

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM

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Abstract

Social media is getting an increasingly important role in acquiring tourist information fast and easily. Our study was aimed to find out to what extent social media is influential as far as the motivations of travellers are concerned, and how compelling social media content is; also, the research was aimed to identify what feelings and emotions are triggered in travellers by actually visiting the places popularized by social media. In our survey an online questionnaire was used for mapping the issues mentioned above (N=208). Our results have proven the importance of the effect of social media sites on the motivation of travellers. Also, it has been identified, that women are more active consumers of contents on social media sites, and they tend to organize their travels online more frequently, than their male counterparts. Social media users accept the information on these pages as authentic, and only a few of them have experienced disappointment when visiting the given destinations; although, men seem to be more critical and disillusioned than women. No 'compelling' impact of the social media has been outlined, but the feeling 'FoMo' (Fear of Missing out) has already been experienced by some of the respondents.

Keywords: tourism, motivation, attraction, experience, social media

A KÖZÖSSÉGI MÉDIA HATÁSA A TURISZTIKAI CÉLÚ UTAZÁSSAL KAPCSOLATOS ATTITŰDÖKRE

Absztrakt

A turisztikai információk könnyű és gyors beszerzésében egyre nagyobb teret hódítanak a közösségi oldalak. Tanulmányunkban arra keressük a választ, hogy mennyiben befolyásolja a közösségi média az utazási motivációt, az utazók milyen mértékben érzik kényszerítő hatásúnak az azon talált tartalmakat, illetve milyen érzéseket vált ki belőlük a közösségi médián népszerűsített úticélok felkeresése. Vizsgálatunkat online kérdőív segítségével végeztük (N=208). Eredményeink igazolják a közösségi oldalak utazási motivációra gyakorolt hatását, valamint azt, hogy a nők aktívabbak az ott generált tartalmak fogyasztásában és az utazások online szervezésében. A felhasználók hitelesnek fogadják el a közösségi oldalokról szerzett információkat, s az azok alapján meglátogatott desztinációkban keveseket ér csalódás, noha ilyen esetben a férfiak többnyire kritikusabbak és kiábrándultabbak, mint a nők. A közösségi médiának „kényszerítő hatása” nem körvonalazódik, de a közösségi felületek vonzó tartalmai miatt az utazók egy része már átélte a kimaradástól való félelem (FoMo) érzését.

Kulcsszavak: turizmus, motiváció, attrakció, élmény, közösségi média

1. Introduction

Travelling for leisure has been part of people's lives for centuries. The desire to travel increased uninterrupted until 2020, the year of the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. By data of the World Tourism Organization=UNWTO covering the period from 1990 to 2019, the number of international travels increased from the annual 438 million people to 1.4 billion (UNWTO 2019) by 2020, and then there was a 74% drop, a total of 1 billion persons less. It meant that in world tourism more than 100 million jobs were in danger (MTI, 2021). Unfortunately, the current crisis, the period of pandemic is not yet over, which also affects the subjective assessment of quality of life (ÁCS et al. 2021), and thus the mood to travel. Consequently, the recovery of the tourism sector is still ahead. Hopefully – and it has been confirmed by research as well – no irreversible changes have been detected concerning consumer behaviour; epidemiological emergency has induced only temporary changes (CSÓKA et al. 2021). At the same time, the pandemic-induced circumstances may offer new possibilities for some service providers; some of them may aim to achieve improvement in the areas of crisis management and, also, in the appreciation of safer and more sustainable tourism (KOVÁCS et al. 2021).

Since, due to the rapid growth in info communication technologies, as well as in transport, geographical space and time tend to 'collapse' (HAGGETT 2006), thus, an increasingly growing number of social groups in the developed countries are affected by the possibility of travelling for pleasure. As a result of the huge amount of information available on the internet, a totally new world has opened in tourism. Although, when planning and organizing travels, traditions are still there, i.e., people still use travel agencies, but there is an increasing number of those, who acquire travel information fast and easily by using the internet (GONDA – CSAPÓ 2019).

The online travel agencies (OTA) are not only the hegemonic channels of booking and sales nowadays, but they are the channels of information gathering and spreading in the accommodation-related information. The possibility of easy feedback – including the entries and scores on the OTA websites – can help to choose of the appropriate accommodation and promote word-of-mouth advertising related to the destination (POÓR – HORVÁTH 2021). At the same time, no doubt, since gaining ground of travel blogs has arisen, tourists have more confidence in what users write down than what travel agencies publish (GROTTE 2010).

These significant changes have made it possible for potential travellers to decide for their own travel and stay, thus targeting the most distant destinations of the world as well (DUDÁS – VIDA 2020). In this respect it is also important to add, that, there is a never-before-seen array of travel offers tempting the travellers (for example: budget airlines with unbelievably cheap airline tickets). These factors have led to the situation that travellers have become 'parts' of an increasingly large crowd of tourists, a quality, inseparable from the popularity of tourist attractions. There are several places, which owe their popularity and success to social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and there are evaluation platforms as well, such as TripAdvisor, SmarterTravel, and HolidayCheck. A typical picture of mass tourism of our age is, that crowded tourist buses transport people to chosen sites; it seems that everybody is there to take a picture only of the famous place, and all the shots are almost identical. Then, the next step is that tourists post those photos on social media sites.

Our survey investigated the impact of social media on choosing a travel destination, and, as a result, we attempted to describe the emotions the traveller experienced when visiting the chosen destination. Other questions worth investigating were as follow: To what extent did the social media influence people's motivation? Have travellers felt the content found on social media compelling? Also, it was an interesting issue to investigate if people were willing

to contribute to the content of social media sites; also, what emotions were triggered in them when they visited the places they had found with the help of the internet.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. The tourist experience

Tourism in general means that a person leaves his or her own place of residence voluntarily and temporarily in order to meet his or her needs at another geographical place. The features of this new place, which are a novelty for the tourists, and which are at the core of their desire to travel, represent only a familiar sight for the locals, being part of their services and offer (GYÖRI 2020). Recently tourism is interpreted as an organic part of the way of life of postmodern man, and it is seen as the most useful way of spending one's leisure time. Tourism leads to happiness, contentedness with life and thus it contributes to intellectual richness, the preservation and improvement of one's health, spiritual freshness, and the maintenance of good physical condition (MICHALKÓ 2010, LACZKÓ – BÁNHIDI 2015). It is not a coincidence that in recent tourism research the immaterial factors are becoming increasingly important.

Travelling must become an enjoyable and useful activity, a positive experience in the life of the traveller (MICHALKÓ et al. 2009). Although an experience can be investigated from a variety of aspects, but from the point of view of our topic, its key words definitely must include the notions of happiness and contentedness. There are authors, too, who approach the notion of experience from the point of view of 'flow' (KUNDI 2018). The experience of 'flow' can be defined as a condition when a person is emerged in an activity to such an extent that no external influence can disturb him. The activity itself is the 'experience'. At the same time the flow-experience is not identical with the peak-experience, which is defined by MASLOW (1943) as the best, happiest experience of human existence, which can occur only a few times in one's life. In contrast, according to CSÍKSZENTMIHÁLYI (1992), the flow can be experienced again and again in human life. The basic characteristic feature of this experience is that it is subjective, depends on the personality of the tourist (KUNDI 2018), and, at the same time, it has an impact on personality development, too.

But are those people happier and more satisfied with their lives who are part of modern-day tourism? 'Satisfaction is influenced by push motivations, pull motivations, on-site experience, perceived quality and perceived values of visit' (NAVRÁTIL et al. 2012:411). Based on a survey by MCCABE – JOHNSON (2013), three fourths of travellers feel happier and more satisfied after the completion of their trips. Respondents perceived some improvement in their personal wellbeing and quality of life. What is behind these feelings?

MICHALKÓ and his fellow researchers (2009) used several aspects when investigating the impact of tourism on the quality of life in Hungary's population. They concluded that the travels represented an added value concerning travellers' general satisfaction with life. Those people, who were frequent travellers, were happier, than those who did not travel; on the basis of the above, researchers concluded that travels have a positive effect on people, there is a feeling in them, that they want to be part of it again and again. Investigations by GONDA (2021) clearly demonstrated that the more educated people are and the better their financial situation is when subjectively judged, participation in tourism is more and more important for them, and, in their opinion the impact of travels on happiness and the quality of life is much stronger.

Travels – naturally – may have unpleasant consequences; excitement and stress caused by diversions from everyday routine may even lead to the deterioration of health during a tourist trip (e.g., stress caused by airport procedures, fear of flights, excessive alcohol, or food

consumption, sleeping problems etc.) (GWI 2013). When returning to the topic of positive effects it is important to emphasize the opinion of MICHALKÓ and his colleagues (2009) that tourism (travels) need to be interpreted as flow-inspiring activity, in which motivation is seen as an energizing, maintaining and guiding factor. With the help of motivation people tend to eliminate inner deficit status, a situation, which, like general human behaviour, is quite divergent (URBÁN 2001).

1.2. The markers of the tourist attractions

In tourism research attraction is considered as the main driving force of motivation; it offers a sight, an event, an experience, which, for some reason, is seen as attractive, and, because of this, visiting the place is considered as important. Tourism would not exist without attractions (PUCZKÓ – RÁTZ 2011). Both the natural and the built environment surrounding the traveller, together with the spectacle of the landscape, have for long been one of the most striking attractions in tourism, the primacy of which – due to spontaneous campaigns of the social media – is not questionable in our days either. The tourists always cast their eyes on those characteristics of the location, which differ from those they experience in their everyday lives: it means they seek otherness and variety (URRY 2002) when travelling. At the same time, the places travellers visit may become a scene for a variety of tourist activities, too, and this is how the destinations internalize and lead to changes; they result in personal enrichment and the transformation of the traveller. There are areas which enchant the traveller with the spectacle of their natural beauty, thus it is the aesthetic value of the landscape that makes them a tourist attraction of utmost importance (KARANCSI 2014).

Earlier research in landscape preferences investigated human bonding with landscapes; researchers aimed to find out what types of landscapes people preferred and what their preferences depended on (APPLETON 1975, KARANCSI 2008). Even though the natural environment serves as the basis of a landscape, but it should not be forgotten that the tourist attraction is always culturally constructed, i.e., without a commonly accepted meaning no surface form, historical site or cultural phenomena can become an attraction in tourism (PUSZTAI 2011).

In the semiotic structure of tourist attractions, it was MACCANNELL (1976) who used the notion of *markers*, first with the aim of informing tourists about a concrete site (e.g., a memorial plaque), or, under the term he also meant markers which aim to attract tourists to the site itself (e.g., travel brochures or films). Markers are those objects, too, which help tourists to recall their travel experience later (e.g., a photo, a brochure, postcard, or a souvenir), what is more, these markers can motivate other people to travel to the same destination. In addition, the visual quality reflected in pictures provides reliable and valid psychometric data in tourism-related research (NAVRATIL et al. 2013). Today there are millions and millions of markers available on sites of internet and thus they offer new perspectives in tourism marketing as well, since virtual and hybrid spaces need to be an immanent part of business strategies (SIKOS et al. 2019).

Thus, the notion of a tourist attraction comprises the experiential relationship between the tourist, the sight and the marker. Markers have an additional importance, too, because, when the traveller reaches the desired destination, the actual place will be unintentionally compared with the expectations, based on the markers formerly seen. It is important to add, too, that a tourist may also contribute to the system of markers by taking new photos and buying different souvenirs (CULLER 1981). In case the attraction in real life is not up to its mental equivalent i.e., the expectations, tourists are disappointed. On the other hand, certain repulsive elements, so-called visual conflicts, may have negative effects on the spot; furthermore, noise pollution or unpleasant smell also represent value-decreasing factors (KARANCSI et al.

2022). Exaggerated expectations, leading to disappointment on the one hand derive from external stimuli of the tourists' surroundings, and, on the other hand, they come from internally generated images (MICHALKÓ – IRIMIÁS 2011).

1.3. Tourism and the social media

It is well known that social media sites provide possibilities for activities that encourage consumption; in tourism there is a very strong bond between supply and demand. The role of e-marketing is therefore extremely important, as it has a significant influence on the traveller's decision-making and the development of an interactive partnership with its tools (GROTTE 2013). But the media, the social media may often make travellers believe that they would be able to experience some 'miracle' on the spot, but this miracle seems to be non-existent, or, if it does exist, its existence is seen only in its vulgarized form. When reaching the tourist attraction, some travellers may feel disappointment, or frustration tolerance, and the intensity of these feelings depends on the state of mind of the travelling person. The more educated and more experienced travellers overcome the problem more easily and find some other activity to substitute for the original one (MICHALKÓ – IRIMIÁS 2013).

Nevertheless, travel *influencers* – who have a tremendous impact on travel-related decisions of their followers with their contents and opinions - are daily followed by hundreds of thousands, a fact, that creates huge potential for demand (ALIC et al. 2017). GUERREIRO et al. (2019) do not think that the impact of digital influencers is this direct, even though their followers visit the sites they recommend, comment on them, and share their content with others. Producers of today's social media provide users with a digital framework and thus people can create and share their own content. Web 3.0, that is the post-2010 internet systems, use 'cookies' to scan the interests of their users and provide information accordingly (KLAUSZ 2016). Tourism providers also had to get used to this novelty and even learn to deal with criticism of them (GROTTE 2013).

As data by INTERNET WORLD STATS reveal, internet users today represent about 65.6% of the world's population. Numerically it means more than 5 billion people (INTERNET WORLD STATS 2021). Even though not all internet users are social media patrons, social media use has by now become one of the most popular online activities. In 2020 it was 3.6 billion people who used some social media sites and, it was estimated, that by 2025 this number will have reached 4.4 billion. Users on average spend a daily 144 minutes on social media sites (STATISTA 2021). When considering social media platforms, the rise of Instagram is the most noteworthy of them all. This platform was started 10 years ago, and its inspiration was the sharing of holiday photos. Today this social media portal has about 1.2 billion users, who, on average, spend a daily 53 minutes there. 6 people out of 10 log in at least once a day (BARNHART 2021). Having overviewed these data the question arises how and to what extent the decision making of people is influenced by social media in the area of tourism. GUERREIRO and his fellow researchers (2019) assume that 60% of the travellers - more typically women – use the social media to plan and to organize their trips, and the same proportion of travellers would consider social media information provided and shared by other travellers.

When considering the sharing of travel experiences or using content given by other travellers one can see a continuously rising tendency. The internet and modern communication technologies (e.g., smart phones and social media networks) make it possible for their consumers to share their opinion concerning the tourism product itself, or their travel experiences almost right away, through different online channels. Naturally, this information has an impact on the decisions of other consumers (GROTTE 2010, CHEN – LAW 2016). This phenomenon is called the 'Electronic Word-of-Mouth'=eWoM, and it is considered to be

the best commercial, or, occasionally, anti-commercial, the content of which is provided by members of social media networks and groups. Members of these networks and groups are able to share their ideas and opinions quickly, simply and openly, and while they are generating some kind of content, at the same time, they are functioning as consumers of contents, too, having been generated by others (CHEUNG – THADANI 2012).

The content created by internet users is considered authentic information, and, as such, it is playing an increasingly important role in the process of choosing travel destinations. Travellers often consider the information present on social media sites more realistic than the one published by tour operators themselves (CHOI et al. 2007). In connection with Instagram TERTTUNEN (2017) claims that it is a much more authentic platform to get information on travels than travel brochures, in which professional photographers' idealized pictures are published with the aim of attracting as many tourists as possible.

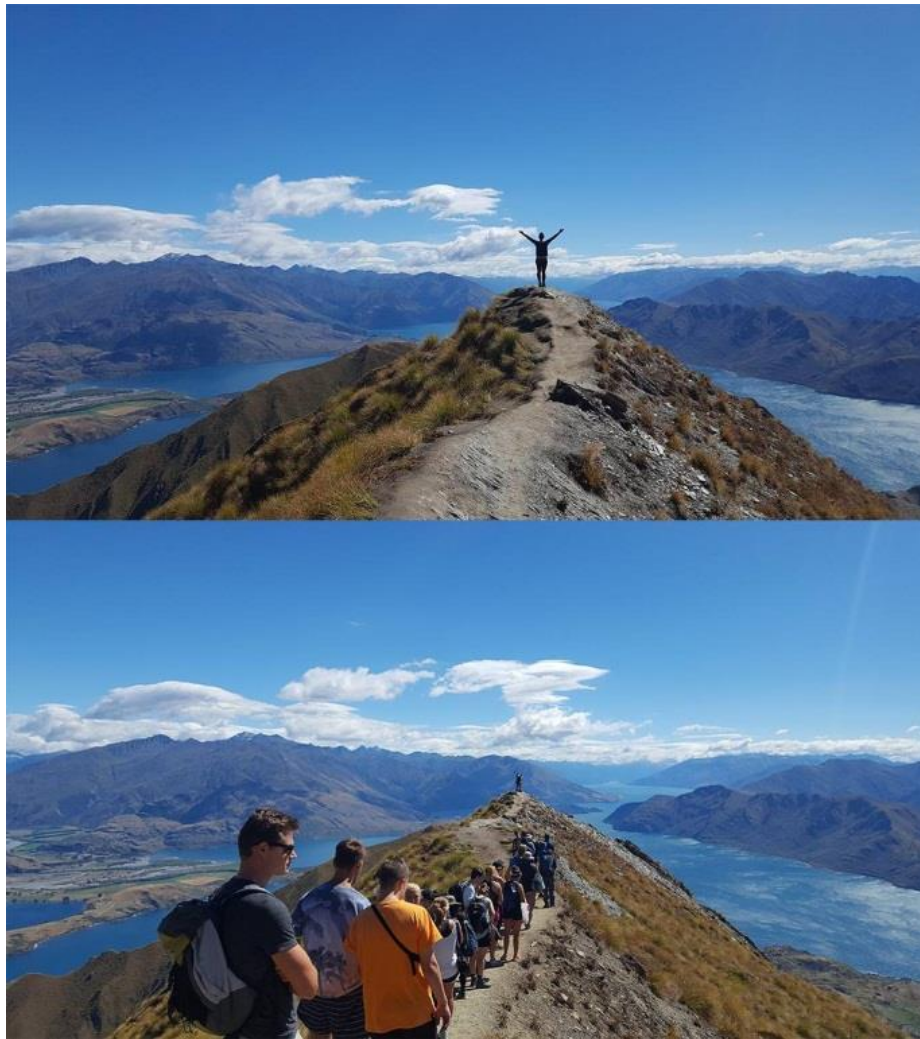
In the opinion of PARSONS (2017) social media use and the motivation to travel are closely related to one another. True, the social media has a powerful effect on the individual, but people may become addicted to it; they may surf the net all the time, always trying to find new travel destinations. Consequently, the author also points out that in the decision-making process one uploaded photo with the related text may not only have a positive impact, but it may influence potential travellers negatively as well. It is possible that the content of a social media site makes people decide not to travel to a particular tourist destination.

People, including tourists, tourism experts and/or researchers, most often make their decisions where to travel on the basis of photos, seen in travel brochures or on the internet (KARANCSI 2019). When planning a trip, people usually search the net by giving the name of a geographical place and browse the most popular photos they find there. But it may also happen, that when they actually get to the place of their 'dream vacation' – as it has previously been mentioned – they do not find themselves at the place they expected to see on the basis of the photos. The authors of this paper also know from their own personal experience, that the majority of photos of tourist destinations by professional photographers are 'manipulated', modified, made 'perfect' as markers, by using image editing programs with the aim of getting as many 'likes' as possible.

Several travellers think that after a new tourist destination becomes popular, it takes only a short period of time and it loses its attraction for tourists; sooner or later crowds of visitors would rush to the place, thus spoiling the authentic experience the place was supposed to offer (PARSONS 2017). In addition, it would be advisable that management of tourist attractions to meet the conditions for sustainable attendance rate, it should facilitate the visit by tourists who are informed and aware of the importance of preserving a good quality environment (NAVRATIL et al. 2013). In this respect, there are still significant differences between cultures and countries (BACSI 2020).

There are cases when a 'dream destination' of a person turns into his worst ever experience. One traveller described his experiences of visiting the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro as follows: 'One of the worst travel experiences of my life was visiting Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I spent the day in a seemingly endless line in the sun to get on a packed bus, only to get in another line for another bus, before practically sitting underneath the statue with hundreds of people, too cramped to see anything. That didn't stop everyone around me from spreading their arms like Christ himself to get a photo for Instagram. The only pictures I took were of them' (HOELLER 2020). The army of tourists lining up in order to take the 'perfect' photo can be called a 'social media queue' (Fig. 1) (BBC 2021). Does it mean that most travellers just want a photo and nothing else? Does it mean that the road leading them there and the adventure itself do not matter?

Figure 1: Social media queue in New Zealand



Source: BBC (2021)

Our co-author, Dániel Krátki was on his way to discover a tourist destination on an island in Indonesia. He rented a scooter and planned his trip accordingly, although locals at his place of accommodation did not recommend him to do so. But he did not want to deprive himself of the experience of discovery. The locals argued as follows: 'Why would you want to ride a scooter when there are a lot of tourist buses on the spot to take tourists to the desired destination?' Following a five-hour ride, full of adventures, he arrived at the place of attraction just to be terribly disappointed. There were hundreds of tourists lining up there, at a place, which was very different from the one he had seen on the internet (Fig. 2). The locals organized the photo taking session very 'efficiently'; the tourists were helped by one of the locals: he, in a robot-like fashion, organized the 'perfect' photo sessions for the tourists with the following commands: 'Pose, pose, pose! Jump! Next one!'

What is the solution to this problem? Giving up on tourism is definitely not the right thing to do. Finding new adventures is the key, instead of imitating others (MILLER 2017). In a campaign video made by one of New Zealand's travel agencies, travellers are requested to explore new places and stop visiting social media 'hot spots' and posting identical photos of those places. Travel agencies promise to draw gift travel vouchers in the group of those who take photos of places which are less known and less popular (5).

Figure 2. Lempujang Puya, a church (Indonesia), an Instagram hot spot. On the left-hand side, the photo taken for the social media and on the right, the reality in a self-made photo



Source: own construction

On the basis of investigations by PARSONS (2017) it can be seen that in the background of the desire and the motivation to travel there is something else and not the perfect content of social media sites. The majority of respondents in his research said that, when travelling, they targeted pleasure and experience. On the other hand, it is undeniable that there are people who travel because, due to competition, they feel compelled to do so. The media-enhanced competition inspire them, too, to travel to a 'perfect' destination and take a 'perfect' photo there. Some of these travellers even confessed that they had travelled to a certain place – not very enthusiastically – only because other people had done so. Supposedly, it is the FoMo (Fear of Missing out) phenomenon that can be found in the background of this tendency.

Social media sites also have their hidden risks, especially for those users, who are not careful enough, or, who have only a low competency level of digital skills. The FoMo phenomenon is also typical of this group, since its members always feel the constraint of being active in social media (BAK – KÓVÁRI 2019). This group of symptoms leads to permanent anxiety, a feeling that we miss out on activities that other people find pleasure in (PRZYBYLSKI et al. 2013). This feeling is more common and compelling in groups of the younger generation (KRÁTKI 2021).

It is obvious that today the tourism-related FoMo is brought about as a result of eWoM communication, increasingly widespread on social media sites. On the other hand, luckily, there is a parallel movement, too, called JoMo (Joy of Missing out). In contrast with the FoMo phenomenon, the tourists in this latter group focus on enjoying their travel instead of worrying about what impressions they make on the social media. A believer in JoMo, instead of visiting those places which are favoured by mass tourism, support alternative tourism by visiting quiet, authentic places as destinations (LOPEZ 2019).

2. Data and Methods

Our research, aimed to investigate the impact of social media on tourism-related travels, was based on internet-based questionnaires (N=208). Due to the coronavirus pandemic the survey was conducted in an online form. All respondents were granted anonymity and their attention was called to the fact that no personal data were collected within the framework of the research. By filling in and submitting the form all respondents agreed to participate in the research. So as to be able to target authentic groups of travellers, the snowball method was used to reach different tourism- or travel-related social media groups (e.g., Facebook groups). Research questions focused on sociodemographic and travel-related issues; we were also interested in the respondents' habits concerning their use of the social media. Completing the questionnaire took about 10 minutes. The survey was carried out in April 2021.

First, the online questionnaire enquired about the respondents' gender, age, educational background and income (e.g., *'What is the highest level of education you completed?'*). The respondents' social media activities were also considered (e.g., *'Are you a registered user of any social media platform?'*). There were questions about travel habits; the answers made it possible for us to identify the frequency and the length of respondents' travels prior to the pandemic (e.g., *'How many times did you travel for pleasure before the breakout of the coronavirus pandemic, in the period 1 March 2019 - 29 February 2020?'*). In order to analyse the answers more easily, sociodemographic questions as well as those ones which were intended to map respondents' travel habits, were close questions. The relatedness of travel habits and the use of social media was part of the questionnaire, too (e.g., *'How do you feel when you see the travel-related photos and videos shared by other travellers on the internet?'*). Eight questions of this type were asked, and respondents had to mark their answers given on a 5-point Likert scale (1= not typical at all 5= absolutely typical).

Statistical data analysis was carried out by using SPSS for Windows 23.0 programme. The analyses were compiled with the help of descriptive statistics. To explore the correlation between categorial variables Pearson's chi square test (χ^2) was used.

3. Results

The questionnaire was filled in by 208 people. 77.9% of our sample consisted of women and 22.1% of men (Tab. 1). As far as the age of respondents is concerned, the average was 41.5 years (deviation=14.0). Concerning the educational background of respondents, the following results were found: the dominant 53.5% completed higher level of education, while 37.5% of them had taken secondary school leaving examinations. Considering the per capita net income within the same household, most of the respondents had between 100 and 200 thousand HUF (40%), but the percentage of those who represented a higher level of income (more than 300 hundred thousand) was also remarkable (31.3%).

In the year preceding the coronavirus epidemic, one third of our respondents (33.2%) travelled on pleasure at least once or on two occasions, but the percentage of those who travelled 3 or 4 times per year was also similar (31.7%). More than a quarter of the tourists travelled 5 times, while there were some of them (8.7%), who did not travel at all during the period in question.

The overwhelming majority of our respondents chose classical products of mass tourism as main travel destinations: they preferred seaside resorts, riverside or lakeside holiday resorts, or, they visited cities. In addition, many of them spent their leisure time visiting places of some interest or places with some historical significance. 40-40% of our respondents was interested in wellness- or sports programmes (too), while it was about 20% of them who drove, took a bus, or train or flew to new places to go to a concert or attend the events of a

festival. It was only a smaller group of our respondents whose aim when travelling was to visit family members or friends. The most favoured length of stay for holidaymakers was one week (56.3%). 27.4% organized 1–3-day travels, and it was only 16% of the respondents who left for 2 weeks or even for a longer period. Four fifths of the respondents (79.2%) thought that travels played a very important role in their lives.

98.6% of all respondents are registered users of one or another social media platform. More than 98.1% of them use Facebook, 57% Instagram, and less than 10% use TikTok and/or Twitter.

Table 1: Distribution of the sociodemographic and travel frequency variables of the sample (N=208)

Gender	% (n)
Men	22.1% (n=46)
Women	77.9 (n=162)
Age	
18-24	9.6% (n=20)
25-30	21.2% (n=44)
31-40	15.9% (n=33)
41-50	22.6% (n=47)
51-60	21.2% (n=44)
61+	9.2% (n=20)
Educational background	
Primary school	1.4% (n=3)
Vocational school	7.7% (n=16)
Secondary school	37.5% (n=78)
Higher education	53.4% (n=111)
Income	
50-100,000	8.7% (n= 18)
100-200,000	38.9% (n=81)
200-300,000	20.2% (n=42)
300,000+	31.3% (n=65)
Travels in the year prior to the pandemic	
Did not travel	8.7% (n=18)
one occasion	10.6% (n=22)
2 occasions	22.6% (n=47)
3-4 occasions	31.7% (n=66)
5-9 occasions	17.3% (n=36)
10 or more occasions	8.7% (n=18)
Social media use	
Yes	98.6% (n=205)
No	1.4% (n=3)

Source: own data and construction

Further, people's attitudes towards travels and the social media will be analysed. The results concerning the impact of the social media on travel attitudes are arranged according to the responses given to the highest category (5) of the Likert scale (Tab. 2, Fig. 3).

Table 2: The evaluation of the relation between social media use and travel attitudes based on a 5-point Likert scale (N=208)

Question	Average	Deviation	Median	Mode
1. How do you feel when you see the travel-related photos and videos of other people shared?	3.51	1.13	4	4
2. When you travel do you visit the sights and events which were popularized on social media?	3.47	0.97	4	4
3. How important is the sharing of experiences on social media for you?	2.49	1.29	2	1
4. To what extent do you think the photos and videos of travel destinations on the social media reflect reality?	3.29	0.84	3	3
5. Have you ever experienced FoMo, i.e., Fear of Missing Out, when you saw the material other travellers shared on social media platforms?	2.27	1.25	2	1
6. Have you ever experienced disappointment when you visited a place which was popularized on social media?	2.20	0.95	2	2
7. To what extent do you feel the travel- related contents of social media platforms compelling for yourself?	1.76	0.93	1	1
8. To what extent do you feel that visits to these popular places bereaved you of the true enjoyment of a destination?	1.92	0.90	2	1

Source: own data and construction

Considering the responses, the conclusion can be drawn, that sharing travel-related contents of other people on social media (photos and videos) had a powerful impact on respondents. More than half of our respondents (54.0%) found it typical (No. 4 on the scale), or very typical (No. 5 on the scale) that browsing the online contents had inspired many of them to travel. It was almost 30% of respondents who gave a neutral answer (No. 3 on the scale), while respondents chose Numbers 2 or 1 of the scale to a lesser extent (16.3%), meaning, that they were not really interested in seeing other people's contents, or they were not interested at all.

The inspiring effect of the social media is seen in the fact, that more than half of the respondents (52%) visit those places during their travels, which they saw on social media. It is about one third of respondents (32.2%) who gave a neutral response, while other people's (15.9%) choices of travel destinations were rarely influenced or not at all influenced by social media contents. The mean and standard deviation values of responses to the two questions were also very similar.

The majority of respondents are influenced by travel-related social media contents; the photos and videos may contribute to the popularization of sights. On the other hand, when asking survey participants about their own decisions concerning the sharing of their own travel experiences on social media platforms, every second respondent gave a kind of a negative answer. 30% does not share contents at all, and 23.2% does not think it as important. In relation to this question one fourth of respondents (24.6%) seems to have been uncertain and it was a bit more than one fifth of them (22.3%) who take advantage of the opportunity. The most frequent response was No. 1 of the scale, i.e., 'not important', but the deviation value was the highest in this respect.

Interesting results were gained in relation to the realism of pictures and videos popularized on social media. A large majority of respondents (44.4%) could not give a clear answer. The mean values also reflect this uncertainty. Positive answers 'Often' and 'Always' represent 41.6% of all responses; according to these respondents the photos and videos are capable of reflecting reality, while sceptics represent 14.5%, with their answers 'Rarely' and 'Never'.

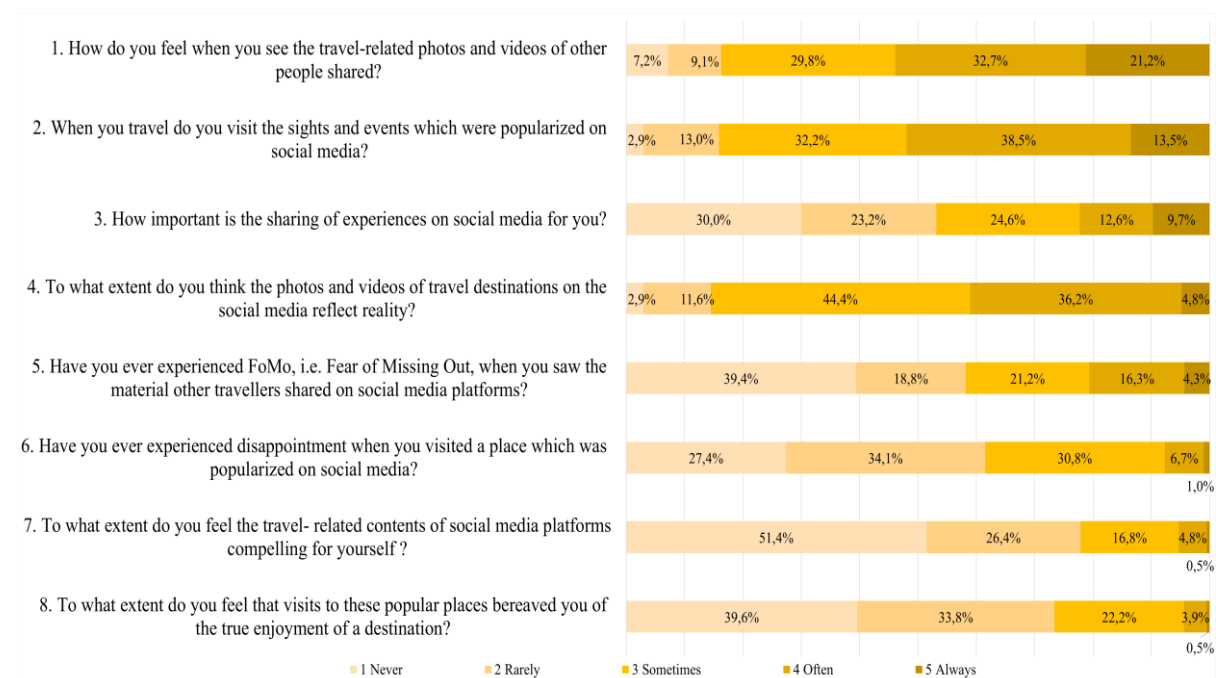
The experience regarding FoMo, the Fear of Missing Out, was also part of our questionnaire. The majority of respondents (58.2%) answered that they had rarely or never experienced this feeling. Mean values are low. On the other hand, every fifth person answered that they had experienced some kind of compelling force, anxiety, or fear of missing out on travel experiences, other people had had the opportunity to be part of ('Often', 'Always': 20.6%).

It was only a relatively small number of travellers who had experienced disappointment when visiting the sights popularized on social media: it was only 1% who reported total disappointment and 6.7% answered that they had experienced some kind of disappointment. The majority (61.5%) had never been disappointed, and 3 out of 10 respondents answered that it was only rarely that they did not get what they had expected. The mean values are also low.

The travel-related contents appearing on social media platforms were perceived as compelling only by 11 respondents when making their own decisions. Only one person of them marked the answer 'completely typical'. The vast majority (77.8%) never, or rarely experienced that the shared contents of electronic interfaces would put pressure on them or would make them compete.

The visits to places popularized by social media did not cause any conflict for most people (73.4%); they were able to experience, to enjoy them in accordance with their expectations. It was only a few people who marked different options (4.4%). Regarding the last two questions the most frequent answer was the first one ('Never').

Figure 3: Answers concerning the attitudes towards social media and travels



Source: Own data and construction

In our research we also wanted to find out to what extent the answers of men and women were different. Our analyses have proven that there were significant differences by gender in relation to three questions. The answers given to the question 'How do you feel when you see the travel-related photos and videos of other people shared?' demonstrate that women tend to be more motivated by such contents than men (Women: 60.5%, Men: 30.5% are motivated, or very motivated) (Tab. 3).

Table 3: Differences by gender in attitudes towards social media and travels

	Men % (n)	Women % (n)	χ^2	p
How do you feel when you see the travel-related photos, videos of other people shared?			34.3	0.001**
Very motivating	2.2% (1)	26.5% (43)		
Motivating	28.3% (13)	34.0% (55)		
Neutral	28.3% (13)	30.2% (49)		
Not interested	26.15% (12)	4.3% (7)		
Not interested at all	15.2% (7)	4.9% (8)		
When you travel do you visit the sights and events which were popularized on social media?			10.8	0.029*
Always	10.9% (5)	14.2% (43)		
Often	28.3% (13)	41.4% (67)		
Occasionally	32.6% (15)	32.1% (52)		
Rarely	19.6% (9)	11.1% (18)		
Never	8.7% (4)	1.2% (2)		
How important is the sharing of experiences on social media for you?			2.1	0.716
Very important	13.0% (6)	8.7% (14)		
Important	13.0% (6)	12.4% (20)		
Neutral	17.4% (8)	26.7% (43)		
Not important	26.1% (12)	23.6% (38)		
Not important at all	30.4% (14)	28.6% (46)		
To what extent do you think the photos and videos of travel destinations on the social media reflect reality?			6.7	0.148
Always	2.2% (1)	5.6% (9)		
Often	30.4% (14)	37.9% (61)		
Occasionally	43.5% (20)	44.7% (72)		
Rarely	21.7% (10)	8.7% (14)		
Never	2.2% (1)	3.1% (5)		
Have you ever experienced FoMo, i.e., Fear of Missing Out when you saw the materials other travellers shared on social media platforms?			7.0	0.135
Always	10.9% (5)	2.5% (4)		
Often	10.9% (5)	17.9% (29)		
Occasionally	19.6% (9)	21.6% (35)		
Rarely	19.6% (9)	18.5% (30)		
Never	39.1% (18)	39.5% (64)		
Have you ever experienced disappointment when you visited a place which was popularized on social media?			9.8	0.042*
Always	4.3% (2)	0.0% (0)		
Often	10.9% (5)	5.6% (9)		
Occasionally	23.9% (11)	32.7% (53)		
Rarely	30.4% (14)	35.2% (57)		
Never	30.4% (14)	26.5% (43)		
To what extent do you feel the travel-related contents of social media platforms compelling for yourself?			7.8	0.097
Always	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)		
Often	8.7% (4)	3.7% (6)		
Occasionally	10.9% (5)	18.5% (30)		
Rarely	32.6% (15)	24.7% (40)		
Never	45.7% (21)	53.1% (86)		
To what extent do you feel that visits to these popular places bereaved you of the true enjoyment of the destination?			4.3	0.363
Always	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)		
Often	4.3% (2)	3.7% (6)		
Occasionally	17.4% (8)	23.6% (38)		
Rarely	37.0% (17)	32.9% (53)		
Never	39.1% (18)	39.8% (64)		

Note. *A p-value of 0.05 or lower is generally considered statistically significant. **A p-value of less than 0.01 is viewed as highly statistically significant. Source: own data and construction

Presumably, it is one of the reasons why significant differences by gender were found regarding the following question: *'When you travel do you visit the sights and events which were popularized on social media?'* More than half of the women (55.6%), while only two fifths of the men (39.2%) always or frequently visit those places which are popularized on social media.

On the other hand, disappointment (*'Have you ever experienced disappointment when you visited a place which was popularized on the social media?'*) was more typical of men than women regarding one or another travel. 15.2% of men answered 'always' or 'frequently' to the former question, while in the group of women this proportion was only 5.6%. In case of the other questions – although there were some minor differences by gender – the statistical tests have not shown any significant difference.

4. Discussion

Our survey has clearly confirmed those hypothetical statements, according to which the people who wish to travel use the world wide web to search for and find relevant tourist information (GONDA – CSAPÓ 2019). They may get information fast and easily using social media platforms; at the same time, they can also use those platforms to share their own experiences. More than half of the respondents of our online questionnaire (N=208) said they had been inspired by tourism-related contents (photos, videos) uploaded and shared by other people. This fact proves that there is a close link between social media use and travel motivations (PARSONS 2017).

Another proof of importance is that every second respondent does visit the attractions, recommended by social media users. Only one or two respondents out of ten said that they were not influenced by the 'appraisals' of the social media. Also, there were fewer people who would share their own contents (2 persons out of 10), than those who follow others.

Our survey also confirmed that hypothetical statement, that, typically it is the women who use the social media when planning their travels and who also pay attention to other travellers' shared experiences (GUERREIRO et al. 2019). Women were twice as enthusiastic as men when browsing the net for tourist information. Concerning the issue of visiting the actual places and events recommended by the social media, there was a significant difference by gender: 5-6 women out of 10, while only 4 men out of 10 answered that they always, or often visit the recommended places and events.

It has been proven, too, that the visual materials on the internet (photos and videos) greatly contribute to decision making (KARANCSI 2019). But, regarding the reliability of those visuals, some uncertainty could be identified in the group of respondents. Four users out of ten said that they reflect reality reliably, 4-5 people could not decide, while 1-2 people expressed their doubts regarding this issue. These results suggest that the contents uploaded on social media are considered more or less authentic and reliable by travellers (CHOI et al. 2007).

Travelling for pleasure leads to satisfaction and happiness, (MICHALKÓ 2010, MCCABE – JOHNSON 2013), emotions, the presence of which was confirmed by our survey as well. Visiting those destinations which were recommended on social media platforms did not cause any problem or complication for three quarters of our respondents. They were able to experience what they had expected to get and it was only a few of them who reported otherwise. Some people felt disappointment, too, but in case of men this figure was significantly higher than in the group of women (15.2% vs. 5.6%). Consequently, travellers

are mainly motivated by the prospect of pleasure and happiness and not by the 'perfect' social media content (PARSONS 2017).

Social media was not perceived as 'pressure' by eight people out of ten. At the same time, 2 respondents out of 10 have already experienced FoMo, the Fear of Missing Out (PRZYBYLSKI et al. 2013). The great majority of respondents (77.8%) did not feel social media contents as compelling or competitive.

Finally, the limitations of our research also need to be mentioned. When interpreting the data, it needs to be considered, that the questionnaire was specifically designed to measure travel motivations, and, due to this feature, among the respondents there were proportionately more active travellers, than in the general population. This fact may lead to the overestimation of certain figures. Further, it needs to be considered, too, that women were overrepresented in the group of respondents (162 women vs. 46 men), a fact, that proves that in general women are more willing to fill in questionnaires. It is a standard phenomenon in surveys, in which the respondents answer questions on a voluntary basis.

5. Conclusion

Our paper investigated the relationship between social media and travel attitudes using an online questionnaire. The results proved the powerful impact of social media contents on travel motivations. Also, it has been proven that people tend to follow social media contents rather than produce them. Typically, it was the group of women who proved to be more active when planning and also when travelling. The uploaded content is considered more or less reliable and authentic by users and when they actually visit the places recommended on social media, it is only a few of them who experience disappointment. In the group of disappointed travellers there are more men than women, meaning, that men tend to be more critical and more disillusioned than women. No compelling effect of the social media has been outlined in our survey, but, when browsing some attractive content on the internet, part of the respondents has already experienced FoMo, the Fear of Missing Out.

When summarizing all aspects of our survey it can be concluded that our paper can provide valuable additional information concerning the place, the role and impact of information technologies in the system of tourism and in the development of tourism services. The authors of this paper sincerely hope that all the players and experts in tourism, as well as those people, who are merely interested in travel and tourism, find some useful information in it.

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