketing in East and Southeast Asia

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Edited by

Dimitrios Stylidis

University of Crete, Greece

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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

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by
Konstantinos Andriotis, Middlesex University London
and
Dimitrios Stylidis, University of Crete, Rethymno

Tourism literature includes a plethora of books and conference and journal papers that address various issues of tourism in different regions and sub-regions of the world. However, up to now there has been a lack of a collection of contribution-based books with a regional and sub-regional focus. In order to complement the existing tourism literature with new or emerging topics of particular interest, it is the aim of the **CABI Regional Tourism Series** to offer a collection of books with comparative and individual case studies from at least eight regions and sub-regions of the world. These books will come under the following titles, each of which focuses on some of the countries or country clusters: Tourism in Western Europe; Tourism in Eastern Europe; Tourism in East and Southeast Asia; Tourism in Middle East; Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa; Tourism in the Caribbean; Tourism in Latin America; Tourism in Pacific Oceania.

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Brief summary of careers

Konstantinos Andriotis is a Professor in Tourism at Middlesex University London and in the past, he was Associate Professor and Head of the Hotel and Tourism Management Department at the Cyprus University of Technology. He holds an MSc in International Hospitality Management (University of Strathclyde, 1995), a PhD in Tourism Development and Planning (Bournemouth University, 2000) and a Postdoc in Tourism Marketing (Hellenic Open University, 2006). He edits the *International Journal of Tourism Policy* and the *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*. He is a member of the Editorial Board of more than 20 journals and Associate Editor of the leading tourism journal *Annals of Tourism Research*. He is author of seven books and over 45 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. His work has appeared in leading academic journals, such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Tourism Management* and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. He has an h-index of 29 and more than 3700 citations. He has acted as Chairman and member of the organizing and scientific committees of various international conferences, and he has given keynote speeches in several conferences. His research interests are in tourism development and planning, alternative forms of tourism, tourism experience and degrowth.

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3 Visual Destination Images: The Case of the ASEAN Tourism Organization Official Instagram Account

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) consists of ten integrated countries, namely Brunei (formerly Brunei Darussalam), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos (officially the Lao People's Democratic Republic), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Tourism is becoming an essential aspect of economic development in these ten nations. Numerous factors determine the success of the ASEAN countries in the tourism sector, including diversity in terms of cultures, people, culinary experiences, flora and fauna, landscapes, infrastructures, entertainment, shopping, recreation and excitement. ASEAN's tourism sector has also leveraged the key milestones in the community's journey, showcased the region's diversity, and developed and marketed a regional brand and experience by promoting the regional area as one destination (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

In August 2017, the ASEAN countries launched the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy (ATMS) 2017–2020. The implementation of ATMS aimed to enhance the application of information and communications technology (ICT), social media and websites in the region (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2017). To reach the vision, one of the strategic objectives highlighted an integrated digital marketing action plan that provides an action framework for the ASEAN national tourism organizations (NTOs). In 2018, an ASEAN Tourism Marketing Agency developed an integrated marketing plan (i.e. blogging, social media marketing, branding and websites, and partnerships) with the campaign tagline 'Southeast Asia: feel the warmth' (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2019).

With the development of social media in the tourism and hospitality industry, information exchange on products and experiences changed dramatically, with travellers and organizations sharing knowledge online on various platforms such as Facebook, TripAdvisor, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram (Chu *et al.*, 2020). Social media has changed the way organizations communicate with their customers, and plays a role in generating a clear image of a travel destination and tourists' intention to visit the destination (Gaffar *et al.*, 2021). Most tourism and hospitality social media studies focus more on Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Foursquare, Flickr, Instagram and YouTube, with topics related to social factors, organizational attributes, return on investment (ROI), platform attributes, user characteristics and engagement,

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task–technology fit analysis, distribution channels, opinion and recommendation by giving positive opinions and comments (Wozniak *et al.*, 2017; Chatzigeorgiou and Christou, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2020; Nusair, 2020; Hysa *et al.*, 2021; Lin *et al.*, 2021). In the context of destination communication strategies, limited systematic research exists on the residents' and visitors' engagement or the attractiveness of content posted on official city or country social media accounts, such as on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Paüli Agustí, 2018, 2021; Molinillo *et al.*, 2019; Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020; Filieri *et al.*, 2021; Song *et al.*, 2021; Kumar *et al.*, 2022).

This chapter analyses the ASEAN tourism organization official Instagram account in terms of its functional, informational and performance dimensions. In addition, the chapter investigates the usefulness of Instagram over other social media platforms, as 50% of the variance in intention to visit and creation of a destination image is influenced by Instagram, followed by Facebook and YouTube (Molinillo *et al.*, 2018). The framework used in this chapter involves considering functional (tangible) experiences, information and performance to measure an NTO's presence on Instagram. First, functional dimensions can be used to explain destination characteristics in terms of natural features (NFs), cultural features (CFs) and tourist infrastructures (TIs). Second, information dimensions inform the characteristics of tourism organizations' communication content on Instagram. Third, analysing the performance dimension, such as the numbers of followers, comments, likes and mentions, allows analysis of the evolution of the ASEAN tourism organization engagement rate in its official Instagram account from 2016 to 2020. Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the functional characteristics posted by the ASEAN tourism organization on its official Instagram account?
2. What types of information does the ASEAN tourism organization post on its official Instagram account?
3. How effective is the performance of the ASEAN tourism organization official Instagram account?

3.1 Literature Review

3.1.1 Destination images and visual destination images

Destination images refer to the overall image of a destination, which has three distinct components. The first is cognitive, defined as individual evaluation on destination attributes; the second is affective, the emotional feelings about a destination during an evaluation stage or that develop over the course of a trip; and the third is conative and refers to tourist behaviour, namely the intention to visit or revisit a destination. The three components should be effectively used as a strategic plan in positioning a tourist destination (Stylidis *et al.*, 2017, 2020).

In the present time destination images have been influenced and transformed by ICT, with especially the image-based social network sites becoming more crucial in providing information for tourists (Bernkopf and Nixon, 2019; Nusair, 2020). According to Költringer and Dickinger (2015), digital information sources facilitate proper image formation and allow branding, thereby potentially impacting travellers' impressions of a place and serving as platforms for communicating perceptions. In their study, Költringer and Dickinger (2015) found that NTOs focus on the communication of tourist sights and attractions, activities for tourists, and historical aspects of destinations. In the case of NTO promotions, Uşaklı *et al.* (2017) found that NTOs utilize social media as a traditional marketing tool with seven categories to measure visual context on Instagram and YouTube: namely content, major themes, information, engagement, interactivity, promotion and customer service variables. The marketing messages generated by organizations' and users' content through social media posts, images and videos have a major impact on the perception, attractiveness and image of tourist regions (Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020).

A destination's image is also associated with travel motivations and the affective qualities and characteristics of photographs taken by photographers and tourists (Balomenou and Garrod, 2019; Filieri *et al.*, 2021). Interestingly, photo sharing on social media has become crucial for travellers in searching for information, forming

a perception of a destination and the decision-making process owing to the considerable freedom in the image creation and dissemination processes (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies also confirmed the effectiveness of visual content (e.g. pictures, photos and videos) and indicated its importance in engaging tourists and mediating travel experiences (Kim *et al.*, 2018; Balomenou and Garrod, 2019).

Destination functional components

According to Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) two-components model, functional impressions are among the components formed by a destination image. Such components are related to a mental picture or image describing the physical characteristics of a destination and are measurable. The functional components of a destination consist of several attributes from nature, such as natural landscapes and attractions, national parks, beaches, flora and fauna, and water attractions (i.e. rivers, waterfalls and lakes). They include a variety of things to see and do, representing competitive and comparative advantages, such as natural, cultural and developed resources. This view is supported by Beerli and Martín (2004), who identified nine dimensions/attributes in tourism functional components: namely natural resources; general infrastructure; tourist infrastructure; tourist leisure and recreation; culture, history and art; political and economic factors; natural environment; social environment; and atmosphere of the place. In recent studies, projected destination images on social media have been related to tourist attractions (i.e. natural and humanistic resources), tourism environment (i.e. natural, social and location-related), culture and history art, traditional buildings and museums, modern architectures, tourist leisure and recreation facilities, festival and events, and general infrastructures such as transportation, shopping facilities, sports facilities, accommodations and catering (Bernkopf and Nixon, 2019; Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Sun *et al.*, 2021).

Information content

Projected image is linked to the ideas and impressions generated from various information sources that are related to a destination and available for travellers' consideration (Almeida-García *et al.*, 2020; Lojo *et al.*, 2020). In other words, attributes describing a destination can be translated as a supply-side image related to tourism products and experiences serving to describe the activity choices, location and attractiveness of the destination (Lojo and Timothy, 2020). According to a study by Barbe *et al.* (2020), users prefer to follow destination management organizations' (DMOs) accounts for incentives and information. The media used by tourism organizations have transformed traditional text-based communication into image-based information such as photos and video clips (Kim *et al.*, 2018). Tourism contextual and non-contextual information features delivered via social media have significantly affected destination image formation and resulted in behavioural change (Lin *et al.*, 2020). In connection to changes in behavioural patterns based on social media visual content, several studies demonstrate the significant impact of the use of images on social media (Bernkopf and Nixon, 2019; Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020).

3.1.2 Social media marketing

People have used social media in the process of seeking information related to their travel process (Hysa *et al.*, 2021). Social media use has become an important communication tool in the hospitality, travel and tourism industries for destination branding, marketing promotion, community management and consumer interaction (Chu *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies on social media found that destination image is closely related to consumer behaviour, with social media in the tourism industry used to attract potential tourists and to increase revisit intention (Abed, 2018; Nusair, 2020; Gaffar *et al.*, 2021). Marketing strategies implemented via social media provide a channel of constant connectivity that fosters consumer engagement and enables tourism organizations to improve destination image (Lin *et al.*, 2020).

Marketer-generated content design factors (i.e. visual materials, content themes) have a critical relationship with social media engagement process (i.e. likes, replies, comments, shares) for engagement management and marketing

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(Molinillo *et al.*, 2019; Song *et al.*, 2021). The behavioural engagement performance by users in social media is calculated differently depending on the site. For example, total engagement on Instagram comprises the total number of likes and comments on a post, divided by the total number of followers (Aramendia-Muneta *et al.*, 2021). The increasing assessment by social media users of interactive content (i.e. textual, hashtags, videos, images) based on indicators such as the number of likes, comments and shares is an indication of positive engagement and interest in a brand (Mao *et al.*, 2020; Yost *et al.*, 2021).

3.1.3   Instagram

With the rapid development of mobile-phone technology, the current forerunners in social media are now image-based service applications such as Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest (Nusair, 2020; Filieri *et al.*, 2021; Lin *et al.*, 2021) Specifically, Instagram emerged rapidly as a mobile photo and video capturing and sharing platform that is popular for social media marketing (Aramendia-Muneta *et al.*, 2021; Kemp, 2021). Instagram allows users to post and share photographs to multiple platforms. Instagram has an ability to convey feelings through pictures and videos and has become a valuable communication tool for branding (Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). The use of Instagram became the basis for the so-called new mobile and visual aesthetics and radically transformed the traditional functions of photography (Serafinelli, 2018). Several studies have investigated experimental visual aesthetics consisting of context, content and composition to validate Instagram likes as a potential measure for the aesthetic appeal of contents, major themes, information types and image clusters (Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Arefieva *et al.*, 2021; Le Busque *et al.*, 2021; Yost *et al.*, 2021).

In conclusion, evidence from previous studies analysing destination images on social media is related to three dimensions – namely functional, informational and performance – that were used to describe tourism destination image content. Two important themes emerge from the previous studies discussed: first, how do functional (tangible) elements appear in NTOs' natural, cultural and TI images; and second, what is the organizations' perspective as publishers of providing relevant information on social media and how this performance is measured? Moreover, there is a need to provide more results addressing Instagram's effectiveness and performance as the image-based social media platform used by NTOs, in this case Southeast Asia as a single destination. Therefore, the information and communication displayed on the official Instagram account of the ASEAN tourism organization are the focus of the study described in this chapter.

3.2   Methodology

Content analysis was used in this study, which is a suitable method that can offer an orderly and objective analysis of images and textual content posted on social media (Sun *et al.*, 2021). This procedure is valuable for understanding social correspondences and cooperation practices, enabling specialists to inspect correspondences and coordinate efforts in a straightforward manner (Acuti *et al.*, 2018). In recent years, this method was used in assessing travel and tourism websites, social media campaigns, sentiment analysis of online reviews and users' behaviours on destination (Lin *et al.*, 2020).

3.2.1   Variables and measurement development

Based on the literature on social media and visual destination images in Instagram, evaluative dimensions were developed to measure the visual destination images posted by Visit South East Asia, the official ASEAN tourism account, on Instagram, including three aspects: functional elements, information and performance (Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Aramendia-Muneta *et al.*, 2021; Yost *et al.*, 2021). The items explained the usefulness of destination images related to nature, culture and tourist infrastructure (Bernkopf and Nixon, 2019; Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Le Busque *et al.*,

2021). The information dimension is a cognitive concept combined with different relevant social media information types and content, such as behind-the-scenes posts, educational posts, trending posts, influencer posts and short videos (Uşaklı *et al.*, 2017; Deng and Li, 2018; Palazzo *et al.*, 2021). In terms of the context of a destination, up-to-date linguistics is used to measure digital tourism initiatives as identified by official hashtags (#) to link messages and images around a theme, making specific posts easily discoverable (Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Filieri *et al.*, 2021; Yost *et al.*, 2021).

According to Yost *et al.* (2021), the engagement rate is the proportion of all engagements on a post to the total number of impressions, expressed as a percentage. According to DevriX (2020), engagement rate can be classified based on the following criteria: less than 1.0% = low engagement rate; between 1.0 and 3.50% = average engagement rate; between 3.51 and 6.0% = high engagement rate; and above 6.0% = very high engagement rate. This rate is considered a major key performance indicator (KPI) for social media platforms including Instagram. In previous studies, observations were conducted to assess engagement rate on social media with the information given by measuring the numbers of likes, shares or comments received, the number of tags related to the images and the linguistic characteristics posted by users based on the number of followers during a selected period of time (Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Molinillo *et al.*, 2019; Mao *et al.*, 2020; Aramendia-Muneta *et al.*, 2021). A compilation of the social media KPIs developed by ASEAN tourism organization especially for social media is displayed in Table 3.1.

3.2.2 Data collection

Visit South East Asia, the official ASEAN tourism Instagram account, was chosen for the present study because: first, Visit South East Asia is a regional tourism organization that utilizes Instagram to promote regional tourism destinations; and second, considerable visual information (e.g. images and videos) and textual information (e.g. captions, hashtags, mentions and comments) are available on the ASEAN Instagram platform for analysis. To analyse the activities of ASEAN tourism organization on Instagram, the available data were first crawled using a dedicated Instagram data crawler application, 4K Stockgram (Acuti *et al.*, 2018). Data collection was conducted in February 2021, and the data were obtained from ASEAN tourism organization official Instagram account (@visitsoutheastasiaofficial). The crawler was set to track and summarize the activities on the account in the past five years, specifically 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 as the ASEAN tourism organization joined Instagram on 19 August 2016. During the data collection period, the official Instagram account had 8905 followers. Descriptive statistics for the ASEAN tourism online can be seen in Table 3.2.

3.2.3 Data analysis

To conduct data analysis, guidelines for coding were first determined based on the dimensions and categories used in the study corresponding to the evaluation criteria. Next, the contents were grouped based on their functional and

Table 3.1. Potential marketing activity KPIs (social media) (source: adapted from The ASEAN Secretariat, 2017, p. 48).

Potential KPIs
Number of fans and followers on social media networks
Comments (two-way conversation – comments are a way to keep the conversation going)
Likes and shares (what the audience likes is a good indication of whether your content is attractive to them)
Mentions (the number of times people talk about ASEAN or Southeast Asia on social media contributes to the overall effort of digital marketing and public relations)

KPI, key performance indicator.

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Table 3.2. Descriptive statistics of ASEAN tourism online Instagram account, February 2021 (source: authors' own compilation).

Category	Frequency
Statistics	
Number of followers	8,905
Number of posts	1,106
Number of likes	68,262
Number of comments	2,538
Up-to-date linguistics	
Total number of captions	1,106
Number of unique hashtags (#)	691
Total number of mentions (@)	315
Type of post	
Single images	1,033
Carousels/multiple images	52
Short videos (less than 1 minute)	21

informational dimensions. Then, after the data were obtained by the application, the entire content of the program was stored in separate folders for each image and short video category. The tabulation output consisted of the full caption, URL link to each Instagram post, and date and year of each post. Furthermore, the textual data (captions, hashtags and mentions) output (.csv file) for each category was cleaned. Finally, after the cleaning process, the corpus file was analysed for textual and frequency content to present word-cloud analyses.

3.3   Results

3.3.1   Functional dimension

Functional images were the most posted content on ASEAN tourism online, with 990 posts or 89.5% of the total number of posts. The functional images were composed of information on CFs (388 posts or 35.1%), NFs (359 posts or 32.5%) and TIs (243 posts or 22.0%). In addition, 18 categories were used to classify the posts into functional categories (see Table 3.3). Examples of photographs representing ASEAN visual destination images are shown in Fig. 3.1.

Cultural features

Most of the functional aspects of a destination were represented by content on culture (35.1%), with the heritage site category including 187 posts (16.9%) and representing the largest number of images for any category. Most of the content represented the uniqueness of the cultures of the ASEAN countries, such as heritage sites (i.e. the Kek Lok Si Temple, Angkor Wat, Borobudur, Sam Poh Tong and Malacca Straits Mosque), hotels and palaces (i.e. the Grand Palace, Taman Sari Water Castle and Raffles Hotel), old towns (i.e. Hoi An and Malacca) and UNESCO world heritage sites (i.e. George Town and the Singapore Botanical Gardens).

The local cuisines category represented 9.0% of the total number of posts and the culinary diversity of the ten ASEAN countries, with posts on dishes such as tom yum goong (Thailand), nasi lemak (Malaysia), rendang (Indonesia) and loh bak (Singapore). The local traditions and customs category represented 2.6% of the total number of posts, including local traditions such as the Kecak Dance of Indonesia and Khon performances from Thailand, followed by posts about local people (2.1%). The other categories, namely traditional markets, arts and handicrafts, and museums, had a post frequency below 2%.

Natural features

The posts on nature showed the beauty of the ASEAN countries, with the most posted category being natural landscapes having 136 posts (12.3%), ranging from islands (i.e. Palawan, Ha Long Bay and Bali) and mountains (i.e. Mount Bromo and Mount Kinabalu) and hills (i.e. the Chocolate Hills) to rice fields (i.e. Lao Cai and the Banaue Rice Terraces). The second most posted NFs in the ASEAN region were freshwater features such as lakes, waterfalls and rivers (6.1%); specifically, several destinations such as Kayangan Lake in the Philippines; the Mekong River, which crosses five ASEAN countries (i.e. Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia); and Aling-Aling waterfalls, which include waterfalls at different heights. The posts on beaches represented 5.3% of the total number

Table 3.3. Visual destination images by category on ASEAN tourism online Instagram account, February 2021 (source: authors' own compilation).

Dimension	Category	Code	Subcategory	Frequency	%
Functional	CFs	*CF*		*388*	*35.1*
		CF1	Arts and handicrafts	16	1.4
		CF2	Heritage sites	187	16.9
		CF3	Local cuisines	100	9.0
		CF4	Local traditions and customs	29	2.6
		CF5	Museums	16	1.4
		CF6	Local people	23	2.1
		CF7	Traditional markets	17	1.5
	NFs	NF		359	32.5
		NF1	Landscapes	136	12.3
		NF2	Flora and fauna	45	4.1
		NF3	Lakes, waterfalls and rivers	68	6.1
		NF4	Beaches	59	5.3
		NF5	National parks	51	4.6
	TIs	*TI*		*243*	*22.0*
		TI1	Recreation facilities	41	3.7
		TI2	Sports facilities	9	0.8
		TI3	Modern buildings/landmarks	43	3.9
		TI4	Accommodations	73	6.6
		TI5	Restaurants, bars and cafés	40	3.6
		TI6	Health and wellness facilities	37	3.3
Informational	IFs	*IF*		*116*	*10.5*
		IF1	From the organization	18	1.6
		IF2	Special promotions	2	0.2
		IF3	Events and festivals	26	2.4
		IF4	Public holidays	5	0.5
		IF5	Special campaigns/contests	31	2.8
		IF6	Celebrities/influencers	22	2.0
		IF7	Traveller re-posts	12	1.1
Total				*1106*	*100*

CFs, cultural features; NFs, natural features; TIs, tourist infrastructures; IFs, informational features.

of posts, including Phuket and Koh Phi Phi in Thailand, the Gili Islands in Lombok (Indonesia) and My Khe Beach in Vietnam. Two categories with a few posts were: flora and fauna (4.1%), consisting of animals such as orangutans, elephants, Komodo dragons, tigers and Irrawaddy dolphins that can be found in ASEAN countries; and conservation and national parks (4.6%).

Tourist infrastructures

Posts on TIs on the ASEAN tourism organization site were mostly related to the hospitality industry

3.3.3 Performance dimension

Number of posts, likes and comments

From 2016 to 2020 ASEAN tourism online hosted a total of 1106 posts or an average of 0.69 posts per day (see Table 3.4). The total number of likes on the site was 68,262. A significant increase in the number of likes was observed from 2018 to 2019 (49.3%). Meanwhile, the total number of comments from Instagram users was 2538 or 1.60 comments per post on average.

Engagement rate

The engagement rate of ASEAN tourism organization Instagram account is based on three variables: the number of likes, the number of comments and the total number of followers (Yost *et al.*, 2021). A tendency towards an annual increase in user engagement was observed, especially from 0.53% in 2016 to 2.54% in 2020. The latest number of ASEAN tourism followers (8905) and that during the study period (i.e. from 2016 to 2020) were the benchmarks for the calculation, in which the total number of likes was 13,652. In addition, the average number of comments from Instagram users was 508. Thus:

$$\text{Engagement rate} = (\text{likes} + \text{comments})/\text{follows}$$
$$= (13,652 + 508)/8905$$
$$= 1.59\%$$

The engagement rate distribution for each post is illustrated in Fig. 3.3, in which the

Table 3.4. Online performance of ASEAN tourism organization official Instagram account, 2016–2020 (source: authors' own elaboration).

Year	Total number of posts	Total number of likes	Total number of comments	Engagement rate (%)[a]
2016[b]	137	4,508	193	0.53
2017	346	11,681	680	1.39
2018	134	12,089	495	1.41
2019	237	18,049	499	2.08
2020	252	21,935	671	2.54
Average	214	13,652	508	1.59

[a]Engagement rate = (total number of likes + total number of comments)/total number of followers.
[b]The total number of posts in 2016 is from September to December.

Fig. 3.3. Distribution of post engagement rate on Visit South East Asia, the official ASEAN tourism Instagram account (*N* = 1106), 2016–2020 (source: authors' own elaboration).

majority of the 877 posts (79.29%) had a low engagement rate (less than 1.0%). Meanwhile, the posts with an average engagement rate (1.0–3.50%) accounted for 19.89% of the total number of posts. The other posts with a high engagement rate (3.51–6.0%) and very high engagement rate (above 6.0%) accounted for only 0.81% of the total number of posts.

3.3.4 Up-to-date linguistics

Captions

For the up-to-date language information, 1106 captions data were crawled for the analysis. Most of the captions in the functional categories (i.e. NFs, CFs and TIs) described the images, the history of an image, or an exciting fact or location, with website links as references for additional detailed information. For the information category, most of the captions related to news from the ASEAN tourism organization, information, and special promotions from hotels, restaurants and airlines. The organization also regularly posted information about contests (i.e. photo competitions and blog competitions) and celebrations for special days (Christmas, New Year's Day and Independence days).

Mentions

A total of 315 mentions were obtained from unique Instagram users. The most frequent mentions were from individual accounts/ tourists who visited various destinations in the ASEAN countries and captured/posted an image of one of the ASEAN destinations and their reviews and captions. The second most frequent mentions were related to the ASEAN NTO official account, followed by travel blogs and professional photographers. The other accounts mentioned related to travel and tourism facilities, such as hotels and resorts, restaurants/cafés, and wellness and health facilities; online travel reviews; and retail shops. Some of the mentioned accounts were connected with ASEAN tourism organization activities and campaigns, such as public/ thematic communities/non-governmental organizations, NTO official accounts, local television and promotional accounts.

Hashtags

The ASEAN tourism organization account included 24,270 hashtags or 22 hashtags per post on average. The analysis revealed 691 unique hashtag words and the 50 most used hashtags can be seen in Fig. 3.4. With the majority of posts, hashtags such as #Travel, #Tourism, #Adventure, #Travelgram and #wanderlust are used. Historically, the account employed different themes and campaigns for keyword hashtags each year. For example, between 2016 and 2017, the ASEAN celebrated its 50th anniversary and used the hashtags #VisitASEAN@50 and #ASEAN50. In 2018, the association used a variety of hashtags, including #TravelByASEAN, #TasteOfASEAN, #MeanwhileInASEAN and #wellnessbyASEAN. In 2019 and 2020, #VisitSEAsia and #VisitSoutheastAsia hashtags are mostly used in every post.

Fig. 3.4. Top 50 hashtags from Visit South East Asia, the official ASEAN tourism Instagram account, 2016–2020 (source: authors' own elaboration).

Discussion and Conclusions

The objectives of the study described in this chapter were to analyse the official Instagram account of the ASEAN regional tourism organization by identifying three dimensions, namely functional, informational and performance dimensions. The research was based on the analysis of pictures and information on the NFs, CFs and TIs of the different destinations on the Instagram platform. The results revealed, first, that functional dimensions represented the majority of the posts on ASEAN tourism (89.5%) related to a variety of natural attractions such as high mountains; green landscapes; the sea, sand and sun; and the richness of the flora and fauna. This confirms the previous findings from Kuhzady and Ghasemi (2019) and Le Busque et al. (2021), where projected destination images are dominated with natural attraction and landscapes. The findings also confirm Southeast Asia as a rich and diverse destination, focusing on four overarching themes to be implemented in regional thematic experiences: namely cultural and heritage, nature and adventure, wellness and culinary (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2017). The cultural diversity was influenced by multiethnic backgrounds, religions and races, and numerous options were offered for heritage sites and experiences as well as cultural attractions in different locations, and this finding confirms previous studies from various destination types such as city by Bernkopf and Nixon (2019), country by Kuhzady and Ghasemi (2019) and multiple countries by Song et al. (2021).

The second significant finding was that the information dimension was infrequently posted on the ASEAN tourism organization account (10.5%). Information content appeared periodically in destination posts relating to news (including special events, campaigns, contests, special promotions) and endorsements using celebrities/public figures as influencers to promote the attractiveness of a destination to Instagram users. Palazzo et al. (2021) and Iglesias-Sánchez et al. (2020) mentioned that social media influencers and local residents can be effective ambassadors for a tourism destination because they shape destination image and increase visit/revisit intention, reaching target markets. NTOs should use social media to perform marketing activities and promote the brand image of the destination not only for the travellers, but also involve travel bloggers, photographers, social media influencers and tourism companies to support destination promotion campaigns and increase the awareness of destination attributes (Palazzo et al., 2021).

Another consideration for ASEAN tourism organization is tourist involvement in the online platforms of NTOs. According to Sun et al. (2021), tourist involvement can be achieved by engaging them in the construction of destination image information via improving the quality of and creating communication strategies between tourists and NTOs using means such as special promotions, campaigns/contests, re-posting tourists' posts and replying to their comments. Moreover, according to Iglesias-Sánchez et al. (2020), 'brand creation starts with a communication campaign by DMOs, while UGC [user-generated content] by Instagram users enhances the brand through specific experiences at the destinations and their motivation to travel there' (p. 20).

The third finding is that the average engagement rate obtained by the ASEAN tourism organization account over the past five years (2016–2020) was 1.59%. This engagement level of 1.59% revealed in the current investigation is below those observed in previous research by Stevanovic (2020), where the Instagram's average industry engagement rate is 1.9%. A possible explanation for this finding may be that the ASEAN tourism organization account has only approximately 8905 followers, and the number of likes and comments is averaged. Therefore, the ASEAN tourism organization account can be categorized as having an average/satisfactory engagement rate (1.0–3.5%) (Foxwell, 2021). According to Rabo (2019), the global engagement rate for an Instagram account is 4.7%, and the Instagram engagement rate for the travel industry is slightly higher (4.94%). Interestingly, the engagement rate of one of the most popular influencer industries, namely the travel industry, dropped from 8.0% in 2018 to 4.5% in 2019. Among social circles, having a high engagement rate on an Instagram account can provide increased credibility (Mao et al., 2020; Yost et al., 2021). Moreover, it shows that an account posts high-quality content that resonates with its followers, and a growing number of users as well

as an elevated trend towards visual content and pictorial themes in social media engagement such as likes, comments and shares can be observed (Aramendia-Muneta *et al.*, 2021).

The study also found that foci throughout the development of the regional brand and experiences are culinary, wellness, culture and heritage, and nature and adventure (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2017), and this is also confirmed with hashtags such as #TasteOfASEAN, #MeanwhileInASEAN and #wellnessbyASEAN. The use of hashtags and mentions was related to campaigns, post categories and specific interests for improved search purposes. The main hashtags (e.g. #VisitASEAN@50) were found in every post, supported by several campaigns useful for informing audiences about promotions and special events. According to Yost *et al.* (2021), posts with hashtags receive a higher engagement rate compared with the rest of the posts. The combination of photographs, text and hashtags has been used to express traveller's attitudes towards destinations (Filieri *et al.*, 2021).

The research findings have significant implications for understanding how regional tourism organizations communicate functional destination images on the Instagram platform, which can be categorized as a content community wherein users can share media content such as photos. Functional photos/images are undeniably used as representations of destination image for potential and existing audiences (Kuhzady and Ghasemi, 2019; Arefieva *et al.*, 2021; Filieri *et al.*, 2021). Marketing strategies implemented via social media provide a channel of constant connectivity that fosters consumer engagement. An organization must be able to differentiate itself from its competitors or create a positive image for consumers, because this enables tourism organizations to improve destination image and drive organization performance (Uşaklı *et al.*, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2021; Yost *et al.*, 2021).

The ATMS 2017–2020 mentioned that engaging influential audiences through social media will become a useful tool in the Southeast Asian region. The rise of digital technology will enable tourism organizations to shift from traditional marketing tactics to targeted content marketing strategies with highly customized content relevant to travellers (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2017). The study findings can be used to create awareness and promote significant efforts by the ASEAN tourism organization to inspire and increase people's awareness and to develop relationships with potential stakeholders. The active role of social media users should be taken into account by NTOs, especially the use of Instagram as a social media platform for sharing experiences (through the sharing of evocative visual content) to create a destination brand and highlight the attractiveness of tourist regions (Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020). In addition, perhaps the most crucial finding was that the categorization of tourism themes can serve as a robust indicator for NTOs in evaluating their performance and helping them choose the right marketing strategies in the future (Song *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the findings, the most crucial themes focused on innovation and transformation from traditional marketing tactics (broad audiences) to targeted efforts, and the use of content marketing for targeted audiences by interacting with potential travellers on digital media by sharing information and experiences. NTOs can consider developing content on Instagram that matches the motivations users have for following their account by continuing to provide useful information to prospective travellers in an enjoyable and entertaining format (Barbe *et al.*, 2020). NTOs also need to utilize the advertisement option on Instagram and link their account with other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and their official website, to maintain engagement with users (Song *et al.*, 2021). Thereby, a better understanding and awareness of the Southeast Asia tourism brand globally can be gained; and the Southeast Asian region should be positioned and branded in its markets to be perceived as a single destination (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015, 2019).

Generalization of the results presented in this chapter is subject to certain limitations. First, analysis was conducted only on secondary data from Instagram posts such as images and textual information (i.e. captions, hashtags, numbers of likes and comments), and the perspectives of users and regional tourism authorities were not included in the research. Analysing users' comments may also help in better understanding travellers' perspective of the ASEAN countries

as a regional destination. Furthermore, analysing the perspective of the NTOs could establish a high degree of accuracy in relation to posts on functional and information content. Future research can also involve regional tourism authorities by conducting in-depth interviews to identify their social media marketing strategies. Moreover, future studies can compare the information gained in the present study with that from other regional destination organizations with various cultural, natural and tourism infrastructure characteristics.

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March 16, 2022

Dear Prof. Sam Kim and Dr. Dimitrios Stylidis:

Thank you for reviewing our manuscript "Visual Destination Images: The Case of the ASEAN Tourism Organization Official Instagram Account." which was submitted to *Tourism Marketing in East and South-East Asia CABI book series* for publication consideration. We are grateful to receive your constructive and valuable comments, which have helped to improve the overall quality of our manuscript.

Please note we have revised the paper based on your comments and suggestions. This revision summary provides a point-to-point response to the comments offered by the editors. We also confirm in comprising a maximum of 7000 words per chapter including references and 4 figures for this chapter.

Again, thank you very much for your interest in this work. We wish the final revised manuscript would meet the standard of CABI book series.

Yours truly,

Fajar Putra
Correspondence author

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Comments:

(1) Need to present which countries this association involves

__Our response:__

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript and add countries name involved in this association. Please refer to p.1 (paragraph 1)

(2) Section 1 Paragraph 3. Phrasing

__Our response:__

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript based on your comments and paraphrased sentence. Please see the full manuscript revised.

(3) Section 2 paragraph 1. Phrasing

__Our response:__

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript based on your comments and paraphrased sentence. Please see the full manuscript revised.

(4) Sub section 3.1 paragraph 2. Sentence is not clear

Our response:

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript based on your comments and paraphrased sentence. Please see the full manuscript revised.

(5) Sub section 4.3 paragraph 2. Phrasing

Our response:

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript based on your comments and used the current references on destination images.

Please refer to p.4 (paragraph 1 and 2) for the destination images definition and current relevant studies.

(6) Sub section 4.4 you mean up-to-date or local?

Our response:

Thank you for your comments. Please note we have revised the manuscript based on your comments and used up-to-date linguistic as tittle.

CONTRIBUTOR'S CONTRACT

made between Fajar Putra (hereinafter the "Contributor") of POLTEKPAR NHI BANDUNG, fap@stp-bandung.ac.id **and** CAB International, trading as CABI (hereinafter "CABI" which expression shall, where the context admits, include CABI's assigns or successors in business as the case may be) of Nosworthy Way, Wallingford OX10 8DE, United Kingdom.

CABI has agreed with Dimitrios Stylidis, Seongseop (Sam) Kim and Jungkeun Kim (Editors) to publish a Work:

Tourism Marketing in Southeast & East Asia

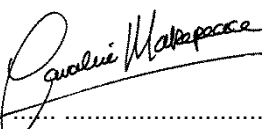1. The Contributor will submit a chapter or chapters, *Visual Destination Images: The Case of the ASEAN Tourism Organization Official Instagram Account*, for this Work comprising a maximum of 7000 words per chapter including references and a maximum of 5 figures per chapter. The completed typescript in the English language will be delivered in an agreed electronic format to the Editor(s) by 31st March 2022. Figures should be supplied in their original formats, in separate, clearly-labeled files in a state ready for print.

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