

**Examining the Response Behavior of the Tourism
Sector Towards Social Media as an Innovative Tool
to Combat the Negative Impact of the Political
Challenges**

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization-oriented transformation provides enormous possibilities to all sectors, ranging from manufacturing to the service industries. This study aimed to investigate the role of social media and its utilization by tourism operators/policymakers as a catalyst to enhance the image of a destination that is grappling with political deadlock and burdens of non-recognition despite its abundance of tourism resources. The case of North Cyprus is an embodiment of a number of destinations that are challenged by political hurdles, and non-recognition, which result in economic hardship, political uncertainty, and social disappointment. This research aimed to investigate the role of social media in popularizing and marketing north Cyprus by placing it on the global digital tourism map. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method was employed and data collected through semi-structured interview questions. The interviewees were mainly public sector tourism officials, hoteliers, travel agency managers, and tourism academicians. Data analysis was conducted by applying Atlas.ti 9 (1.0.0.206) software. Also, to increase the confirmability of the study, two existing theories (social influence theory and destination image theory) are used as a guide for the authors to fashion the results as a story. The findings reveal that tourism operators and policymakers have failed to take advantage of social media platforms which have become a form of public goods to mitigate the negative effects of the political impasse that has curtailed the tourism sector. Therefore, this study informs the tourism operators and destination managers who are challenged by political conflicts to realize the value of social media and strategy for a governance model in overcoming some of the challenges in the case of North Cyprus and similar issues.

Keywords: Destination image; North Cyprus; political deadlock; social media platforms; tourism.

ÖZ

Dijitalleşme odaklı dönüşüm, imalattan hizmet sektörlerine kadar tüm sektörlerde muazzam olanaklar sağlıyor. Bu çalışma, sosyal medyanın rolünü ve turizm operatörleri/politika yapıcılar tarafından, turizm kaynaklarının bolluğuna rağmen siyasi çıkmaz ve tanınmama yükleriyle boğuşan bir destinasyonun imajını geliştirmek için bir katalizör olarak kullanımını araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Kuzey Kıbrıs örneği, ekonomik zorluklar, siyasi belirsizlik ve sosyal hayal kırıklığı ile sonuçlanan siyasi engeller, çatışmalar ve tanınmama nedeniyle meydana okunan bir dizi destinasyonun somutlaşmış halidir. Bu araştırma, sosyal medyanın Kuzey Kıbrıs'ı popülerleştirme ve pazarlamadaki rolünü küresel dijital turizm haritasına yerleştirerek araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış ve veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları ile toplanmıştır. Görüşülen kişiler çoğunlukla kamu sektörü turizm yetkilileri, otelciler, seyahat acentesi yöneticileri ve turizm akademisyenleridir. Veri analizi Atlas.ti 9 (1.0.0.206) yazılımı uygulanarak yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, çalışmanın doğrulanabilirliğini artırmak için, yazarların sonuçları bir hikaye olarak biçimlendirmeleri için mevcut iki teori (sosyal etki teorisi ve destinasyon imaj teorisi) bir rehber olarak kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, turizm operatörlerinin ve politika yapıcılarının, turizm sektörünü kısıtlayan siyasi açmazın olumsuz etkilerini azaltmak için bir tür kamu malı haline gelen sosyal medya platformlarından yararlanmada başarısız olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Etkileri ve katkıları da tartışılmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs ve benzeri konulardaki bazı zorlukların üstesinden gelmede bir yönetim modeli için sosyal medya ve stratejinin değerini anlama konusunda siyasi çatışmalarla karşı karşıya kalan turizm operatörleri ve destinasyon yöneticileri hakkında bilgi vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Destinasyon İmaj; Kuzey Kıbrıs; siyasi kilitlenme; sosyal medya platformları; turizm;

DEDICATION

To my sympathetic & compassionate

MOTHER

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>B2C</i>	Business-to-Consumer
<i>BRI</i>	Belt and Road Initiative
<i>CRM</i>	Customer Relationship Management
<i>DI</i>	Destination Image
<i>DIT</i>	Destination Image Theory
<i>DNA</i>	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
<i>ECO</i>	Economic Cooperation Organization
<i>e-Image</i>	Electronic Image
<i>e-WOM</i>	Electronic Word of Mouth
<i>EMU</i>	Eastern Mediterranean University
<i>NTO</i>	National Tourism Organization
<i>OBC</i>	Online Brand Community
<i>OECD</i>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<i>OI</i>	Organic Images
<i>OIC</i>	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
<i>ORs</i>	Online Reviewers
<i>PACE</i>	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
<i>ROI</i>	Return on Investment
<i>SCRM</i>	Social Customer Relationship Management
<i>SEM</i>	Structural Equation Model
<i>SMI</i>	Social Media Influencers
Smart PLS	Smart Partial Least Squares
<i>SMM</i>	Social Media Marketing

<i>SPSS</i>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TV	Television
<i>TRNC</i>	Turkish Republic of North Cyprus
UGC	User Generated Content
UN	United Nation
<i>UNWTO</i>	United Nation World Tourism Organization
US	United State
<i>WOM</i>	Word of Mouth

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Tourism is recognized as one of the sustainable development options (Reddy & Wilkes, 2015) . Calculations at the end of 2019 show that the total exports from international tourism was about \$ 1.7 trillion and accounting for 7% of global exports in goods and services (*International Tourism Highlights*, 2020) see figure 1.1.

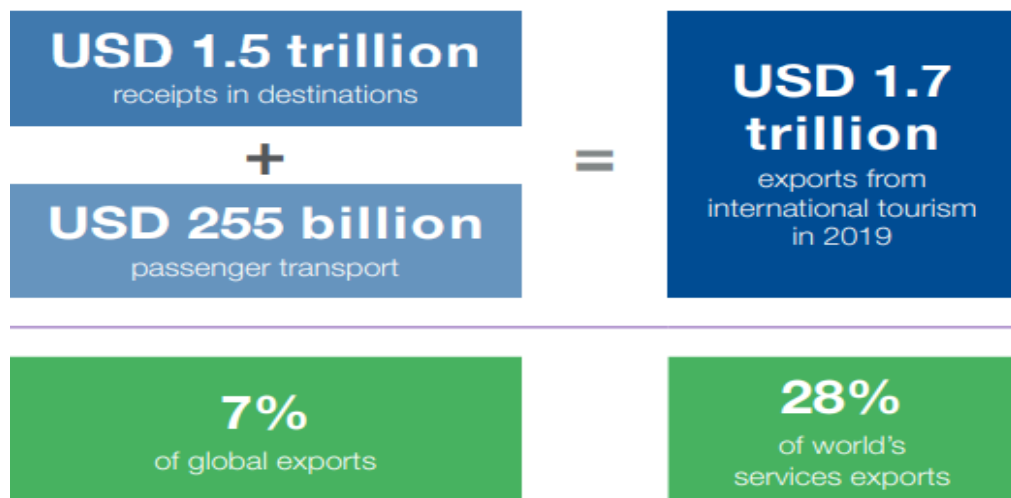


Figure 1.1: Export revenues from tourism

Therefore, this high figure shows the importance of tourism globally from a social, economic, cultural, and environmental perspective. Moreover, tourism has become a major driver of active change in destinations that have sought internal influences and effective management (Reddy, Vijay et al., 2020). However, in today's modern and interconnected world, the tourism industry is subject to numerous events, forces,

crises, and political environments (B. W. Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). Whether these events or crises are due to natural disasters or manmade elements such as political conflicts, civil wars, and terrorism, they will profoundly affect how the image of one destination is shaped and sustained (Barbhuiya & Chatterjee, 2020; Demiralay, 2020; B. W. Ritchie, 2004). Researches have shown that the political environment and partisanship seriously impact people's perceptions and choices of destinations and places to spend their holiday time and visits. Moreover, Indicators of the possibility of tourism policy specify that countries with favorable political conditions can implement strong management programs for tourism; the opposite, those countries that have an unfavorable political climate may not make a good plan or claim (Becken & Wardle, 2017). Therefore, political issues can attract the attention of the media at the national and even global levels and affect people's perception of the destination image (Severt & Jeannie, 2020). While the destination's image is related to the totality of impressions, opinions, thoughts, expectations, and feelings accumulated towards the place (Hyounggon Kim & Richardson, 2003; Lojo et al., 2020), it is also composed of three broad components, including cognitive, affective, and conative elements(Lojo et al., 2020). Such characteristics add complexity to the destination image with ramification for destination marketing. In the meantime, destination image is playing a profound role in destination viability and success in the global tourism arena (Sanz et al., 2016). Notwithstanding extensive studies in tourism destination image, there is not any comprehensive study with a focus and devotion on destination with political impasse. Literature is in deficit regarding the influence of dynamic security or political situations with ramification on tourism request and flows (Mansfeld & Korman, 2015). A comprehensive destination image 'refers to the synthesis of people's perception, impression and viewpoint of tourism destination, as well as the synthesis of the

cognition and idea of the society, politics, economy, life, culture, tourism development and other aspects of the destination' (J. Zhang & Dong, 2021). With respect to above definition, the role of social media in exhibiting a true image becomes instrumental as a modern communication technology in the marketing toolbox (Ghizlane et al., 2017), that contains promotion, advertisement, word of mouth (WOM), and printed materials...etc. Travelers are not willing to rely solely on information from travel companies. Tourists are keen to search for and obtain destination information by their own from weblogs and social media agents such as UGC and e-WOM (Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016; Leung et al., 2013). To confirm the role of social media, we can cite the research of Hanlan and Kelly (Hanlan & Kelly, 2005), who conducted in-depth interviews with 21 backpackers visiting Australia. In their research, they found that conventional media, such as broadcasting and newspapers, play little or no role in shaping the destination's image from the interviewees' point of view. Unlike independent information sources such as e-WOM and UGC has been a major factor in shaping the destination image of backpackers. The emergence and strengthening of e-WOM in social media expand multiple perspectives of a destination and thus improve the destination image formation (Tham et al., 2013). Ghazali and Cai (Ghazali & Cai, 2013) suggested that social media link three components: consumers (tourists), suppliers (destinations), and third parties. Social media can stand out as an agent in shaping the overall conative image of a destination. A conative overview of the destination is provided in social media platforms by evaluating and combining cognitive and affective information of a destination that is presented through suppliers, customers, and third parties. (Ghazali & Cai, 2013) [p. 86]. Unfortunately, many National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) do not know how to take advantage of social media opportunities. Alizadeh and Isa (Alizadeh & Rosmah Mat, 2015), in their

studies on current social media websites run by national tourism organizations in 193 countries, found that many NTOs still do not know how to use social media, despite ample room for improvement.

This study suggests pathways rooted in social media platforms as a source/means to overcome the challenges of political uncertainty that coupled with sanctions in a tourism destination that is wrongfully affected by distorted image due to specific political environment. North Cyprus, a destination in the Mediterranean Sea, is a case in point where tourism resources abound, but its image tarnished because of an ongoing political impasse (Alipour & Kilic, 2005; Altinay & Bowen, 2006; Farmaki et al., 2015; Yasarata et al., 2010).

1.2 Problem Statement

The North Cyprus island is a destination facing constant political uncertainty that demonstrates in a lack of recognition and sanctions (ALTINAY et al., 2005; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). The present political situation has generated various drawbacks, including: lack of direct flight, lack of easy trade mechanisms, and negative image that is perpetuated by the south. The implications of these impediments have affected North Cyprus's image as a destination and the tourism sector, notwithstanding its tourism potentials. However, A few studies have focused on the 'image' of the destinations with political problems e.g., (Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Eid et al., 2019; Perles-Ribes et al., 2019; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). In addition, the role of social media as an innovative phenomenon in the tourism marketing and promotion and its contribution to image enhancement has remained unexplored. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore the extent of utilizing social media towards image enhancement whilst destination is grappling with political uncertainty and straightjacketed by sanctions.

We hypothesize that the role of social media in reducing and minimizing the negative impacts of political factors-as obstacles to genuine destination image formation- is paramount. Nevertheless, social media and internet phenomenon has revolutionized the way tourism is marketed and consumers are understood. The use of new communication medium in tourism manifested in the International Ecotourism Summit in Quebec in 2002 (Çakmak & Isaac, 2012), which signified how internet and its domain facilitated exploration of new destinations.

1.3 Aim and Contribution of the Study

In this study, the aim is to have a discursive analysis to explore the role of social media and internet in the case of north Cyprus as a Mediterranean destination, which has been affected by lack of solution to its political uncertainty to either unite with the south Cyprus or achieve recognition as an independent state. Furthermore, and as a crux of this study, the aim is to explore the behavior of tourism operators and destination policy makers' behavioral response to the utility of social media and internet to bypass the dark cloud of political limbo that negatively affected the image of north Cyprus for the last four decades. Knowing that north Cyprus is endowed with attractive tourism resources and advantageous location. This study is also an attempt to overcome the deficit of focus on a fascinating gap in the literature in terms of political conflict, destination image, as well as, contextualizing the utility of social media as a catalyst in mitigating the negative image that is resulted from political conflict. "In general, one of the obstacles to the tourism industry has been related to borders and border areas, so wars, political instability, psychological and administrative barriers, territorial conflicts, and political instability, both perceptually and in real terms, always occur impressed the tourism industry". (as cited in (Mansfeld & Korman, 2015)).

However, social media has changed the communication landscape, as it has become a global public good(Massi & De Nisco, 2018).

Nevertheless, we assume that social media platforms are highly conducive to informing the tourists about the true image of the destination and at the same time to mitigate the damaging impact of political stalemate in the case of north Cyprus and similar situations. Thus, this study focuses on exploring the extend of tourism sector operators' (i.e., public and private sectors) resolve and determination towards utilization of social media platforms to overcome some of the political hurdles that hampers full potentials of tourism sector to be realized in the case of north Cyprus.

1.4 The Main Research Question

Therefore, two research questions are raised in this study:

- First, how a destination with political deadlock (e.g., north Cyprus) can portray its true image by utilizing social media?
- Second, can social media function as a catalyst to bypass various obstacles that political deadlock inflicts upon the destination?

For this purpose, in the first chapter, we have an overview of the subject, including the research problems and the definition of the research. In Chapter Two, we have a complete look at the literature on the subject. In Chapter Three, we use two theories to increase the credibility of our research results. In Chapter Four, we assessed the destinations involved in political problems. In Chapters Five and Six, we discuss how to collect and analyze data, and in the last chapter, the results of research, implication, and future research direction were discussed.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Importance of Tourism and Planning

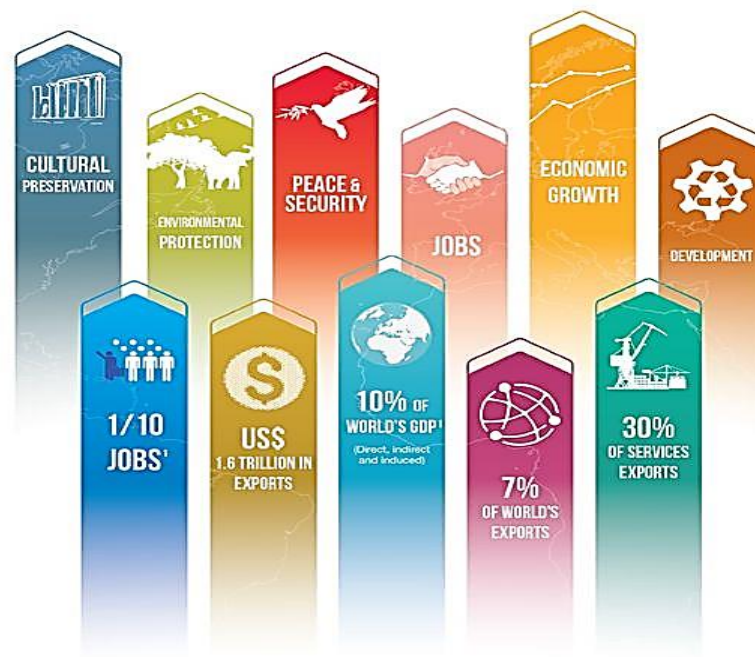
Tourism in contemporary civilization through its content and role has become a prominent field of activity and of fundamental importance in the economic and social life of most countries (Bunghez, 2015). Although many people have been tourists at some point in their lives, they may not fully understand the true definition of tourism. Tourism is an activity in which people travel and stay in places outside their usual environment for less than a consecutive year to spend their leisure time, job, or other purposes (*Collection Of Tourism Expenditure Statistics Technical Manual*, n.d.). There are different types of the tourism and each of these types as mentioned in figure 2.1 can have different advantages and disadvantages for a destination.



Figure 2.1: Different categorization of tourism (The Importance of Tourism in Any Country – Economy, Infrastructure & Business Opportunities (With Infographic), n.d.)

Tourism can bring many benefits to a destination. These benefits include: increasing incomes, generating thousands of businesses, creating a feeling of cultural exchange between foreigners and residents, improving a country's infrastructure, etc. (Yasmine, 2019). see figure 2.2. When we talk about the benefits of tourism, our focus is not just on tourism and hospitality section. The arrival of tourists to a country can also led to employment in the agricultural, communications, health and education sectors.

WHY TOURISM MATTERS



Tourism is more than you imagine!

Figure 2.2: The importance of tourism

Tourism destinations can also increase government budget by efficiently managing taxes and expenses paid by companies that benefit from the tourism sector (Bunghez, 2015). Tourism is also considered as a reinforcing component in the export of local products. It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the total cost of tourists is spent on clothing, gifts and souvenirs. This has helped the tourism industry to better understand the market and international tourists and to develop appropriate advertising strategies (Héroux & Church, 2014; S. Kim, 1997). In tourism destinations there are markets where local handicrafts are sold. Hence, the amount of local products at the destination also affects the local economy (Kotler et al., 2014).

Tourism is considered as one of the priorities of the country's economic development. Therefore, at a time when the global economy is in a period of change, trying to orient

towards sustainable economic development and tourism is a must for decision makers and planners (Bajrami & BELLAQA, 2020). A evaluation of the research literature displays us that the basic principles for the development of sustainable tourism, in the sense of the current society using all natural resources, including historical, cultural, economic, should be done in such a way that these resources are preserved for future generations (Bajrami & BELLAQA, 2020). As Alipour (Alipour, 1996) points out in his research, sustainable tourism minimizes the negative impact of tourism on resources, society and visitors. Therefore, this requires the adoption of comprehensive and strategic planning by destination decision-makers and policymakers (Almeida et al., 2017; Bianchi, 2018; Bramwell & Lane, 1993). Some studies suggest that tourism planning is shaped based on business needs(Bianchi, 2018; McIntosh et al., 1995) . Therefore, a program with such a goal is designed only to maximize long-term profits for travel businesses. Therefore, such planning fails due to project-oriented nature in responding to social issues and changes in society (Lew, 2017). Tourism planning that really seeks to solve problems should be able to provide conceptual perspectives on contextual issues (Rahmafitria et al., 2020). One of the approaches for planning is called communication approach. A strong communication approach is a combination of the needs of the public, society and political interests (Innes, 1995). One of the branches of communication planning is called participatory planning. The main purpose of this branch is to involve all stakeholders in the planning process of adapting ideas, interests and needs (Alexander, 1992). Another issue to boost tourism industry is related to the effective strengthening of the destination image by policy-maker and planners (Farhangi & Alipour, 2021). In this regard Koufodontis and Gaki (Koufodontis & Gaki, 2020) point to the important role of policymakers in improving the image of tourist destinations, especially e-images.

2.2 Destination Image (DI)

Considering so many definitions in the literature, Currie (Currie, 2020) noted that DI is a personal perceived image of attitudes, awareness, and opinion about a particular place and it recognizes that travelers perception of the place is motivated by their personal assessment of quality experience towards a destination. Based on the literature, it is essential to mingle that there is no generally agreed definition for the concept of destination image both in the past and in the presence(Currie, 2020). There are so many definitions existing for DI. Destination image had been seen as a phenomenon consisting of beliefs, impressions, expectations, ideas, and feelings culminating towards and about a place over a while put together from a wide range of sources of information and shaped via an individual's physiological and sociodemographic characteristics. Further, Currie admitted that destination image is a typical concept as a result its dynamism according to actual experience of a destination over space and time through exposure to tourist information.

some studies suggested that market craftsmanship and its associated promotional materials inspire the induced image and motivate potential tourists to decide to visit a destination (Chaulagain et al., 2019).

To Ferrer-Rosell and Marine-Roig (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020), the DI is defined as the prevailing beliefs, impressions, and ideas possessed by a person as regards a destination. This definition corroborates the “cognitive, affective and conative model” concerning both affective and cognitive evaluation of a precise destination (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020).

DI is seen as the tourist's overall perception and belief of a destination (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019). This means the representation in of the mind of a tourist of what is felt and know of the destination (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019). DI is a very germane factor in making travel decision because it effects the individual subjectivity, perception and therefore destination choice (Souiden et al., 2017). The imperceptibility of tourist services of which destinations connote inform its image more importantly as it transposes an indication of a place in the mind of tourist, giving a pre-evaluation of the destination (Souiden et al., 2017). The destinations that are considered to be having attractive image are likely to be taken as chosen how tourist makes travel decisions.

Destination image is an individual's mentality towards a place, and representation of beliefs, knowledge, impression, and global perception about a destination. It is being argued that DI is a product of interrelated components of cognitive and affective. However, DI comprises of organic image and induced image (Moon & Han, 2019).

Flowing from above, Sun et al.(W. Wang et al., 2016) noted that DI is a term that was first proposed by Crompton in 1979, which at the moment is becoming one of the greatest subjects discussed in the field of marketing and tourism. To this extent Su et al referred to DI as the sum of ideas, impression, and beliefs an individual is having towards a destination place. It has been shown by most great studies that DI has important influenced on decision of tourists, satisfaction, WOM, willingness of review and recommendation, and willingness to revisit (Tung et al., 2021).

2.2.1 Definition of Organic Image, Induced Image and Modified Induced Image

There are three forms of images according to Ragb et al (Ragb et al., 2020). These three forms are: organic image, induced image and modified induced image or complex image.

Organic Image:

Organic images (OI) are determined based on information from non-commercial sources, including television reports and magazine articles (Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017). OI is determined individual sources of information that can inform projected images of two types:

- physical conversations with ancestors, including acquaintances, friends and colleagues in form of WOM.
- Online conversation through social media disseminated via e-WOM

OI is also called general image, emanating from a personal interaction with non-commercial, information sources, and non-tourism sources including newspaper, radio, and television reports; films (factual and fictional); novels (fictional and historical); history and geography lessons; and WOM. It is the overall person's perception about a destination that destination marketers cannot organize (Currie, 2020; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Lojo et al., 2020).

Induce Image:

An induced image of a destination is formed due publicity, advertising, and promotional campaigns by the management of such destination place and tour operators. The induced image is formed as a result of previous exposure to commercial sources including brochures, travel agents, and advertisements emanated from the

promoters of such destination place (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020). These images depend on tourism information that is published in web site advertisements or brochures (Ragb et al., 2020).

Modified Induced Image

This came up when striking balance between the images perceived before traveling to the destination place and after the visitation (Isaac & Eid, 2019). Hence, it has been suggested that an OI has a higher credibility than an induced image. Still, if marketers can create induced destination images that will be consistent with built-in organic images, they are most likely to be more successful. Then branding can assist in shaping an interested consumer's image of a destination place, however, there are some other factors that cannot be controlled by marketers that affect the images (Tiago et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Destination Image Formation

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive definition of the destination image because various factors influence its formation (Gallarza et al., 2002; J. Zhang & Dong, 2021). Some researchers consider the image of the destination as an important factor in creating job opportunities, attracting investment and skilled labor (Martínez & Alvarez, 2010; Tegegne et al., 2018). Others consider a positive destination image as a factor for greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, sharing experiences, and the intention to revisit (B. K. Lee et al., 2014). Nevertheless, in the literature, destination image has been probed as a multi-dimensional construct composed of cognitive, affective, and conative components (Baloglu et al., 2014; Marques et al., 2021). The three components are interrelated and form "the destination image idea as an attitudinal construct consisting of a person's feelings mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), and global impression about a

destination” (Basaran, 2016)(p. 165). Marques et al.(Marques et al., 2021) added another component to the destination image concept as the unique destination image, which has not received deserved attention. In their view, the unique destination image plays a stronger role in differentiating the competitiveness of the destination. Juxtaposing the global impression of a destination with a unique image of the destination is significant when considering the role of social media (Alghizzawi et al., 2018; Királ'ová & Pavlíčka, 2015) in mitigating the negative image that is propagated by the destinations that are entangled in conflict (e.g., in the case of north and south Cyprus). “This happens especially when the destination agents try to reverse the negative image created for the destination”. Therefore, a detailed and accurate evaluation of the destination image creates an opportunity for destination operators to develop a successful strategic plan to correct, create and enhance the image in travelers.” (as cited in (Currie, 2020) (p. 2)). According to Gunn and Var (C.A. Gunn & Var, 2002), each destination, including north Cyprus, has its unique image, which is also called the DNA of the destination. However, Tourism destination images are becoming more transient and fragmented in nature. The use of the Internet and its platforms has been able to change the language of tourism communication from a one-way (monologue) process by transmitters of traditional media to a two-way process. This generates new electronic communication language (e-WOM) between Western transmitters (tour operators) and Western receivers (tourists)” (Govers et al., 2007) (p. 977–978).

Destination image in the context of marketing is also substantial, which is commonly admitted as an vital aspect in successful tourism development due to its impact on the demand and supply aspects of marketing (Sanz et al., 2016). Other studies have emphasized the complex and ambiguous nature of destination image formation in

terms of evaluating cognitive, affective, and conative components (Baloglu, S.; McCleary, 1999; Beerli, A.; Martin, 2004; Maher, A, A;Carter, 1, 2011). “The cognitive component originates from the knowledge and beliefs of individuals, which means that in the cognitive component, real knowledge, meanings, memories, and beliefs of individuals must be evaluated. However, the affective component is related to the emotions and feelings of a person from a place, that is, when we think of a destination, how do we feel. So, the sense can be desirable, neutral, or undesirable” (Marques et al., 2021) (p. 2). “A third component, conative, is derived from the evaluation of previous two and describes actions and behaviors in relation to the destination” (Currie, 2020) (p. 2). Some authors have also elaborated “Three image-formation agents: organic (unrequested information received from persons mainly through WOM communication), induced (overt and covert induced information emanating from destination promoters), autonomous (independently produced news, movies, and publications).” (as cited in (Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020) (p. 2)). Scholars (Sahin & Sengün, 2015; Williams et al., 2012) agree that destination image and competitiveness in tourism should be considered the main concern in research on top-level management in the context of political instability and security risks, which are key influential factors in models of destination image formation (Isaac & Eid, 2019)(P.840). We assume that in the context of various models of destination image formation, social media platforms are conducive to the complex nature of destination image formation. Therefore, if utilized by tourism operators and destination planners as a source of data dissemination, the implications can be rewarding (Pickering et al., 2020), especially in a destination with political issues since social media is a free, fast, and useful source of data about tourism destinations. Nowadays, researchers have also started to evaluate the data available in social media to assess tourists’ views (e.g., in

TripAdvisor) regarding their cognitive and affective perceptions of the destination. Recently, social media has been highly instrumental in utilizing user-generated content to evaluate and analyze issues relevant to nature-based tourism, conservation, human–environment relation-ships, ecosystem service values, and environmental issues (Calcagni et al., 2019; Ghermandi & Sinclair, 2019; Teles da Mota, V.; Pickering, 2018; Toivonen et al., 2019). Structural and semantic analysis of the content created under the posts on social media can significantly help increase the insight of tour operators to understand how tourists value and perceive natural areas. (Pickering et al., 2020). Thus, social media can be a powerful tool to nullify the wrong image (Lojo et al., 2020) that conflictive parties/destinations spreading about each other, for instance, the wrong image that south Cyprus is spreading about north Cyprus. Nevertheless, one of the main factors that often have negative effects on the affective and cognitive dimensions of the destination image is related to the political evolutions and conflicts that govern a destination (Shilo & Collins-Kreiner, 2019).

2.2.3 The Component of Destination Image

This area of the review discusses elements of destination image. It has been noted by Styliadis et al. (Styliadis et al., 2017) that destination image is a “three-component construct comprising”: Affective, Cognitive, Overall image.

Cognitive:

The cognitive component of destination image denotes to the beliefs and knowledge that an individual embrace about a destination place. Cognitive image has been emphasized by many studies. This perspective has not only to understand tourist destination image but also the characteristics of destination place including food image, culture, dressing and sports activities (Styliadis et al., 2017). Cognitive image is recognized as the belief of tourists’ and destination characteristics.

Affective:

This component shows what tourists' belief or feel about a destination place. In a nutshell, affective image is what a tourist feels about a destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Overall Destination Image:

Overall destination image is a combination of cognitive and affective components integrated to form a destination image of overall perception, which may be similar or different from the affective and cognitive image of destination place (Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017). Therefore, as a result of affective and cognitive mutually evaluations about a place, an general destination image is developed. The overall image of a destination place is the holistic belief or perception of a tourist about a destination that integrates both affective and cognitive images (Myint, 2021).

Meanwhile, Sun et al (Tung et al., 2021) was examining "Australia's project and perceived destination images in the Chinese market." The researchers contributed to the conceptualization of destination image by categorizing it into five categories and twelve sub-categories considering cognitive DI and its dimension: 1. Tourist attractions, including humanistic resources and natural resources, 2. Tourism environment, including social environment, natural environment, location-and related environment, 3. History, art and culture, 4. Recreation and tourist leisure, and 5. Tourist and general infrastructure, including: accommodation, and catering.

Sun et al. (Tung et al., 2021) further identified four pairs of emotions equal to eight types considering affective destination image: Arousing, sleeping, exciting, gloomy, pleasant, unpleasant, relaxing, and distressing. Hence, it has been identified that there

are some gaps between the perceived projected and perceived DI both affective and cognitive dimensions, and there exist a significant difference between projected and perceived DI with respect to cognitive characteristics. It has been observed that tourists give more attentions to cognitive characteristics (for instance culture and environment) more than local negative behavior in specific times (Tung et al., 2021).

2.2.4 Evaluating Cognitive, Affective, and Conative Components of Destination Image

Agapito et al.(Agapito et al., 2013) observed that destination image influences the opinion of tourists before, during, and after travel, as it is a preparation tool contributing to loyalty. They noted that Gartner’s theoretical model advocated that DI’s “cognitive, affective and conative” framework are hierarchically interrelated. For this reason (Agapito et al., 2013) tested the model of the “hierarchical nature of the relationship between the dimensions of destination image”. The result of structural equation modeling (SEM) proves that Gartner’s theoretical model validated the theory, which posits that the cognitive component's influence on conative dimension is higher when moderated by the affective component, signaling managerial implications.

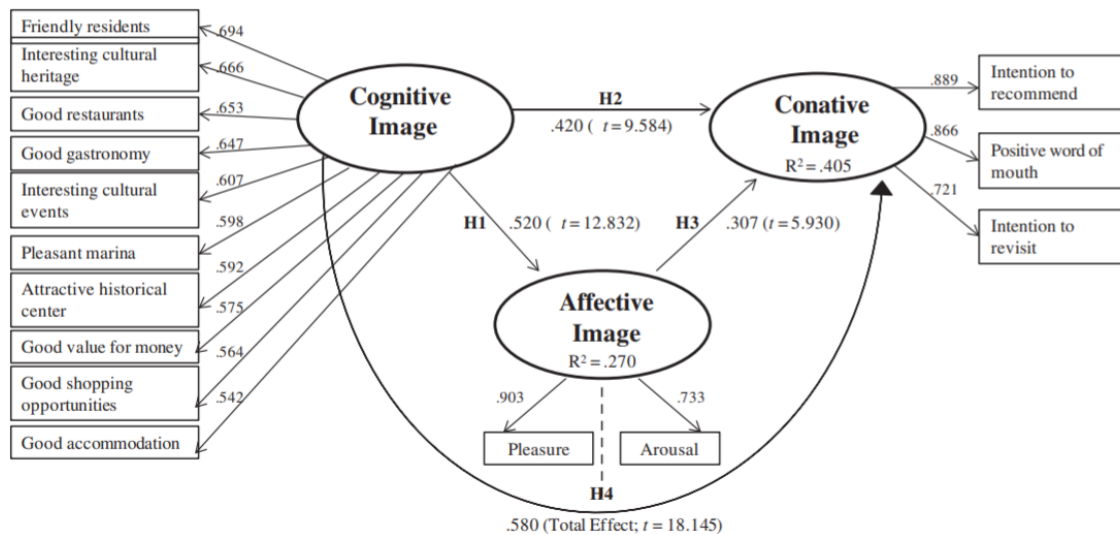


Figure 2.3: Proposed model by Agapito et al. (Agapito et al., 2013)

To understand the three elements of destination image, (Woosnam et al., 2020) examine and combine Affective and cognitive images and emotional solidarity with residents” and the following conclusions were made:

- that emotional solidarity positively affects the affective, conative, and cognitive image (Woosnam et al., 2020);
- that cognitive image positively affects affective image (Woosnam et al., 2020);
- that affective image maintains a positive effect on conative image (Woosnam et al., 2020) ; and
- that the impact of the cognitive image is on conative image in trivial and not really significant (Woosnam et al., 2020) see figure 2.4.

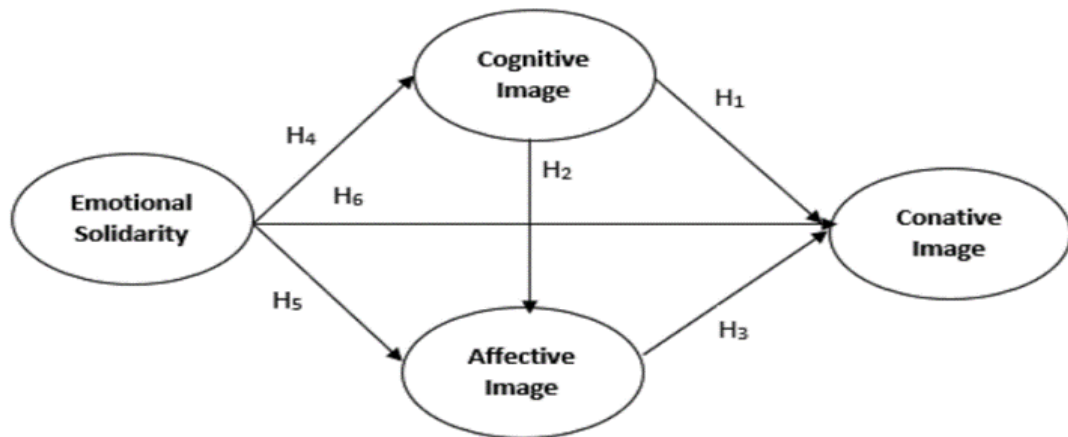


Figure 2.4: Proposed model by Woosnam et al. (Woosnam et al., 2020)

Furthermore, it was noted that tourists’ emotional solidarity with destination places and residents is a significant predictor, so providing novel thought in tourism planning and marketing for sustainable tourism development. (Simpson & Simpson, 2017). It has been suggested that the affective image is extra influential than the cognitive image component (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). This is the notion that tourist often selects destinations where they believe they are hospitable and have great opportunities to interact with people learning about their traditions and customs. It was then theorized that tourists are having a kind affection towards closer grassroots people, learning their norms and traditions therefore establishing positive images of the destination (Woosnam et al., 2020).

2.2.5 Influence of Destination Image on Tourist Decision Making

In identifying the influence of destination image on tourist decision making, Afshardoost and Eshaghi (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020) studied “Destination image and tourist behavioral intentions: A meta-analysis.” The study indicates that all components of destination image significantly impact predicting tourist behavioral intentions. Destination image is very crucial in influencing tourist decisions and visit intention (Chaulagain et al., 2019). Managers have used destination image to influence

tourist decision-making in place (Kanwel et al., 2019). In addition, the destination's image is considered a critical factor in the satisfaction of tourists and their recommendation intention (Jeong & Kim, 2019). When tourists are sufficiently motivated, they are responsive in carrying out their definite objectives and goals. Therefore, individuals put their effort in the direction of destination image administered. Even when the organization has put so many facilities in place in terms of good working conditions, every penny spent on such facilities will become a waste if the tourists are not motivated adequately to do so (M. Zhang et al., 2018).

Tourist decision-making and tourist destination image are pivotal to the success of any tourism business. If such a business moves forward, the destination image must be administered correctly and in the right proportion.

When tourists become more motivated, they more perform a travel plan, share the pleasant experience, and are willing to revisit and recommend to others to visit the destination (H. C. Lee et al., 2019). If business owners, managers, or supervisors fail to use destination image relying on benefit tools, perhaps the social media result will be somewhat dissatisfaction which is the primary reason why tourists perform a tour (M. J. Khan et al., 2017).

Destination image will stimulate tourists to make decisions to travel and must be such that it will meet a tourist's desired needs and expectations (Suhud & Allan, 2019). This shows that destination image can influence tourist management to bring about positive change to the organization. It was noted the destination image must give optimal management; therefore, it should be augmented with adequate training and development (Suhud & Allan, 2019).

A poorly motivated tourist will not decide to travel. This is not in terms of cost but related to negative issues (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). One of these negative factors influencing tourist decisions is the perceived risk of the destination. The results of a study conducted in Rio de Janeiro show that perceived risk from the destination affects all components of the destination image, including affective, cognitive and conative(Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). They also found that hostility between the two countries did not have much effect on the cognitive aspect of the destination image, but on the contrary, negatively impacted the affective and conative aspect of the destination image, which is a strong and effective factor in tourists' decision-making process(Loureiro & Jesus, 2019).

The importance of destination image in the day-to-day management of tourism business cannot be underestimated when it comes to the measurement of well the job has been done. This is a well-known fact that tourist decision-making is improved by increased destination image. If an organization deploys a destination image properly the outcome is always improved productivity and the higher tourist decision-making

It was affirmed that tourist decision-making increases as destination image rises (Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017). Tourist decision-making and destination image are both very pertinent factors for tourism organizations' effectiveness, success, and efficiency. These factors of tourist decision-making and destination image have become areas of interest for decades.

2.3 Social Media

Social media technologies are for interaction that allows the creation or exchange of ideas, career interest, information, and other kinds of expression through virtual

network communities (E Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). It is significant to note that the description of social media is not static; there are various opinions on the concept of social media (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). This is as a result of broad horizon, built-in social-media and stand-alone services that are currently available (Appel et al., 2020). Social media can be defined as a web-based system that gives people opportunity to create exchange and share, data, content and information to numerous other individuals or groups available on the network (Cinelli et al., 2021). Social media establishes substantial advancement in communication between businesses, organizations, individual and communities. This form of communication involves dialogue, many information sources to many targeted receivers as oppose the traditional media which is known to be a single source of information to many targeted receivers or monologic.

The key aspect that consumers and marketers style of such social media adoption means that communication is a function of amplification or “vitality” of one’s opinion via sharing and re-sharing of visual or text targeted towards a larger receivers or audience (Kakirala & Singh, 2020). The concepts of social media are derived from two words (Alalwan et al., 2017). Social means communicating individual opinion within a social or community setting, while media is generally referred to as communication ideas and advertising or data via publication. Social media technologies is a "Web-based idea that maintains people’s capability to generate a public profile, share the link with other users, and traverse and view their list of links in a shared network (Alalwan et al., 2017).

Moreover, social media is a tool of internet-based platforms or applications built on the technological and ideological foundations of web 2.0 and allows the creation and

sharing of UGC(Kapoor et al., 2018). . It is also essential to remark and clarify that social media platforms are not the same as social marketing as it has been purported in the past year (Kapoor et al., 2018). Social media is a publication and communication platform developed and promoted based on the interpretation of people's communication by the specialized and digital medium. Social media is the reinforcement of freedom of data, liberated changing of people's opinion from satisfied publishers to satisfied readers. (Dolan et al., 2019).

From the foregoing, social media is an advancement of mechanistic broadcast to allot of framework in conversation among authors, peers and people (Dolan et al., 2019). This platform engages the medium of crowds to link up information in a collaborative version with various distinct forms, including video and pictures, wikis, internet fora, podcast, message boards and weblogs (Costello et al., 2017). Social Media is put together for user supported website that is generally built on a particular converging point such as Twitter and Facebook (Elisa Shearer & Grieco, 2019). Social medial are actually meant for communication of social peculiarity by engaging extremely techniques and available scalable publishing styles via web based technologies shape off dialogue of communication for an interactive purpose(Gabriel & Röhrs, 2017).

Social media began about eighteen years ago. It started with LinkedIn in 2003, after a year Facebook and Myspace sprang up in 2004, YouTube in 2005, and Twitter in 2006 (Patrick, 2019). Social media traffic has developed so rapidly and quickly that less than a decade, has reached billions of users across the globe (Patrick, 2019). The persons that use Facebook comes first with over 500 million; next to it is Twitter with about 175 million users across the world; and then LinkedIn with over 90 million uses; and finally Myspace had 57 million users (Othman et al., 2020).

Social media users on the average spent up to over 5.5 hours daily on average, joining social media sites for various activities (Tuten, 2020). Social media indicate low-cost instruments that synthesize social communication and technology with words, especially mobile or internet-based like Myspace, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Nevertheless, social media can be considered as a factor for interacting with online customers. The technology can be likened to information sharing instruments, particularly talking about data and information among people; it could be any website that allows users to exchange their opinions, content, views and promote communication where social progress might be classified as a media. (Tuten, 2020).

Social media despite its benefits, there are some disadvantages associated with social media, including lack of Anonymity, harassment and scams, and time consuming (Khorsheed, Rebaz, 2020). Yet, social media is associated with some common attributes such as Internet-based applications of interactive Web 2.0. It is erudite in User generated content (UGC), such as comments, text posts, digital videos or photos, and information generated via all online interactions, hence the heart of social media(Giudice, 2020). Social media entails service profiles that are specific for the app or website that are created, maintained and serviced by the social-media organization. Social media is a technology-based framework for developing social networks to promote online communication by connecting user profiles to other groups or individuals. This media is a service that is accessed through web-based apps on laptops and desktops, or downloaded services that give social outfit for functional mobile devices, for instance tablets and smartphones. As users interact with the electronic services, it is created for highly interactive platforms through which communities, individuals, and organizations can co-create, share, discuss, UGC and participate online activities. In addition, social media are organized for memory

documentation, advertise oneself, exploring idea and learn about new things, and building friendships alongside the growth of concept for the development podcasts, blogs, gaming sites, and videos. This dynamic relationship between technology and human is the point of the emerging field of techno-self research. Social media is endowed with some websites parading some over 100 million users that are registered, include Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, TikTok, QZone, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, Tumblr, LinkedIn, and Baidu Tieba, and many others (X. Zhou et al., 2015).

Building on interpretation, other famous platforms are sometimes known as social media services including YouTube, Quora, QQ, Telegram, LINE, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Viber, Pinterest, Reddit, VK, Microsoft Teams, Discord and more (S. K. W. Chu et al., 2017). The scope of social media is also extended to collaborative content creation such as Wikis (S. K. W. Chu et al., 2017).

Social media is an outlet that is different from traditional media, for instance newspapers, print magazines, TV and radio broadcasting in so many dimensions, including reach, quality, usability, frequency, performance and immediacy. Further, social media connotes outlets of dialogue operation via transmission system involving many sources intended for many receivers, while traditional media included operational outlets under a monologic transmission framework, for instance, one source to various receivers (S. K. W. Chu et al., 2017). Although, newspaper is delivered to many users and a radio station broadcasts does have the same target, but the dramatic increase of digital media, Internet or digital rhetoric are deployed to represent a culture. However, studying how the pomposity that is existent in the digital sphere has become a tangible emerging process for many scholars. Social media have

reinforced a wide horizon of negative and positive impacts of social media deployment (Pan et al., 2017). Social media is a technological base system that assists in the improvement of individual's sense of links with reality and online communities. It has been noted that social media can mean an effective communication of marketing value for corporations, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurs, political party's advocacy groups and governments (Vafeiadis et al., 2019). It has been observed that social media is rising in its usage especially in the social movement as an instrument for organizing and communication in times of conflict and political unrest.

To clear all doubt about social media, it has some inbuilt characteristics that present it as a standout concept, and these include; post is ascribed time stamp, it allows conversations, it allows upload of content, it gives room to connect with friends and family, it gives opportunity for users to build profiles, unique web identity, this media gives unique web address to users, it provides web space for users, vitality, instant communication, site layout, community building, call-to-actions.

Despite the beauties of social media, there are some disadvantages attributed to it (Leena Korpijaakko, 2015) including; Lacks emotional linkages and connection, Proves people a freedom to be hurtful, Reduces face-to-face strategies of communication, Gives inauthentic feelings and expression, Diminishes thoughtfulness and understanding Promotes laziness, Development of skewed self-images, Decreases family cohesion, Can lead to distractions.

2.3.1 e-WOM in Social Media

To conceptualize the electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), first, it is important to note that the traditional WOM is an oral kind of interpersonal communication that are not commercial among acquaintances, it is actually an old form of enhancing products and

services that happen offline (Nuseir, 2019). For instance, a consumer gets to see something of new version, funny or odd or relevant and convey such opinion to friends, colleagues or family about these new things. WOM has been considered a credible and strong influence on consumer behavior or decision by several researchers. It has been argued that WOM is opinion related content that triggers actions that are conceived and taken by consumers (Bryant & Barnett, 2018). WOM is a strong creation of individual which possess a considerable influence on buyer's decision. This form of information will be looked after by persons who are planning and preparing for consumption of a product. Potential buyers consider WOM as a reliable source of information. This old and traditional WOM connotation has emerged into a new version of communication-based on the internet known as e-WOM (Hawapi et al., 2017; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017). In traditional WOM, the message diminishes as soon as when its topic has been altered. In case of e-WOM, such message remains and retain in the link over a period as long the web is hosted and managed. e-WOM involves social media posts, blogs, messages posted on online via groups and online reviews (El-Baz et al., 2018). e-WOM communication is any positive or negative declaration made by old, real, or potential customers about a company, services, or products that are made available to several people, institutions, or groups and is shared over the internet (Syahrivar & Ichlas, 2018).

The technology of e-WOM is closely linked to the application of UGC in the digitalization of advert mix and that the definitions of e-WOM sometimes overlap with a distinctive “virality” of advertisement (Purbadharmaja et al., 2021). In fact, UGC becomes e-WOM by the time people exchange and share such content in an Online Brand Community (OBC).

Marketer use various techniques stimulate e-WOM (Purbadharmaja et al., 2021). They strive to become part of the social process and engage consumers by stimulating UGC in achieving advertising goals. This holds that e-WOM has a strong impact on consumer buying decisions(Seo et al., 2020; Suki & Suki, 2019). These concepts are known as e-WOM Advertising. An illustration of such e-WOM Advertising method is when brands call up consumers to write review of product; negative or positive in order to assist other consumers with purchase decisions.

The consistency of e-WOM as demonstrated by many studies holds that e-WOM is an important factor and activities in hospitality(Seo et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021). Interviewees had shown that the significance of a high ranking of one e-WOM platforms helps a place in gaining visibility (Gunawan et al., 2020). Among the numerous platforms, TripAdvisor signifies the most engaged platform for companies and organizations' operation in hospitality sector. Companies are expected to monitor reviews constantly and answer frequently asked questions.

e-WOM is becoming a standout concept in social media deployment (Ahmad Tajuddin et al., 2020). This recognized by managers in hospitality sector. Managers are careful about e-WOM channels and feedback mechanism established in it. When e-WOM is negative which is generated by users, managers quickly respond to such review before going viral, and they are interested in the cause and introduce measure of satisfied intension, changing the opinion of the potential buyers (Park et al., 2019). e-WOM represent useful instrument in the hand of manager, it assists them in excellent management of customer's perception. One such platform is TripAdvisor, it represents direction for purchasing as it leads many customers to their website homepage where

users look for reviews particularly before purchase relying on the experience of those people that have previously bought goods, services or products.

e-WOM is a key, powerful in influencing purchase decision and further behavior(Hu & Olivieri, 2021). After purchase phase, customers are encouraged to drop comment, a review about destination place; the trailing ones are shared and exchanged, culminating e-WOM (Hu & Olivieri, 2021).

According to e-WOM is electronic communication supported by contemporary technological creation. In the current situation, almost every Internet community is searching for data or information about travel and destinations due to the evidence of existing media features for most people (users) is expected to respond to online tourism. This existing tourism products and services cannot be accessed directly which is the reason for uncertainty of high degree in the hospitality sector. This is the reason why potential tourists visit websites such as Trip-Advisor.com, Hotels.com, and LateRooms.com to get learn whatever level of products and service is available or obtainable. The website provides several qualities of service and ratings which assists tourists in making decision for their desired destination. Though, this is not a mistake or misstep, because visitors or tourists only peruse reviews online, yet its accuracy may not be guaranteed, but are provided with rudiment of information needed.

At present, e-WOM is still on the momentum, researchers are still putting up more key words to define it. e-WOM is a content that paint an abstract in mind of explorer of a destination. e-WOM is any form of content put together by online users to depict a particular situation, company or organization as aimed as source of information in shaping images or goals (Hsu & Ngamnate, 2018).

e-WOM cast a representative effect in customer's mind for loyalty reinforcement (Sari & Pangestuti, 2018). Further Sari and Pangestuti (2018) added that e-WOM help to enhance customer value with respect to a destination and it is a strong representation customer's thought and purchasing decisions. e-WOM is intended to make situation more popular, famous for visitation (Shetu, 2020). e-WOM is a factor when studying the correlation between tourist satisfaction and information satisfaction via the internet. e-WOM, however has been linked to destination trust and destination image, e-WOM continue to support the truth about a place which in turn generate more tourist decision (Purbadharmaja et al., 2021). e-WOM is characterized or distinct words that are carefully put together as a reference to promoting the perceived tourism to destination image. e-WOM allow managers in hospitality sector to rebrand services in recreational spaces (Mendes et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2021).

e-WOM is performing the role of organized information, orchestrated to improving value of a place through series of activities including social communication aimed at providing value tourists (K. Zhang et al., 2020). e-WOM connotes the source of knowledge for travelers providing an evidence to support the decision of tourist through social media applications such as Facebook (Rodríguez et al., 2020; Shetu, 2020). Corroboratively, e-WOM is characterized by; reader's motivations, seeking online opinion, perceived risk, source credibility, enhanced volume: help to reached more people other than using traditional WOM, Platform dispersion: when comments about services or product are deployed online platforms differentiated, Observability and Persistence, Deception and anonymity, Buttress of valence, And community engagement. Some other useful points elucidated from e-WOM include; Biases, Disagreement, Under-reporting is also pretty popular: only those very happy or unhappy customers will participate in e-WOM (King et al., 2014).

Mohammad Shafiee (2016) studied “The effect of destination image on tourist satisfaction, intention to revisit and WOM: Empirical research in foursquare social media.” It also entered that e-WOM is an innovative WOM theme using electronic social media platforms for performing online Internet-based communications(Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017). Mohammad Shafiee examined the model using theory of planned behavior. Based on this construct, his research is tried to examine the e-WOM model, Attitude Toward Destination and Destination Image. it was revealed that some factors were given greater effects against travel decision both indirect effects andliu direct effect of total effects.

They deployed Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA) methods to test the model (Shafiee et al., 2016). It was concluded that:

- e-WOM was positively influencing DI
- e-WOM was positively influencing Attitude Toward Destination
- e-WOM was positively influencing Travel Intention
- DI was influencing Travel Intention; and
- Attitude Towards Destination was influencing Travel Intention.

Hence, Mohammad Shafiee believed that e-WOM was a crucial aspect of social media marketing because it was having greater effect on DI and Travel Intention.

2.3.2 User Generated Content (UGC) in Social Media

Getting proper insight into what is called user-generated content is necessary in order to conceptualized the word “User-generated content. The beginning of user-generated content (UGC) is a watershed in media organizations ranging from creating content online to providing concepts for those who are not professionals in publishing their

own or personal content (Assaker, 2020). UGC has been attributed “citizen media” and should not be mixed up with “packaged goods media.” UGC as a citizen media is audience-generated mechanism for feedback and coverage news (Assaker, 2020). People give feedback, reviews and exchange stories in a user-generated form and user-uploaded video and user-generated audio. UGC is also characterized with two-way communication process (Tu et al., 2021). This is a very germane feature of Web 2.0 which promotes the publishing of one's idea, own comment and content about other people's idea or content (Tu et al., 2021).

It is also important to note that significant of the passive audience had shifted since the advent of New Media, and an increasing number of participatory users who are maximizing the benefits of interactive opportunities, particularly on the Internet to develop independent content. UGC is also an organization of grassroots idea, opinion, generated into an innovative sound, techniques, artists, and associations with targeted audiences who are using it in mainstream media (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019).

UGC is allowing activity that is participatory and creative audience is thriving today with important accessible media, applications and tools; and its participatory culture is affecting the mass media corporations in turn and global audiences (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019). UGC is a technical social media operated feature (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018). As beneficial to companies, it is very important to consider alternatives before calling up users to write reviews. For example, it could be disastrous if customer care unit of a company calls for review on a specific product directly on the company's Facebook page and the review portrait negative notion towards the product, hence this comment chase potential consumer away.

From the foregoing, the attention is then drawn to the definition of UGC given by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as three central schools (Christodoulides et al., 2012):

- As a publication requirement, UGC could be created by a user and publicly is accessible. However, this definition has some gaps. Because some of the content created on the Internet or social media is only visible to selected people. For example, a university students' group was created to follow a special event. This is often a way to exclude two-way instant messages, email, and the like. Therefore, the created content can be viewed only by selected students.
- UGC can be conceptualized in term of creative effort. Considering creative effort, this was put in place in order to adapting or creating the existing work to informing a new one; such as users when they are to contribute their own idea to the work. UGC is also a collaborative element to websites, in this regard, users can edit content in collaboration. For instant, merely taking and copying a segment TV show and posting it on an online video website such as YouTube is not seen as UGC because it is not created. It is a mere duplication of content that has been published elsewhere. UGC is attributed to original of idea but does not necessarily mean that the idea is entirely new. For instance, UGC is when a user uploads a photo; however, gives thoughts in a blog or when a user creates a new music audio or video, this is the similitude of UGC. Yet the accepted minimum creativity effort is hard to comprehend and depends on the context itself.
- Another way UGC can be defined as creation outside of professional routines and practices: UGC is overall created outside of professional procedures and practices. It mostly does not have a commercial market or an institutional

market context. In some cases, UGC is also created produced by those who are not professionals without profit motives or expectation remuneration. Other motivating factors for engaging UGC are keeping up the connection with peers to achieve a certain level of notoriety, prestige, or fame. The decision or freedom to express oneself without restriction in most cases, but restrictions occur when some content is to be censored in the face of political and other strong undertones of societal implications.

Though, hyperlinking or a mere copy and paste could be regarded as user-generated self-expression (Burbules, 2016). This action of copying, connecting or linking with peoples could stimulate or inspired the creation of new content; acting as motivation source. Such links include, StumbleUpon.com, leaptag.com, Digg.com are good places where such linkage to work occurs. The culmination and arrangement of such linkages are very well identified for the tastes of people in the social sphere and make such people unique. UGC occurs when customers' idea of a product disseminates and create online content about such product or the company that markets it (Grosser et al., 2019). This phenomenon is usually in form of written text but can also come in other forms such as photos, music, videos or photos. There are characteristics attributed to UGC (Petz et al., 2013); There are characteristics attributed to UGC (Petz et al., 2013); That the users contribute something new, and the piece added is creative in nature; That the medium for sharing such context is the internet for general accessibility; That users make the contribution of service or a product rather than the company or firm that presents this service or product; That in nature, UGC is creative and the user contribute something new; and UGC is posted online, and it is generally accessible.

Since communication via social media is indispensable for daily activities, UGC in social media is also acknowledged gradually, as it can then be identified from various literatures, although it has been claimed that exploration of UGC still needs to be followed in a greater depth. The expansion of UGC in social media has certainly influenced hospitality businesses.

To define UGC in more professional way, it is related to tourism guide and information via social media deemed fit as supportive guide for information gathering for tourists to develop plan to travel which in turn assist tourists in making travel decision (Colicev et al., 2019). UGC is considered as a highly placed information, trustworthy technique for searching instant information and reliable (Colicev et al., 2019). As long as users are able to interact with others or search for information in broad dispersion, the shared information is produced with the determination to inform knowledge or experiences with others. This information comes from family and friends, enterprises, tourism organizations or even completely a stranger. Trusting UGC is also reinforced by real-life endorsement from friends through social media (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019). Those who sought UGC tourism typically need such information to plan activities during holiday (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019). UGC is then playing the active role of a good information source about other peoples' experiences in order to making decision about traveling (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019).

However, UGC is not only a factor of pre-purchase period, but also give information of the real situation in the post-travel time. UGC is goal oriented focusing the influences of the formative UGC on social media is credible ways for sharing pictures or information other users about their personal experiences (Rajamma et al., 2020). UGC reflects a large body of evidence in the pre-travel time. UGC is targeted towards

giving valuable information as such information is comprise personal commentaries, comments, different opinions and travel experiences, which are put together by tourists or users themselves. UGC in social media has been regarded as good supportive information for tourists to give insight in making a decision, this is because the tourists or users themselves are the ones who put such information together or generate such for updating contents independently and voluntarily on social media, especially when traveling to a specific destination (Rajamma et al., 2020).

UGC is not only used as an information or guide for any tourism business or decision, but also as supportive information in planning, organizing and arranging a trip. Then, it has been observed that many Internet users have not use UGC in planning their travels, yet little is known presently regarding the relevant determining factors of UGC adoption in travel planning. As it has been known that tourism is an experiential good, its product quality cannot be perceived by tourists in advance, and thus interpersonal communication becomes a distinct way to minimizing risks in making travel decision.

Social media further gives users opportunity to share information, clear all their doubts, and dialogue or discuss interests with many other users, especially, those who already have experience about the destination (Y. Liu et al., 2019). This allows them to reserve and seek the best places to visit and prices to opt in for alongside transportation and accommodation for the trip through personal content sharing and commentaries and broadcasting. These commentaries especially, when they went into e-WOM, there will be more influence on the travel decision process and planning. The UGC in actions in the current time can be taken on wherever and whenever it is deemed fit through Internet-connected instruments. UGC ensure that tourist can be utilized in

an online setting to redesign tourist behavior. As a result, UGC in social media can redefine e-WOM in form of adaptation.

The idea that connotes UGC is related to strong ties with e-WOM. UGC is a factor of tourism information source; this kind of social media framework is fundamentally based on users' idea and involvement (Y. Liu et al., 2019). UGC provide a wide range of chance sharing and recording adventure experiences.

The UGC plays a key role in choosing a tourist destination as well as the tourist decision-making process. This technology is constantly competing with tourism service companies and media by a classical nature. UGC is a strong feature in the consumer decision making and behavior for trip planning (Mendes-Filho et al., 2018). Hence, UGC is seen in term of creative effort. Taking creative effort as strong feature, this was put in place in order to adapting or creating the existing work to informing a new one; such as users when they are to gives their own idea to the work (Roma & Aloini, 2019). UGC is also assisting tourist for traveling guide before travel commitment.

2.3.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) is the adoption of websites and social media platforms to enhance a service or product (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Although the concept of digital marketing and e-marketing are still having its dominancy in academics, social media marketing is getting more famous for both researchers and practitioners (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Chaffey and Ellis noted that various social media platforms have built-information analytics instrument, enabling firms to track the success, progress, and integration of advertisement or campaigns. Firms address a wide range of stakeholders via SMM, including potentials and current, potentials and current

employees, bloggers, journalists, and the public generally (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). On a technical level, SMM details the management of marketing governance, campaign, setting the scope (for instance more passive or active use) and the creation of company's desired social media tone and culture (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

When utilizing SMM, company can allow Internet users and customers to post UGC (for instance online contributions, product reviews, among others), also referred to as earned media rather a use marketer-prepared ad copy (Alford, 2018).

SMM could be described as a challenge to use social media to inspire customers to buy a product (Setkute, 2018). It is also a framework that convinces buyer that a business, services or products are noteworthy. It has been observed that social media marketing is a nexus between consumers and brands, while giving a personal credit and channel for user centered social interaction and networking (Setkute, 2018). This is marketing system is deployed through online networking, societies, blogs marketing, social networks, among others. This situation (Social Media Marketing) could be as structured marketing concept, knowledge application, and technique to enhance social economics means and ends (Setkute, 2018). Social media marketing is further link with analytical marketing of social policies and consequences, and decision making activities (Kayumovich, K. O Kamalovna, 2019). Kayumovich & Kamalovna explained that this is not limited only to hitting the front page of any social media website, and that SMM can also be a method and plan to establish and process company's reputation and influence within community, readers, fans or potential customers.

SMM is a new marketing; trending rapidly and growing as concept which businesses are using to reach out to more targets, consumers easily (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). SMM can be easily constructed as the adoption of social media channels to encourage acceptance of an organization, its services, products and goods (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). This form of marketing strategy can be classified as one of the only marketing frameworks that are put in place via traditional Web-Based enhancement; this could be newsletter, email, and online ad campaign. SMM has enhanced new exponential distribution term and entrust to mass market and mass communication. There are so many social media site but the one that are popularly known is the Facebook and the twitter. These two social media sites or channels are really among those greatly and popularly used in the current time. Social Media marketing provides an avenue of transformation and innovation for organizations (Jacobson et al., 2020). Particularly, those firms who are trying to send message or selling themselves by communicating with their buyers and customers offline by employing media platforms and online channel.

For instance, about 500 Global Fortune companies and firms are stepping increasingly employing instrument of Social Media like Facebook, YouTube, corporate blogs and Twitter in their marketing strategies for communication operations (Barroso et al., 2018). From the above, Barroso (2018) concluded that about 25 percent of the viable organizations across the world actively engaged in using four different Social Media marketing platforms, and while, 84 percent adopted the usage of at least one of the four social media platform. These media instruments are giving opportunities for companies, organizations who want to collaborate or work collectively with their business partners, customers and suppliers.

Further, Social media marketing engage usage of sites which allow companies and organizations to enhance the customers' communication which has already been identified through existing media, for example TV ads, print ads to a more wider individual level (Duffett, 2017). Apart from this, social media marketing gives opportunity companies, firms and organizations to market closely in relation with their customers and clientele as it may apply. Additionally, this form of marketing widens the horizon so that market approaches clientele that are hard to reach before. Considering some firms or companies' having their performance influenced by lack of linking and networking the social media sites.

It has been seen that about 40% of 50 Fortune organizations created and maintained social media accounts on sites that applies, at the same time have not link such sites to their own organizational websites of the organization such as Twitter and Facebook (Y. Wang & Yang, 2020). The inadequate or less enthusiasm to inspire or encourage these sites is due to legal concerns and content control issues mostly (Y. Wang & Yang, 2020). Social media marketing has been connected and tagged "Communication tools that provide interaction between organizations and customers and provide accurate and detailed information about the company to customers who are interested in the company's product or people who do not know them." (Khorsheed, Rebaz, 2020). Hence, social media marketing according to Khorsheed is a set of tools that is deploy to image creation reinforcing products of a company, organization or firm. The impact of social media marketing is huge as it is so significant factor and an instrument to informing buyers, customers and subscribers bout services provided by organizations, what their profiles look like, what they represent as well as what they can offer and also in line with intra organization communication. This is reflecting in the opinion of Wang and Yang (2020).

Social Media marketing has provided various significant advantages for selling company names, ideas and capability. For example, SMM has given window of opportunity to marketers to make available their services and product to subscribers and customers (Iankova et al., 2019). This system (SMM) gives room for quick feedback from customers who are willing to review or give suggestion for organizational improvement (Iankova et al., 2019).

This is one of the easiest or fastest ways to receiving grievances and suggestions from clients. SMM is coordinated system made simple for retailers to recognize different peer groups or influencer who are capable to contribute to the growth of companies' brand and make it relevant in short period time (Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016)(Chen & Lin, 2019). If a customer just created a viral brand for a company in less than a day, such company can 100% of sale of products at the current time. Chen and Lin maintained that SMM sometime is done at very low cost, the cost of doing is efficiently nearly zero cost when it is compared to the conventional customers' outreach considering social media networking of which most are free for users. The conventional social media medium such as magazine and newspaper especially in the 1930; print media advertisement in 1950 are expensive (Amadu et al., 2018).

Even in the 21st century TV ads still remain expensive compare to online media. This is e-commercial age, where marketing is moving towards digital and electronic media ads. Social media marketing has rapidly turning into a powerful instrument for clients and customers' engagement (Shareef et al., 2019).

Many organizations and companies have employed different marketing strategies. Many of those strategies are not effective as that of social media strategy with

numerous benefits. Social media marketing includes social customer services feature (Shareef et al., 2019). Organizations and companies are having representative online to answer queries or questions about product. This is a new technique, and companies can also use many other support tools or process to maintain higher levels of customer relation and satisfaction for improvement and bringing better performance and revenue. Most firms, company are using social medial marketing system to discussing customer for technical support point of view to sales perspective (Shareef et al., 2019). This has promised success using it as a marketing channel because they give a direct way to customer's feedback. In the current time, online environment is identified by users as a new concept for commercial activities (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Tafesse & Wien (2018) observed that SMM had been identified as opportunity to develop online stores and shopping which changes the users' perception. It has changed the mode of customers-marketers' communication. This is moderating consumer's process of decision making and evaluation of product service. This offer information through communication among peers and could influence many other customers or buyers via review of services and products. On SMM buyers are also influenced by other factors such as income and purchase motivation (Tafesse & Wien, 2018).

Social media marketing has rapidly influence behavior of consumers such as putting fourth dissatisfaction statement or gives notable attitude about a company's activities or product that is not up to satisfaction or below standard (Tuten, 2020). It has given great opportunity for business to strive, engage and communicate with consumers of potential buying decision, and build in important relationship with such potential consumers. Social media marketing has represented connected business directly to both primary and secondary consumers timely and at low cost (Tuten, 2020).

SMM through social media platforms have transformed consumers, corporation and society with wide access to information connection; linking millions of users across the globe similar interest, opinion, and views and hobbies (Khorsheed, Rebaz, 2020). SMM have so many activities embedded in it. Social media marketing activities aim to connect, promote partnerships, and exchange ideas and content with social media users or communities. It has been shown that such activities include five main actions, namely; customization, entertainment, interaction, trendiness, Word-of-mouth (e-WoM), which means all posts, online reviews, and messages on social media, blogs, and third-party platforms from a variety of individuals and groups. In addition, e-WOM can be any negative or positive reaction or comment from a company's customers regarding a product or service that is provided to institutions, individuals and groups via the Internet.

Further, SMM have so many benefits. According to (Sharmin et al., 2021): it creates a platform that is sustainable business-to-consumer (B2C) and gives room for marketing goals at a supportable cost, often low, which increase income or revenues; offers tangible opportunities to link up with consumers, and increase awareness of brands or products, improve product quality and receive feedback. It has a huge impact on the manner individuals search for information, share travel information, and even make decisions regarding destinations. Influences consumers' attitudes towards products of tourism, advertisements, and hospitality destination; creates improvement opportunities to understanding marketing activities.

Hence, social media marketing is changing the process of decision-making towards tourist. Tourism brands and companies are embracing social marketing websites and

networking in a contemporary manner that rapidly speeds communication with potential consumers while improving sustainable marketing (Tuten, 2020).

The development of smartphones that is currently booming had made it possible for increasing sophisticated navigation. Such high tech functions have maintained the continuous creation of sustainable destination marketing (Z. Wang & Kim, 2017). This fact about social media marketing have shaped up a wide range of social practices, including online ticketing for travel and tours through content creation, and exchange experiences with peers(Z. Wang & Kim, 2017). In this line of reasoning, there are some unique attributes regarding the interaction with consumers of target audience about branding, and distribution. In more generality, the enhancement of services is keenly engaging with clients via social media marketing which brings benefits to companies, for instance in producing e-WOM about airline industry as a form of advertisement. SMM is positively affecting customer equity in such brand industry (Sharmin et al., 2021).

In a nutshell, the following are the characteristics of Social Media Marketing; participatory, encourages feedback and contributions, openness, Relationships building, Reliability, Community building, Customer services, Avoidance of spamming.

As easy as social media marketing in digitalization of business, it has come with some associated challenges and disadvantages including; Not intent for business, Feedback that are negative tarnish brand, hugely rely on ads, Low ROI, Time consuming, one needs to stay active and engaged, difficulty in measurement, privacy and security policy issues.

2.3.4 The Impact of Social Media on Tourism

Digital-oriented transformation and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn...etc. have removed the boundaries and restrictions on access to the information dissemination. These platforms have created enormous opportunities for customers and suppliers of goods and services, especially in tourism sector (Achrol & Kotler, 2012; Currie, 2020; Dolan et al., 2016; Härting et al., 2021; Isaac & Eid, 2019; Y. Liu et al., 2019; Luo & Zhong, 2015; Shu & Scott, 2014) noted that ‘Trivago and TripAdvisor are some of the popular tourism social media platforms [that] enable hospitality and tourism firms to promote their brand to customers and develop connections with [tourists] beyond the service encounter’.

Furthermore, tourists’ travel behavior is also changing, as they tend to enjoy independent or personal tours rather than traditional group package tours (S.-E. Kim et al., 2017). Online travel bookings expected to hit \$817 billion by 2020. 700 million people will be booking their hotel rooms online by 2023. About 70% of travelers’ research travel on their smartphone (condorferries.co.uk). The number of social media users worldwide reported by Global social media has reached about 4.20 billion at the beginning of 2021, equal to more than 53% of the world's population. (datareportal.com). Tourists are keen to search for and obtain destination information by themselves from weblogs and social media agents such as UGC and E-WOM (S.-E. Kim et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2013). TripAdvisor.com illustrated that one in ten internet users visit this site before traveling (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Therefore, these features change the way tourists search, disseminate information, internalize destination image and finally make a decision where to travel. Furthermore, with the available sources of information on different social media platforms marketers

do not have complete control of affecting the travelers and manipulating their destination decision. Filieri & McLeay (2014, p. 54) stated that from a managerial point of view, the managers of the hospitality departments should pay more attention to online review because, in the online context, travelers are marketers who can influence the decisions of other travelers by producing comments far more than traditional marketers. One manifestation of the impact of social media platforms on traveler's decision-making process is e-WOM. "e-WOM has been defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, that is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (Filieri & McLeay, 2014)(p. 44).

Therefore, concerning destinations with political problems, social media can promote the intended destination and decrease the perceived risk of visiting a destination. It is the responsibility of tourism operators (i.e., public and private sectors) how to distribute information, engage with online users, utilize social media platforms, and influence the travel decisions of potential tourism market (John et al., 2018).

The social media platforms facilitate collaboration, interaction, and sharing of content among users (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2009); therefore, allow tourists to shape their pre-expectations based on information they receive regardless of who is the creator that shares the contents. If they are fully confident in the publisher's source, they will partially shape their perception of the destination (Narangajavana et al., 2017). Therefore, tourism destinations, especially ones with political obstacles, should have a good understanding of how social media functions, understand users, initiate positioning and branding, and have control over the quality of contents (Alavi, 2016; Dedeoğlu et al., 2020).

Karim (2018) studied the “The impact of social media on tourism industry growth in Bangladesh.” It was observed social media has been staggering in paying its role in the tourism industry development in Bangladesh. This also resulted into a great strategic marketing decision making instrument for tourism business. The rapid development of Internet has increased expansion of ICT which has enhanced social media users to be on the increase since its creation. Karim investigated the reasons for tourism industry growth, and generated his data from 1,060 respondents including different professionals. It was observed that that social media (SM) has stimulated recent growth of tourism sector in Bangladesh.

Further, (Karim, 2018) noted that 97.26% respondents believed that SM has significant impacted tourism sector in Bangladesh. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Social Blogs, and YouTube, are the front liners leading sources to get travel information. Due to this, the sector has found enough flow of tourists ever before. Thus, travel agencies, authorities, tourism enterprises, and advertising firms can engage SM as a competitive tool to promote websites, explore tourist centers and improve infrastructures to expand the industry.

Yet, (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017) in his study examined the manner rural enterprises can become interested to millennials deploying Internet and the SM. It has been evidence that the major way to attract millennials is trough social media accounts. Rural trade and businesses need to improve their personal relationships to attract customers and investors through social media accounts. It is also worth noting that some research has shown that the implementation of traditional marketing on small-scale, such as rural businesses, has not been effective. In contrast, the marketing of influencers on social media has recently become an essential asset for the development of small tourism.

Chatzigeorgiou (2017) also proposed a model which connects image, fame, and activities with the Social Media influencer and the way the intension and decision making by millennials is influenced when planning or considering visiting a rural tourism destination.

(Zarezadeh et al., 2018) was “Reviewing the past to inform the future: A literature review of social media in tourism.” He acknowledged the important progress of social media; the contribution and reliability of social media has been extensively analyzed in tourism literature. Due to this, it has been on the increase difficulty to analyses an overview of the product knowledge with respect to the topic. It was provided that such overviews tend to guide research efforts in future. Meanwhile, (Zarezadeh et al., 2018) analyzed his data generated from 152 tourism-related social media papers since 2008 using qualitative and systematic analysis of literature, topics from the perspective of a consumer, it was argued that that there is enough room for more research exploration on social media in tourism, especially as the many of existing literature did not take cognizance of social media beyond platforms for review while demonstrating that UGC content powerfully influences tourist experiences and behaviors.

Alghizzawi et al (2018) observed that the globe is witnessing an extraordinary development in the contemporary means and technology and digitalization, particularly the social media and networking websites became deployed in many businesses including the tourism industry. This enhances the healthy competition between the tourism firms to provide the good offers to the people about the tourists’ websites. Hence, social media is an indispensable tool a sustainable tourism.

2.3.5 Positive and Negative Impact of Social Media on Destination Image

From the foregoing, it became necessary to analyse and review the impact of social media on destination image both positively and negatively. To this extent, (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020) in their study indicated a significant and positive correlation between all variables considered except online destination trust, satisfaction, and review. Considering online reviews, e-WOM activities acted as a full moderating variable between destination satisfaction and destination trust for the potential traveler in future using social media. Ferrer-Rosell and Marine-Roig predicted relationship between interactions (comments and likes) and followers engaging Chi-Square Test of Independence at alpha level 0.05. Ferrer-Rosell and Marine-Roig acknowledged that the p-value was less than their chosen significance level alpha level 0.05, Therefore, they rejected their null hypothesis, which they had previously proposed, and concluded that there is a significant correlation between the number of followers and the total number of interactions (such as comments and likes).

Furthermore, Ferrer-Rosell and Marine-Roig (2020) opined that their new keen-sightedness into the field of DI through social media, giving particular attention to the creation of image and promotion of such with contributions from stakeholders. It was revealed that effort of social media is focused attracting, persuading, and showing tourists to the attributes and icons of a destination. In some manner, DI is based on social media content enhances and reproduces these features. However, tourist websites and monuments share attributes with characteristic of traditions and events. It was noted that natural and cultural heritage of a place as the fundamental characteristics that define such identity, contributing to the formation of an image as a traveler destination. Then special focus shifted on the experiences of how to enjoy

better the destination, and the ways to do things with respect to hospitality, depending on the tourist (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020).

Meanwhile, (Tung et al., 2021) in their study noted that social media platforms are dynamic and interactive, and they give destinations opportunity to manage their image the way they like. Those who produce content are also aware of the contribution (strategic) of social media for such image, and they offer to generate good or useful content for tourists. In their study, Tung et al. identified that over 20 percent of the content exchanged is focused on planning or providing knowledge about events that are scheduled. The authors found that the followers' number has a direct implication of attractive content, rather than the number of chats or posts, which is not a main factor in investigating positive correlation with interactions and interest in the destination pace on their social media obtainable. Social media content guarantee customer interest which has positive effect on relations between brand and users, thereby extending to greater levels of loyalty and credibility, but it also enumerates DI should be consistent in value creation in social media to positively create image for all stakeholders.

Yet, Tung et al. (2021) analyzed three social media accounts. The accounts were focusing on places of interest with respect to their image, moments, and strategies or events of special tourist concern. Lifestyle's characteristic or motivations of a tourist, such as gastronomy, sailing or biking and the use of adequate words to link feelings that are positive to travel. From the content analysis, the connections of the social media posts were found, and content exchanged in each account, including photographs, images and banners images were identified with a lot of comments and reactions which were also shared. Videos were the most content that was unique with

respect to interactions, notwithstanding a small volume of such video were posted but it has huge sum of comments and reactions. It was noted that videos were the most used form of content. Experts had previously noted that videos are the most interactive form of social media about destinations place. As social media platform giving information about destination place, videos became the most reliable method to providing information or knowledge and they are relevant for users who surf the web. The power of social media is persuasive; hence it is good for the tourist destinations to continue deploying practices of good social media management because of the interactive ability and capacity to influence tourist decision-making.

Corroboratively (de las Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020) studied the “Importance of social media in the image formation of tourist destinations from the stakeholders’ perspective.” The authors observed that DI is consistently ingenerating content that is valuable in social media to develop a positive image in ramifications among all stakeholders. They opined that social media promotes DI on the overall and encourages popularity of city where the destination place is located. Social media is crucial in value creation. Tourist are motivated to embark on travel mission after they have been presented with contents, then imagine the affections entangled with destination place on a broader and more attractive way through social community promoting high level interaction relevant profile and interests. Through content related destination, tourists are involved in promoting and building a DI. Due to this, Heras-Pedrosa et al. recommended that more attention should be paid to the content created by tourists on their personal social media pages in relation to the tourist destination. Hence, it was observed that social media allow promotion of destination place at a low cost.

At any rate, it has been shown that DI is still confronted with challenges in its deployment through social media in its objectives to showcasing their capability to achieve potential greater success with such online strategies (Cartwright et al., 2021).

Social media through UGC is positioning itself as a germane factor for managing DI and its general strategies (Cartwright et al., 2021). To expatiate more, Cartwright et al. explained that social media is a very strong way to carry tourists along in forming DI. Social media gives room to achieve tours' expectation and needs with respect to their experience in each of destination places to be comprehended and it indicates the form of content they attach value to in social media from social media accounts and DI in charge of promoting DI. DI information and content is generated by tourists via social media due to posts and comments. At the moment, destinations management have aware of content that is created by users, but negatively, many of those managers is not working enough to see the marketing potentials of such almost free platforms. The managements are not working enough on inspiring tourists to write content that could improve DI. Social media had promoted experience evaluations heritage and cultural places; this is capable of reinforcing and improving the engagement and destination attractiveness. Thus, social media becomes a source of recommendation and information for tourists use.

Social media is really the key to achieving more interactions, and this media is more reliable and travel faster than those of the destination management's own (Wozniak et al., 2017). On the overall, one of the major strategies to the enhancement of a tourist destination is the social media generated by social media users. To this extent, Heras-Pedrosa et al. proposed two-way communication to better promoting their image. Social media and its associated tools are valuable sources of reliable source of

information about DI, and then contribute to the popularization promotion of a destination (Wozniak et al., 2017).

In addition, it has been seen that social media accounts that are controlled by institutions, colleges, and universities seems be a key partner in promotion and creation of a DI and can be taken as a source of tourist' knowledge (Brauer et al., 2019). In a nutshell, it has been demonstrated that social media platforms are strategic instrument for destination image and branding information and promotion (Brauer et al., 2019).

Provided that social media has an impact through its users' contribution or content, DI's positive perception increase and destinations will be positioned to exploit and explore their attractions (events, experience, icons) further and improve their positive perception and minds in making tours (Dinh, 2021). On the other hand, if social media does not have impact through its users' contribution or content, there is negative perception and tourist will not be positioned to exploit and explore their attractions (events, experience, icons) further and improve their positive perception and minds in making tours (Dinh, 2021).

However, (Fu & Timothy, 2021) noted that not allowing some certain social media deployment gives negative implications for DI and tourists' image of a destination with respect to their response emotionally.

Corroboratively, Tung et al. (2021) posited that tourists may counterbalance negativity of comment about social residents via the phenomenon of compensatory efforts by giving more favorable decisions to other basics of the destination (for instance environment and culture).

To further understand the dimensions of the impact of social media on destination image, (C.-P. Chu, 2018) contributed to the existing knowledge by confirming the influence of social media is conveying on travel intention. He confirmed that Facebook is the most influential social media platform forming the essential part of daily life in Thailand. In this country it was revealed that social media is the popular site to gather travel information. Next to Facebook was YouTube and was concluded that people who use social media often get travel information and know better destination image and have higher intension to travel intention. Chu maintained that the result of his study is corroborating Cultivation Theory and Media Ecology Theory. It was also maintained that DI is acting as a significant mediator between social media usage and travel intention. Hence, there is no mediating of DI in the relationship. This means that travel decision could directly influence a person's travel intention irrespective of the mediation of DI. Whether it is affective image or cognitive image, the results were constant.

In this line of reasoning (Stylidis, 2020) explained that there is limited evidence existing on the impact of social media on destination image and image formulation and decision to recommend the destination place to others. DI is erudite in the "exposure and contact theories," Stylidis (2020) offered insights into tourists' DI formation in the light of their contact and interactions with grassroots tourism and residents at a destination place. Stylidis (2020) conducted two independent researches to establish the reliability of the model; the first study was carried out the Kavala city using a sample of 353 and a follow up a study on the Thasos Island using a sample of 397, both study is located in Greece. It was found out that interaction between the two variable considered were positively affect cognitive, affective and conative image, this is predicting 64 percent in study 1 and 54 percent in study 2 of the latter's variable.

So, Chatzigeorgiou (2017) studied "The effect of social media influencers on behavioral intentions on generation Y". He examined the manner by which rural enterprise can become so attractive to millennials engaging the social media and Internet. It has become a proof that the essential way to target the millennials is through social media accounts. Rural and local businesses need to utilize the personal interaction or relationships to develop their customers, expanding these relationships and interaction on social media. It is also important to note that traditional marketing has failed to apply this small rural business in social manner; meanwhile, influencer marketing is becoming a valuable resource for tourism. The model proposed by Styliadis (2020) connects image, fame, and activities with the Social Media influencer and the manner the decision-making of the millennials is motivated when deciding to visit a local or rural tourism destination place.

From the forgoing (Molinillo et al., 2017) also observed that the explosion of UGC by users, is in parallel with the stakeholders' growth of proliferation of social media on mobile devices, is leading to a paradigm change in studies. Interview or surveys are not necessary any longer to maintain users' opinions; this is because scholars can access information on social media freely. In the sector of tourism, reviews of online travel hosted on travel-related standout websites. Molinillo et al (2017) demonstrated the usefulness of online review to analyze the tourist destination image. For this reason, a methodological and theoretical framework is being defined, alongside metrics allowing for measuring different aspects perspective, designative, and appraisive of the image of tourism. Molinillo et al (2017) applied a model to the Attica region of Greece through a random sampling technique of 300,000 users of TripAdvisor review about activities, attractions, restaurants and hotels content in English between the year 2013 and 2018. It was concluded that opinions, assessment,

trends, and preferences from the demand side, which is capable to used destination management in maximizing the distribution of obtainable resources and enhancing sustainability.

Summarily, Social media became an outlet that is different from traditional media, for instance newspapers, print magazines, TV and radio broadcasting in so many ways, including reach, quality, reach, usability, frequency, performance and immediacy. Further, social media has helped transmission system involving many sources intended for many receivers, while traditional media included operational outlets under a monologic transmission framework, for instance, one source to various receivers. However, studying how the pomposity that is existent in the digital sphere has become a tangible emerging process for many scholars. Social media have assisted a wide horizon of negative and positive impacts of social media deployment. Social media is technological base system that assists in the improvement of individual's sense of links with reality and online communities. It has been noted that social media informed effective communication of marketing value for corporations, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurs, political party's advocacy groups and governments. It has been seen that social media is rising in its usage especially in the social movement as an instrument for organizing and communication in times of conflict and political unrest.

2.3.6 Efficiency of Social Media Marketing on Destination Image

In a bid to review the efficiency of social media marketing on destination images, many authors have done so much work in the related field(S.-E. Kim et al., 2017). The authors revealed that assessments, preferences, opinions, and trends the demand side, which in turn can be beneficial for destination managers in maximizing the distribution of resources available and promoting sustainability. Kim et al (2017) maintained that

users of Weibo agreed that various content signals and websites design as a non-content signal are positively related with affective and cognitive images, which result to conative image. Hence, it was noted that social media marketing supports tourism managers in building their shopping concept to persuade more tourists to visit destinations through social media.

Flowing from above, (Garay, 2019) studied the relationship between social media and destination image component found that the aggregation of social media marketing as the main opportunity for formation of image for tourist destinations needs a reinterpretation of whom and how is managing the image formation procedure. Garay (2019) took a sample of 1500 tweets respondents in the Spain brand community using a quantitative content analysis of on Twitter (#visitspain). It was concluded that social media marketing is relevant in promoting destination image.

In this regard, Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, (2020) in their study, they concluded that professional and efficient social media usage plays a prominent role in strengthening closer relationships, creating interactions, maintaining self-confidence in the region, and resolving doubts and concerns. It increases the attractiveness of the destination and encourages tourists to visit that area. Apart from the fact that it helps potential travelers to comprehend the area, social media marketing is beneficial to the tourism who seeks for the right place for his impulse (Al-Gasawneh, J & Al-Adamat, A, 2020).

2.3.7 The Impact of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on Tourist Decision Making

Considering the impact of social media Influencers on tourist decision making, scholars have also contributed greatly to the development of literature. For example, Palazzo et al. (2021) studied “Urban and rural destinations on Instagram: Exploring the influencers’ role in sustainable tourism,” they concluded that various kind of

Instagram's influencers differently accord engagement to tourism destinations. It was noted by the authors that social media influencers have considerable impact on tourist decision making, and act as a central hub for connecting rural and urban environments, considers as tourism destinations, and capable of increasing awareness of their sustainable characteristics (Palazzo et al., 2021).

Also, Guerreiro et al (2019) studied "the influence of social media influencers on tourist decision journey," it was proven that there exists an influence of social media influencers on tourism. It is important to note that majority of social media deploy social networks for trip planning; sharing the past experiences of travelers who has visited such places before. Guerreiro et al (2019) concluded that not all influencers can have a significant impact on society, but their followers tend to cherish and value the content they create. (Guerreiro et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, Magno and Cassia (2018) who used customer journey theory to narrate the effect of social media influencers on tourist decision-making and analyzed data collected with Smart PLS, it was concluded that social media, since it can provide the necessary information about travel for tourists, therefore, as an incentive tool, increases the sense of and the desire for travel in tourists. Besides social media as a marketing instrument serves as an important aspect to influence tourists' destination decision making successfully(Magno & Cassia, 2018).

However, Chatzigeorgiou (2017) in his studies on increasing the attractiveness of rural jobs by social media, concluded that most projecting ways in this century to reach out to millennials is through social media accounts. Then he proposed a model which connects image, fame, activities with social media influencer and the curiosity of how

the decision making of the millennials is influenced to visit a rural destination as tourism (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017).

Palazzo et al.(Palazzo et al., 2021), observed that different forms of Instagram's influencers differently create engagement with respect to tourism destinations. Palazzo et al. concluded that destination image was playing strong role in forming travel or tourism policy makers, useful travel planners and tourism organizations by forming the bases on how influencers can occupy central hubs in linking urban environment and rural as regards tourism destinations for raising awareness of their attributes which can be sustainable (Palazzo et al., 2021).

On this note, Pop (Pop et al., 2021) was studying "The impact of social media influencers (SMI) on travel decisions: The role of trust in consumer decision journey" and he noted that trust of consumers SMIs positive and directly affects the major stages of the customer tour. This was not in conformity with the hypothesis Pop formulated that "SMI trust has a positive impact on consumer-generated content during the travel experience was not supported."

Though, Pop (Pop et al., 2021) proposed a model but the construct failed to include other pertinent factors (for instance, attitude, perceived behavioral control, among others). Yet it was then concluded that the direct and indirect effect of SMI was impactful on trust arose in the before embarking journey by customers, the journey resources being taken over by the accumulated trust in the pre-purchase stage. Hence, the subscriber is an integrated process in the stages. It was added that there exists a relationship that is positive between trust, desire to travel, and SMI and consumer knowledge and information search behavior.

Consumers or buyers who trust in SMIs and consider visiting a destination that was recommended by an influencer are suggested to be more likely to conduct information search provided by SMIs (Pop et al., 2021). Pop et al., et al (Pop et al., 2021) maintained that the effect of SMI that is mediation trust is indirectly significant in every stage of the customer tour, except for travel experience exchange. This is relevant to marketing managers and practitioners who design plans strategically and tools for implementing and improving destination marketing. There is evidence which is clear on SMIs to be having a strong impact on the overall stages in the process of travel planning. To this extent, this is when SMIs are capable of developing trust towards their content. It is also observed that it is beneficial to enhance destination through an SMI. Travel-related knowledge informed by SMIs is more a reality than those advertised by official tourist websites, travel agents and mass media. Companies should pay more attention to perceived source credibility. Pope then showed that trusting the consumer as an influencer can increase the motivation to visit the destination or increase brand awareness.

Still, Sihi (Sihi, 2018) explained that consumers are likely to choose that destination more when analyzing or valuating alternatives. Influencers that trustworthy also display an influence over purchasing motivation, decisions when consumers are being able to shift on their existing travel plans as a result of trustful SMI presented to them. This is a representation that companies can have impact of high magnitude on consumers' decision in purchasing travel products and services by SMIs (Merrilees & Miller, 2019). SMIs increase the satisfaction of the tourist experience, which is capable of having positively effect on repurchasing behavior. This is a strong key element for a relationship that is being taken over for building positive customer relations and loyalty.

On this note, (Szymkowiak et al., 2021) posits that significance of SMIs on the tourism industry in all ramifications has been positive. Szymkowiak et al (2021) carried out a laboratory experiment which was done with graphic stimuli and for controlling the arousal engaging neurophysiological data. It concluded that SMIs is inevitable in making travel decision in the current century.

Chapter 3

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Because grounded theory has been criticized in some ways, such as excessive length, inaccuracy, floating hypothesis, and small sample (Goldthorpe, J. H. Goldthorpe, 2000; Mjoset, 2005); in addition, some researchers believe that the researcher incorporates their assumptions and biases into the study (Charmaz, 2006; Mills et al., 2006). Therefore, using a theory in qualitative study can only be affective in assisting the author in interpreting the data and turning it into a story and an analytical whole (Jr, 2014). In this regard, Sandelowski (Margarete Sandelowski, 1993) “states that studies are always guided by a theoretical point of view, whether this is explicitly stated or not”. Bourdieu & Wacquant say in this regard that “Research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty” (Wacquant & Bourdieu, 1992).

3.1 Social Influence Theory

For the purpose of this study, two theories were utilized. First, the social influence theory (SIT) (Kelman, 1958) that posits social influence brings about changes in attitude and actions. These changes, according to the theory, are influenced by referent others (e.g., users’ generated information in social media) through three primary processes of influence: (i) compliance, which is assumed to occur when individuals accept influence and adopt the induced behavior to gain rewards. Such behavior is due to the social effect of accepting influence; (ii) identification, which is believed to occur when individuals adopt the induced behavior. Hence, people identify themselves with others in sharing the same benefits (e.g., desire to visit the same destination as others

have and express their pleasure); (iii) internalization, which is assumed to occur when individuals are influenced by the opinions and actions of others (e.g., conforming to a new fad) (Hwang, 2016; X. Liu et al., 2020; W. Wang et al., 2016). Wang et al. (2016, p. 135) stated that “social influence can affect emotions, thoughts or behaviors of others in a variety of ways (e.g., through persuasion, compliance, conformity, social learning).” Nowadays, social media platforms have a profound influence on people by providing a toolbox for social learning, persuasion, and conformity (X. Liu et al., 2020). This happens through internalization processes that allow users of social media to absorb the opinions of others into their own set of beliefs. One manifestation of this process is the followers of celebrity figures, sportsmen, politicians, and activists (English, 2016).

3.2 Destination Image Theory (DIT)

The second theory that framed our study is DIT (Alwan, 2016; Clare A. Gunn & Taylor, 1973). Alwan (2016) noted that destination image has undergone a formation process in history, which evolved from the promotion of place for political, economic, and socio-psychological goals until the early 20th century. Then, the focus shifted to promote the place to market its particular aspects in the early decades of the 20th century: For example, changes in today's business have increasingly focused on the service economy, so places are trying to take more market-oriented approaches. (Alwan, 2016) (p. 40). This process eventually culminated in a branding concept that initially applied to tangible products and then to intangible products (i.e., place branding for the purpose of visitation). Finally, with the explosion of mass tourism, destination marketers and tourism scholars began to develop the concept of destination image and its theorization (Clare A. Gunn & Taylor, 1973; Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016). Nevertheless, the destination image process is not static; rather, it is complex

and changing. The complexity is manifest in Gunn's (Clare A. Gunn & Taylor, 1973) elaboration through seven stages including "(1) the accumulation of mental images about vacation experiences (i.e., organic image), (2) the modification of those images by further information (i.e., induced image), (3) the decision to take a vacation trip, (4) travel to the destination, (5) participation at the destination, (6) return home, and (7) modification of image based on vacation experience (i.e., actual firsthand experience)" (as cited in (Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016) (p. 2)).

Furthermore, Gunn (1973) noted that destination image formation takes place through two stages, "organic" and "induced" images: Organic image is derived from information sources that are not commercial or tourism. While the induced image is made entirely of information published by destinations' marketers and agents (Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016) (p. 2). Nowadays, the induced image of destinations is disseminated through various social media platforms with defying power that can circumvent the negatives of political propaganda. Nonetheless, in this study, we highlight the role of social media platforms and explore how these platforms can ease up and bypass the existing political hurdles that emanate from lingering political conflict in a destination dependent on tourism. In addition, the study explores the tourism sector operators' knowledge and awareness of social media platforms as tools for mitigating the negative image engendered by ongoing political conflict. For the conceptual model of the study, see Figure 3.1.

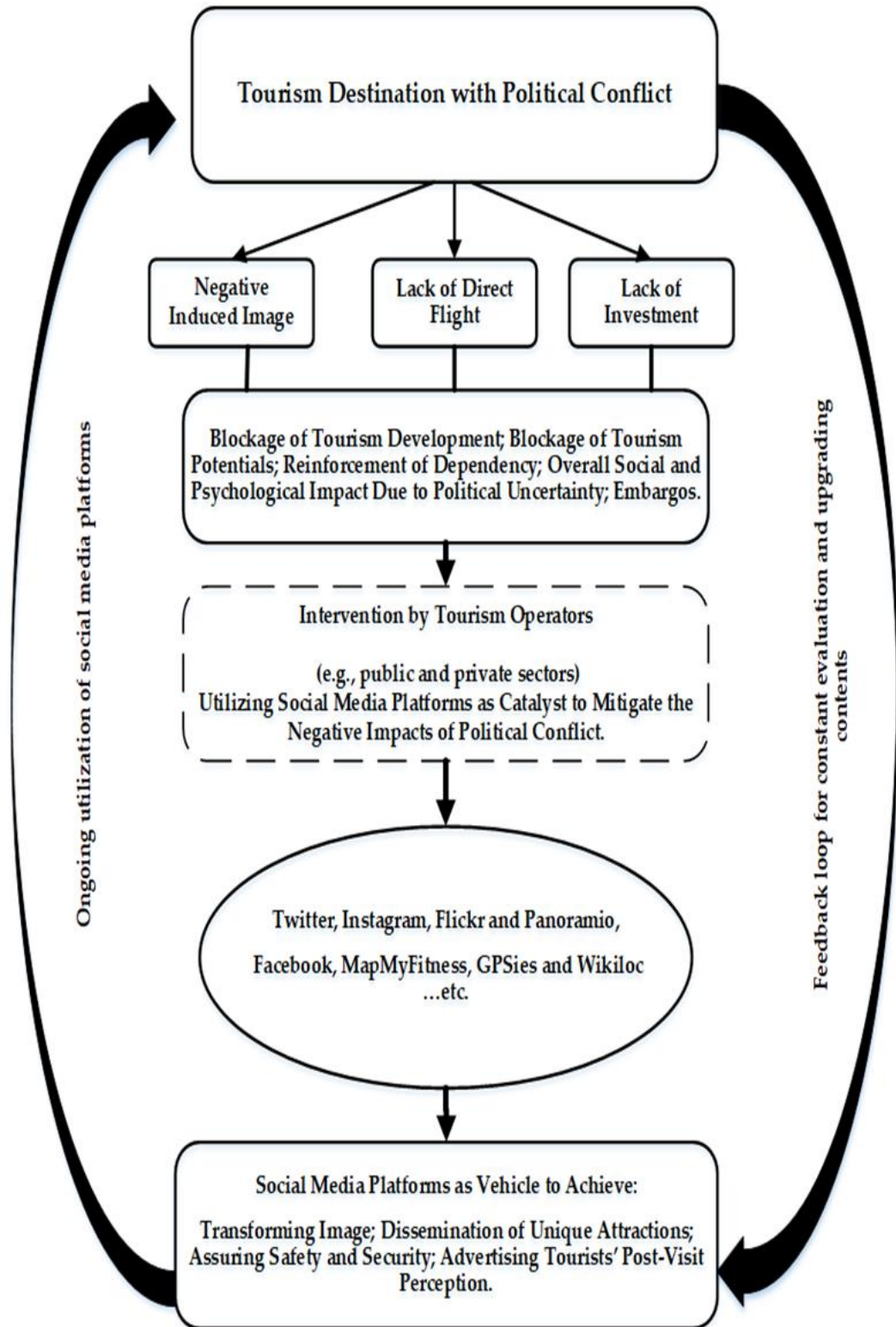


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model of The Study

Chapter 4

DESTINATIONS WITH POLITICAL CONFLICT

4.1 The Role of Political Challenges on The Destination Image Formation

The tourism industry is highly vulnerable to natural and manmade crises and turmoil. The devastating impact of COVID-19 is a testament to such vulnerability (Rastegar et al., 2021; Škare et al., 2021). However, some destinations, notwithstanding their advantageous location and abundance of resources, have suffered because of political conflict and uncertainty. (Beirman, 2002)(p. 167) notes that the effects of political unrest are not as transient as natural disasters. Political crises can linger in the public mind for months or even years and affect the destination's image. With that in mind, different destinations have succumbed to different forms of political pitfalls with a negative impact on the tourism sector (Clements & Georgiou, 1998; Ingram et al., 2013; Neumayer, 2004).

Political conflicts of any form can affect the image of the destination through different channels. For instance, in the case of north Cyprus, the Greek Cypriots/south Cyprus has constantly pictured north Cyprus as a danger zone, to say the least.



Figure 4.1: South Cyprus Negative Propoganda

However, north Cyprus is one of the safest destinations in the world, and “it is argued that tourism development in Northern Cyprus holds enormous potential as the area remains one of the few unspoiled corners in the Mediterranean”(Farmaki et al., 2015). TripAdvisor reported that north Cyprus is perfectly safe and has a far lower crime rate than south Cyprus (*Is Northen Cyprus Safe?*, n.d.; Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011).

The negative impact of political turmoil on tourism might take different forms; however, it affects the tourism sector unable to realize and achieve its full potentials either in terms of attracting tourists or in terms of developing tourism products (Beirman, 2002; Lanouar & Goaid, 2019). One example of political conflict and its negative impact is manifested in the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.(Isaac & Eid, 2019) (p. 1500) stated that the occupation of Palestine by Israel has caused political conflicts between the two countries. Political insecurity has had a devastating and negative impact on the image of Palestinian tourism. Hence this destination is also reflected on social media as an insecure and war-torn destination. The same can hold

true about north Cyprus, which is entangled due to the lack of political resolution with the neighboring south that is exacerbated by constant negative portrayal by the south tarnishing (Prayag, 2009; Yi et al., 2018) the image of the north (Christophorou et al., 2010; Warner, 1999). However, the nature of the political conflict in the island of Cyprus that has resulted in the partitioning of the island into two entities of north and south since 1974 is a unique one.

The unresolved conflict between the north and the south is wrongfully blamed on Turkey's presence in the north that has become a pretext for the south side to constantly block and curtail the expansion of tourism in the north (Özersay, 2020). The rapid economic growth and higher standard of living that has been achieved in the north during the last two decades is the result of the contribution of Turkey through infrastructural, technological, and financial means. Turkey's contribution manifested in north Cyprus's achievement as the international educational hub and a formidable Edu-tourism destination (Alipour et al., 2020; Bicak et al., 2005; Mehtap-Smadi & Hashemipour, 2011; Turan Katircioğlu, 2010).

North Cyprus's political problem that hampers its tourism sector is not an isolated case. There are similar cases of partitioned nations in the past and even at the present wherein unresolved political conflict affected the overall socioeconomic development, in general, and tourism, in particular. For instance, Northern and Southern Cyprus, China and Taiwan, former East and West Germany, North and South Korea are examples of destinations with political conflict and uncertainty, which are typically known as "partitioned states" (Webster & Timothy, 2006).

Political conflicts and disorders can have different effects depending on their type and nature. The devastating impact of some of the political problems is short lived, and destinations may return to their normal state (Coshall, 2003). For instance, despite the French terrorist attacks that took place in January and November 2015, the country is still at the top of the list of most visited destinations (*UNWTO Tourism Highlights: 2018 Edition*, 2018). In contrast, political conflicts and disputes either between or within some destinations have become a pervasive political condition with continuous damage to the image and reputation of the destinations (Altinay et al., 2002; Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Nuttavuthisit, 2007). As (Alvarez & Campo, 2014) pointed out, the hostility between destinations can have a profound effect on the affective dimension of the destination's image. In the meantime, (Hanon & Wang, 2020) revealed that internal political instability dampens tourism more than external political factor such as terrorism.

4.2 The Impact of Destination with Political Conflict on Tourist Decision Making and The Role of Government in Improving Tourism Polices

In a bid to review the nexus between destination image and political conflict, Severt & Jeannie (Severt & Jeannie, 2020) analyzed the future intentions based on political affiliation before and after the election in Alabama to understand if the election was having an impact. Overall, all respondents were willing to make a trip to Alabama or even recommend the state to friends and family in post-election. A significant increase in the mean score suggests that political events can potentially impact the perception of and tourist behavior or decision towards the state at the state level. The destination image as in Alabama and future intents toward the state were compared concerning political affiliation. On the occasion of future intentions for a visit, visitors were

indifferent in visiting again in advent political activities and affiliation. But this is different from the opinion of non-visitors, who were not likely to visit or recommend Alabama for a visit. These categories of people were democrats or supporters of democrats. Hence, Severt and Hahm (2020) concluded that travelers are more willing to visit a state with a similar political ideology as they do; this can explain the intentions and behaviors of Democrats and Republicans sampled in the study.

Some study in their paper titled “Politics and sustainable tourism development Can they co-exist? (Yasarata et al., 2010). Similarly,(Isaac & Eid, 2019) noted the empirical evidence put together on tourists' decisions under such conditions of strained bilateral relationships. Considering social norms, psychographic, demographic, and image factors as influencers of the intention and decision to visit a nation perceived by potential tourists as confrontational and as a mark of animosity ideology, the authors deployed novel data-mining techniques and traditional statistical. It was gathered that the sociodemographic variables convey a minimal influence on tourists' decisions in a conflict situation. In contrast, ethnocentric tendencies, animosity sentiment, the country image of tourists took the central stage of the tourism process. Considering the perspective of the tourism procedure, (Yasarata et al., 2010) posited that bilateral relations are crucial and a factor to consider for tourists while making decisions and selecting their destination place. Nevertheless, in bilateral tensions, a great destination brand is clearly distinct from the country's image. It can stimulate the desire to travel to the country for tourism, and this is the perception of animosity not only in the situation confrontations.

Again, (Yasarata et al., 2010) suggested that when the power structure and intricate political system are understood in a society, the key clue is needed to form tourism policy, planning, development, and implementation.

Furthermore, when countries' relationship improves, rationalized national animosity perception and attitudes are shared, connoting a substantial variance of great amount, very unique in as powerful influencers (Stepchenkova et al., 2020). This suggested that tourists mostly reconsider their cognitive evaluation when the tourism industries, media, and signal improved relationships to the public (Stepchenkova et al., 2020). It has been demonstrated that political affiliation or ideas driven by politics can influence or inhibit sustainable tourism, affecting destination image concerning tourism policy formulation and implementation.

Meanwhile, (Eid et al., 2019) noted that little attention had been devoted to politic-related issues. This could significantly guide and direction to a successful destination image formation if it has been adequate attention. Eid (2019) showed that: 1) That tourists' evaluation of the destination place attributes and political (in)stability act as backgrounds of perceived DI. 2) That political (in)stability and DI have a strong effect on tourist satisfaction and recommend it for friends and family. Tourism policy remains the closest way to keep heritage. It is created to assist the grassroots people and government in meeting the basic needs (economic activities, social service provision: education, health, among others). Evidently, the tourism policy over the years has been confronted by the interference of other politics in its service delivery and responsibilities (Isaac & Eid, 2019). Thus, the focus of this review will be centered on the nexus between politics and destination image. The enhancement of destination image development cannot be materialized using all means without factoring in the

might of tourism administration and political interference. This destination image will mean improving the standard of living of the citizens and initiating various ways of facilitating human development involving social and capital development through heritage that brings democracy dividends. Since the inception, the socio-economic enhancement role of Tourism policy had been established in the literature, and this has to do with the role played as an intermediary between the higher government and people who are not in power that is the citizen (Parrey et al., 2019). On the other hand, the politicians are so powerful that their action or inaction can make or mere destination image of a country.

To maintain destination image, tourism policy evidently had been playing lead way in bringing government closer to the people at the grassroots through the delivery of service in a satisfactory, efficient, effective and adequate manner to tourist (Stepchenkova & Shichkova, 2017). The tourism policy over the years has been confronted by much interference including politics, despite the challenges it plays powerful role shaping destination image; it is certain that it is also playing strategic role in the economy and social development.

Destination image is an element enshrined in the tourism administration which starts with recreation, safe, provision of infrastructure for hospitality, among others. Tourist and travelers are at the heart of hospitality (Tegegne et al., 2018). Tourism policy can only develop in a social manner if the government policies are favoring it. Wisely and successful tourism administration can bring long-term returns to the local families, individuals, and the whole community, and even future generations. The root of tourism policy is linked to previous reforms. Therefore, interactions, transactions, structure, and nature between different levels of government can determine how to

access the destination image (Perpiña et al., 2021). The paradox of Tourism policy is another problem for destination image. The current situation of the Tourism administration is becoming the reflection of politics which has disempowered tourism policy, eroding its stability, autonomy, and embeddedness of immorality which did not provide for the empowerment of the civil society or contribute to the overall development goal set in through destination image.

The reality is that today's tourism policy is not real autonomy, it is nothing but semi-autonomy, and it is somewhat pseudo-autonomy (a resemblance of autonomy). This means that governments are the regulators. The government's political ideology in power informs the perception of destination image by tourists and content generators.

Destination image connotes social service delivery. Destination image has so many indicators, including political ideology, economic status of citizens, and their security. Because the economic status of the government will inform that the level of tourism resulting from per capita income. This also includes the status of human capital development, and people are employed, developed, empowered, or the other way round. Also, all the development indicators are absolutely fused into the economy or social development (Becken et al., 2017). One can also see the influence of tourism policy in enhancing horticultural and food, and recreational activities.

Hence, political conflict impedes tourism policy obstructing basic amenities, society changes, and reducing diversity coupled with complex interpersonal relations has made it at the vantage of deforming new leadership, institution, and local networks. The political crisis is a barrier to the enhancement of the destination images. Because

when there is a political crisis, the induced image is put on the line, fractioned into political sentiments.

Sociopolitical status is another strong indicator of the destination image. The main thrust of tourism policy in economic and social development is to provide service to the tourist and grassroot people.

It is difficult to segregate destination image from politics because tourism policy and implementation have played key roles in enhancing certain infrastructural services, including transportation because many roads are constructed to make easy access to the tourist centers. The influence of tourism policy is seen in enhancing hospitality and other associated activities through construction infrastructure.

Tourism policy activities have influenced and provided a framework for social amenities. Tourism policy has assisted in the enhancement of poverty alleviation in the destination images. It is important to note that tourism policy is also assisting in making local policies that affect destination image concerning agriculture and selected industries, thereby helping to ameliorate unemployment. Tourism policy has enhanced revenue generation, developing planning, budgeting, community mobilization, and provision of social services.

Chapter 5

CASE STUDY

5.1 The Case of North Cyprus (TRNC)

North or Northern Cyprus is recognized formally as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Isachenko, 2019). Northern Cyprus covers Karpas Peninsula (its tip) in the northeast to Bay of Morphou, Cape of Kormakitis and its western point (most), in the west the enclave of Kokkina (Isachenko, 2019). The southernmost part comprises Louroujina village (Ruh et al., 2017). A buffer zone controlled by United Nations expands between Northern and southern Cyprus and divides Nicosia, the largest city on the island (it is capital) (Abdi et al., 2017). See figure 5.1.

A coup d'état staged in 1974, orchestrated to attempt the annexation of the island to Greece, sprang Turkish invasion of Cyprus (Isachenko, 2019). This led to the eviction of many of the population in the North's Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriots' flight from the south partitioning of the island, culminating in a unilateral declaration of independence in 1983 by the north (Kouskouvelis & Chainoglou, 2018). Because other nations do not recognize Northern Cyprus, its funding, political economy, military, and security architecture burdens rested upon Turkey (Kouskouvelis & Chainoglou, 2018). Many efforts were planned and proposed to resolve the Cyprus dispute, but unfortunately none of them were successful. The Turkish Army maintains a large unit and standby in North Cyprus (Kouskouvelis & Chainoglou, 2018). While its presence is approved and supported by the government of TRNC, it has been regarded as an

occupation force by the European Union, the Greek side of Cyprus, and the international community; United Nations Security Council has also denounced this in several resolutions (van den Berg & Nowak, 2020).

Northern Cyprus practices a semi-presidential and democratic government with a cultural heritage that incorporates many influences and a political economy controlled by the services sector (Carkoglu & Kalaycioglu, 2021). The economics of Northern Cyprus grown in the 2000s and 2010s, with the Gross National Product per capita income more than thrice in the 2000s, but it was held back by an international embargo as a result of the closing of the ports in TRNC officially by the Republic of Cyprus (Öner Tangör, 2021). Turkish is the official language of the inhabitants of the northern part of the island, with a clear dialect spoken. The religion of the majority in Northern Cyprus is Sunni Muslim. However, religious attitudes are moderate, secular, and non-extremist religious attitudes. Northern Cyprus is a state-granted observer status in the organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) under the auspices of Turkish Cyprus State, and also observes proceedings in Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) under the nomenclature of Turkish Cypriot Community.

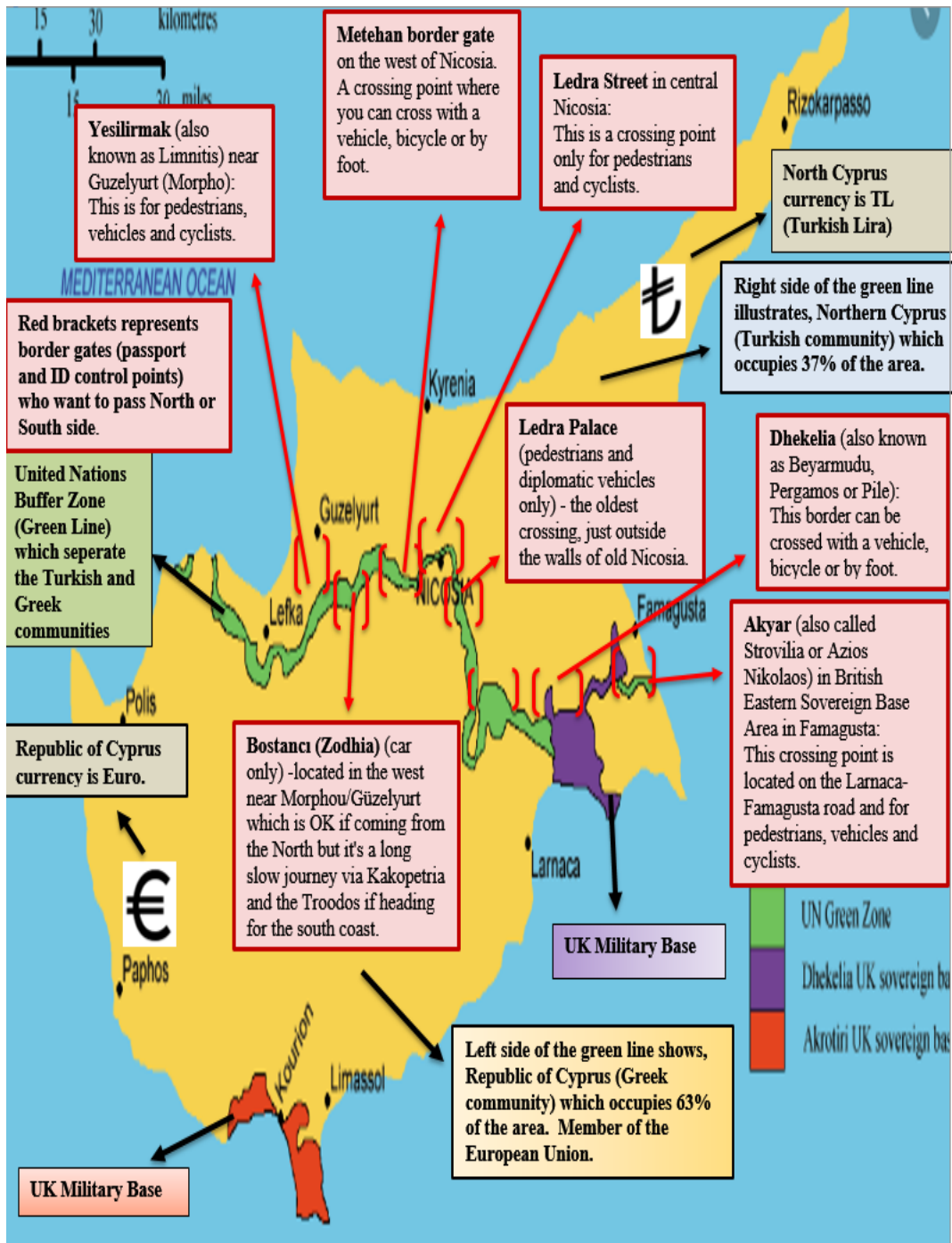


Figure 5.1: Map of The Cyprus Island

5.2 Tourism of North Cyprus

Tourism is recognized as one of the energetic driven force and sectors of the Turkish Cypriot economy (Rezapouraghdam et al., 2018). In 2012, the country was recorded to have about 1.1 million tourists when restaurants and hotels generated an income of 328 million dollars (Hudson & Hudson, 2017). This constituted 8.5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Catering and accommodation presented over 10,000 jobs almost in the same fiscal year. The sector of tourism and hospitality had been seen as a great achievement the 2000s and 2010s, when the number of tourists who chose Northern Cyprus as their destination place was doubling, promoting hotel construction and investment (Ibnou-Laaroussi et al., 2020). In 2013, the official estimate of income that was generated from tourism was 700 million US dollars and the overall bed spaces for tourist were about 20,000.

In Northern Cyprus, Kyrenia is recognized as the capital of tourism. It has many hotels, shopping areas, vibrant nightlife, and entertainment facilities (Young-Brown et al., 2019). 62.7 percent of the visitors or tourists in Northern Cyprus were accommodated in the Girne District during their tour in 2012 (Atun et al., 2019). Considering the volume of hotel in Northern Cyprus in 2013, 99 out of 145 hotels were situated in Girne District. Northern Cyprus has been traditionally identified with beach holidays due to its rich history, nature seen as the inspiration for attraction, and mild climate (Atun et al., 2019). This state had been respected for its relative safety, particularly Karpas Peninsula, which is well preserved. As a result, Northern Cyprus has developed a viable eco-tourism sector as tourists visit the state and see flowers in the wild, walking, cycling, and bird watching. Karpas Peninsula Arbore several forms of tourism (Caldwell, Tyler, 2019), it hosts:

- Bafra Tourism Area, this is a center for beach-goers, where big hotels were constructed, and four luxurious buildings were erected until 2014;
- a wide range of facilities for regular festivals that signify its local traditions and rural qualities and activities;
- a remote or camped natural park,
- the Kantara Castle which attracts visitors at sight; and

Another form of visitation to the state is positioned in the operation of Casino tourism (Uzunsaf Yamak & Zihni Eyüpoglu, 2018). This had also been seen growing because of its significant contribution to the economy of the Northern Cyprus. In 1990s, they were first opened for operation, and have since that time became very famous with tourists from Turkey and other islands, where casinos are not illegal or banned (Uzunsaf Yamak & Zihni Eyüpoglu, 2018). This has contributed hugely to the investments in the casino tourism. However, casino tourism has been downplayed as a result of claims that it does not help shop owners.

In general, Cyprus has a history of contemporary business tourism dating back to the 1930s, the industry's peak in the 1960s. (Andriotis, 2018). Considering Turkish interference in 1974 after a military coup, the ensuing political break of the island into Greek south and Turkish north tourism development was uneven in favoring the south for roughly four decades, while Greek Cypriots were presented with a great opportunity in the development of their socioeconomic formation such as the ability in doing businesses with the global marketplace (Andriotis, 2018). Turkish Cypriots were left with no option other than to focus on the way to maximize their physiological needs to maintain conditions physically. It is important to note that economic isolation

is a substantial challenge facing the tourism sector in the state just like any other sector, this economically isolated state made it form itself in a backwater concerning industry and trade (Andriotis, 2018).

Literature about Northern Cyprus' tourism showed that there are more than 850 hospitality and tourism businesses in the state, including small gift shops, scale bars, restaurants, and cafes. One of the main components of tourism is accommodation. Nearly the end of 2008, over 119 accommodations were constructed, including holiday villages, motels, and hotels with a capacity of bed spaces of 15,540. This is according to the Ministry of Economics and Tourism of Northern Cyprus (Kahn, 2018). The tourism sector has contributed to the Gross Domestic Product of North Cyprus by 303.2 million US dollars and 376.2 million US dollars in 2006 and 2007, respectively (Kahn, 2018). In 2007, the tourism sector also had about 8208 jobs representing about 7 percent of the total employment created in the city. It has been observed that tourism is main booming in Germany, Britain and Turkey, (Shahzad et al., 2017). This is as a result of annual occupancy that was rated 30 percent in 2007. With respects to main indicators of tourism, Northern Cyprus attracts considerable numbers of tourist across the globe, hence, Northern Cyprus has managed to attain economic growth and survive its political economy dependence on Turkey (Edwards et al., 2020).

In Northern Cyprus, despite a good record of tourism, negativity had been recorded to be affecting the state (Hacıoğullari et al., 2019), such that:

- indigenous flora and fauna are being damaged;
- tourism development has caused architectural and visual pollution.
- Generally, some challenges are facing the tourism and hospitality business in the state (Atun et al., 2019), include;

- International sanctions which have prevented economic growth generating issues for the tourism sector
- Over-dependence on the Turkish government
- Turkish clientele and casino gamblers.
- Political and economic crises around and in Turkey have worked against the tourism sector in North Cyprus.
- There is a lack of diversity in North Cyprus tourism due to low occupancy rates and insufficient infrastructure.

Although the state has avoided the concentrations and heavy erection of resorts and recreation centers, many Mediterranean coastlines would be seen. On the Kyrenia coast, villages and hotels are under construction. (Özdemir, 2020). This signifies signs of modernization and transformation (Özdemir, 2020). But it can be argued that TRNC is at the start of rapid alteration tourism, and in a way, this is a reinforcement of the environment at the hub holding the local tourism together (Özdemir, 2020).

Taking cognizance of the environmental phenomenon, there is a springing up issue on the international beginning in the 1970s and this has been measure using different scales and in differential arrangements (Ciftcioglu, 2021).

The orchestration of history and politics has left North Cyprus out of development of tourism (Cihanli, 2020), scrambles that afflicted Mediterranean; it could be that environmental silver is lining towards development cloud in this period. Consumer trends and patterns seem to show a growing concern about the emergence and environment of spoilt, overdeveloped landscape and environments (Atun et al., 2019). This proves and clearly directs towards the developmental realism. So, if tourism is to

be sustained and successful the state's-built environments and nature must be conserved. The government has played many mediating roles to give the likely dispute between different actors that is put around tourism development in Turkish Cyprus.

5.3 The Impact of Social Media on Political Conflict in North Cyprus

The island of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has been partitioned to two enclaves between Greek Cypriots (i.e., officially known as the Republic of Cyprus) and Turkish Cypriots (i.e., Turkish Republic of North Cyprus) since 1974. The Turkish enclave is also referred to as north Cyprus. The ethnic rift, which was going on before the partition, resulted in separation of one-third of the island with dominant Turkish Cypriots as its inhabitants. See also figure 5.2.



Figure 5.2: Map of Cyprus with demarcations line.

Finally, during the post-partition, north Cyprus unilaterally declared its independence from the south Cyprus on 15 November 1983 (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005). However, the self-declared state of north Cyprus, which comprises one-third of the island (i.e., 3,354 km²), recognized only by Turkey. Nevertheless, north Cyprus has been

functioning as a de facto (Kaufmann, 2007) country with an established political and economic structure. North Cyprus has also representative offices in about twenty countries including Washington D. C. (turkishcyprus.com).

Nowadays north Cyprus attracts about one million tourists and is home to two public and 17 private universities with a body of students mainly from Middle East, Africa and Asia. However, with its pleasant climate, advantageous location and unspoiled beaches, she has not been able to realize its full potentials. One of the major obstacle to its tourism growth and development lies with the lack of political resolution either as a recognized nation state by the UN and international community (Connolly et al., 2018), or unification with the rest of the island.

Nevertheless, lack of political resolution inflicted various obstacles and limitations to the overall socio-economic development of north Cyprus and its tourism sector. These obstacles include lack of direct trade, lack of direct flight, lack of foreign investment and dependency on Turkey for various national and international affairs (Diez, 2002; Eralp & Beriker, 2005). These obstacles have been exacerbated by the constant negative portrayal by the south Cyprus that conveys a negative image of the north in the international tourism market (kisa.org.cy) see figure 5.3.



Figure 5.3: Negative Propaganda of Southern Cyprus Against Northern Cyprus.

Outcome of the Greek Cypriot effort convinced the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to cancel the international direct flights to Northern Cyprus (Lockhart, 1994; Warner, 1999).

Therefore, we hypothesize that social media platforms are highly conducive to the mitigation of political obstacles not only in the case of north Cyprus, but also in similar cases. Therefore, this study tries to answer the following questions:

What is the extent of tourism sector operators' commitment to utilize social media platforms towards this aim?

And/or, are tourism operators aware of the utility and power of social media platforms to disseminate a true image of the destination that is entangled in political uncertainty?

This study aimed to explore the answers to those questions by examining tourism sector operators in both public and private sector in the case of north Cyprus. Knowing that social media platforms have become a paramount component of modern tourism by value co-creation. (Holmqvist et al., 2020) (p. 115) argued that ‘after the interaction, customers continue to create value-in-use independently or in social co-creation with peers, both on social media and in real life’. As the true image of north Cyprus, as a tourist destination, has been affected by political uncertainty and lack of resolution to Cyprus problem, social media platforms can become a solvation. The power of social media platforms is situated in the user-generated content and e-WOM. The user-generated content is a free-flow pool of information for the tourists. (McCreary et al., 2020) (p. 82) argued that destination authorities and tourism providers can benefit UGC to understand the dominant features of destination images that visitors reflect on social media to orient their strategic marketing and management goals correctly. For tourism movement in north Cyprus, see Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Tourism movement in north Cyprus.

Arrivals by month Month	Total number of arrivals		
	2019	2020	% change%
January	105,630	112,232	6.3
February	128,028	128,743	0.6
March	131,087	44,107	-66.4
April	146,768	67	-100.0
May	129,844	37	-100.0
June	150,051	477	-99.7
July	152,247	20,228	-86.7
August	159,250	35,119	-77.9
September	192,123	11,727	-93.9
October	177,127	13,275	-92.5
November	148,408	14,552	-90.2
December	129,416	8,282	-93.6
Total	1,749,979	388,846	-77.8

Chapter 6

METHODOLOGY

6.1 Study Method

The applied research method was carried out based on the qualitative model that is conducive to exploring and “understanding the beliefs, values, cultures, and experiences of individuals as well as how they perceive the current situation to develop theories that describe these experiences. Qualitative method created from the social and behavioral sciences as an approach to understanding the dynamic, unique, and holistic reality of human beings (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017) (p.44). The products of qualitative research are purely descriptive, so instead of numbers and figures, pictures and words express the researcher's knowledge of a phenomenon.

Unlike most tourism research, in this study, both authors have had the opportunity to observe the processes of tourism planning and development in a destination with political conflict that is struggling to hold on to its true image despite all the obstacles. Therefore, our observation through decades of living and working in the context of this field study (i.e., participant observation in north Cyprus) complemented with an in-depth interview based on open-ended and semi-structured interview questions. In total, 10 respondents participated in the interview, including academicians in the field of tourism, private sector tourism operators (i.e., hoteliers and travel agents), as well as, public sector tourism officials in the nature of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, which is also known as judgmental sampling, provided a theoretical and

logical generalization (Sharma, 2017). The research process also included thematic analysis of the local newspapers (e.g., Kibris Gazetesi, Cyprus today, Diyalog, and Avrupa), as well as tourism associations and local government minutes.

6.2 Research Design

For the purpose of this study, we applied grounded theory, which is a vehicle to construct theory. Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), who coined the concept of grounded theory, defined it as “the discovery of theory from data collected from community without initial preconceptions” (p. 2). Grounded theory possesses several features that make it conducive to our applied qualitative research method. Those features elaborated by Corbin (Corbin, 2017) (p. 301) as follows: First, grounded theory is an approach to discovering new theories; theories and hypotheses based on data collection during research and data analysis are derived from the research process. These hypotheses by existing theories and the researcher's mental background have not been created. Second, researchers in this type of research do not join research with a predetermined theoretical framework because if this happens, the main goal of this method, which is to develop theoretical planning of a phenomenon from a particular data set, can no longer be achieved. Third, in the grounded theory, the data collection stage is not separate from the data analysis stage, so when the researcher collects data, they must also begin the analytical analysis of the data.” Nevertheless, as Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) pointed out, the core goal of grounded theory is to create or explore a theory. Then, the discovered theory can be tested by further research. The grounded theory also paves the way for analytic procedure throughout the qualitative research process by constant comparisons and asking questions to realize whether further data are needed to “fully develop each

major concept or category” (Corbin, 2017) (p. 302). The efficacy of grounded theory lies in its procedural strength in terms of data gathering and analysis.

(Corbin, 2017) (p. 301) pointed out that two basic methods must be observed to implement the grounded theory in studies: how to perform data collection and analytical analysis. He said "we can collect data correctly when we base our work on the two important principles of theoretical sampling and saturation, " and regarding how to perform analytical methods, he said that asking questions, during memos, diagrams and constantly comparing answers can be a great help to the researcher in this regard. It allows for two significant principles in qualitative research (i.e., theoretical sampling and saturation)” (S. N. Khan, 2014).

Theoretical sampling is a process that guides the generation of extra data to approve and disapprove original categories. This takes place with purposive sampling of those who can provide information about the subject area. The sampling process refers to the simultaneous method of collecting data and coding and categorizing them from people that the researcher thinks can answer existing and future questions through observation or interview with those people and develop his/her research theory. (as cited in(S. N. Khan, 2014) (p. 228)). To conclude, the emerging theory “is fully articulated and supported by the voice of participants” (Harris, 2015) (p. 41). In addition, sampling theory in qualitative research is usually purposive because the main goal in the qualitative study is to find information-rich cases. The sample size in qualitative research should be appropriate to the subject of the research so that it is not so small as to make it difficult for researchers to achieve data saturation. meanwhile, it should not be so large as to make it impossible for the researcher to perform in-depth and case-oriented analysis. (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Qualitative researchers,

working in the context of discovery, are more open-ended, and often follow emergent empirical and conceptual findings in unexpected ways. Thus, they may not know, in advance, how much data they need to gather. The best answer is simply to gather data until empirical saturation is reached. we were working with an estimate of reaching data saturation(Baker, Sarah & Edwards, 2012). Therefore, due to the complexity of sampling theory, different methods have been proposed in qualitative research as purposive sampling techniques. See table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Purposive Sampling Techniques (*Sampling in Qualitative Research, 2015*)

Maximum variation sampling	Select a wide range of cases
Homogeneous sample selection	Select a small and homogeneous case or set of cases for intensive study
Extreme case sampling	Select cases that represent the extremes on some dimension
Typical- case sampling	Select typical or average cases
Critical-case sampling	Select cases that are known to be very important
Navigate-case sampling	Purposively select cases that disconfirm your generalization (to be sure that you are not just selectively finding cases to support your personal theory)
Opportunistic sampling	Select useful cases as the opportunity arises
Mixed-purposeful sampling	Mix the sampling strategies into more complex designs tailored to your needs

Saturation in grounded theory, as Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) elaborated, contributes to further refinement of the construct and answering the research questions. Khan (S. N. Khan, 2014) (p. 225) articulated that to ensure for answering research questions and the value of analytical results, the researcher must frequently repeat the data collection and analysis so that the new data does not create a new category and data saturation occurs. The main idea of the theoretical saturation is that the researcher should continue sampling theoretically until the emergence of new data does not lead to the creation of a new category. In other words, 1-the categories are well developed in terms of various things and scopes. 2- New data should not lead to the emergence of a new category. 3- Relationships between categories should be coherent and valid (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Incorporation does not mean that the researcher does not create any new data from his audience, but it does mean that the new data and response do not create an emerging theory.

6.3 Data Collection

The data required in grounded theory are obtained from various sources. Also, there are several methods for collecting data in this theory, including observing, interviewing, focus groups, sources such as letters, books, government documents, newspapers, videos, etc. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) (p. 5). As noted above, theoretical sampling signifies the process of data collection in the context of grounded theory in which, after initial data collection and its analysis, a concept is derived as the basis for further data collection. In the context of grounded theory, data collection is performed simultaneously with analysis, which results in “constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypothesis” (S. N. Khan, 2014) (p.227). For the purpose of this study, data collection was accomplished through in-depth face-to-face interviews with key respondents/interviewees who were

actively involved in the tourism sector, including public, private, and tourism educational/training institutions in north Cyprus. The interview questions and the nature of the study were submitted to the Ethical committee of Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) for approval. The ethical committee approved the questions by ETK00-2 020-0208 code, and permission to conduct the research was rendered. An official letter was also drafted by the Dean's office at the Faculty of Tourism for the researchers to refer to the organizations/institutions of the respective key informants to interview.

Overall, 19 semi-structured interview questions were developed based on the relevant literature, e.g., (Christophorou et al., 2010; Connolly et al., 2018; Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016; Lojo et al., 2020; Marques et al., 2021; Pickering et al., 2020). Interview questions were subjected to two pilot interviews for clarity (van Teijlingen et al., 2001); as a result, some alterations were made before finalizing the questions. The questions were aimed firstly to determine the level of awareness of tourism sector operators on utilization of social media platforms to disseminate the true image of north Cyprus as a destination that is negatively affected by present political conflict, and secondly, to determine the extent of utilization of social media platforms to overcome the political barriers that impede the true image of this destination. For the list of interview questions, see Table 6.2.

Appointments for interviews were made by phone, and conversations contained a discussion on the topic and an overview of the nature of the study and questions. The conversation also included the consent of the respondents for an interview. This assisted the process by ensuring the willingness of the interviewees to commit to the time and day of the interview. The interview process was based on an open-ended

approach as “open-endedness interviews allow respondents to share more information. Information including how they feel, experience, think, and understand the subject matter. This type of interview also allows the researcher to have a better and more complete understanding of the respondents' true feelings about the subject.” (Turner, 2010)(p. 754–756). For the composition of the interviewees, see Table 6.3. The overall period of the interview extended for three months (October 2020–January 2021). Duration of each interview varied from one to two hours. With the permission of the interviewees, the entire process of the interview was recorded, which was later transcribed verbatim. During the interview, the interviewer made sure to remain as neutral as possible to avoid emotional reactions to the responses (McNamara, 2009). Note taking also complemented the recording; however, in order not to affect the responses due to note taking (Turner, 2010), two interviewers were conducting the process of interview, one of whom asked the questions and recorded the responses, while the second inter-viewer took notes. Finally, the transcribed text became the data for analysis.

Table 6.2: List of interview questions

- What do you think of role of social media in tourism?
- Why social media has become vital in tourism sector?
- Do you believe that social media can develop/create a new image for a tourism destination? If the answer is yes, ask the following question:
- Have you ever contemplated capitalizing/investing on social media to boost the image of north Cyprus? (Knowing the fact that north Cyprus has been affected negatively by political conflict and lack of recognition.)
- Have you allocated any budget towards utilizing social media for the purpose of tourism?
- To what extend the political problem and lack of recognition, in light of lack of solution, have affected North Cyprus's Tourism?
- While you have potential for alternative tourism in north Cyprus, have you ever tried to use social media to advertise/market these potentials? Do you know what I mean by alternative tourism?
- Social media is a great platform for networking and sharing experiences among visitors; have you considered benefiting from such potential of social media for your own good?
- How often do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your webpages in social media? By the way, are you aware of various platforms of social media?
- Have you ever considered utilizing social media to market north Cyprus at the regional level/regional market?
- There are many negative comments by third parties' platform and different social media, especially tripe adviser; do you have any policy to minimize the impacts of these negative comments? Moreover, how often do you check the comments about north Cyprus?
- Nowadays digital marketing is becoming very popular; what have you done in this regard?

- The propaganda by south Cyprus labels north Cyprus as danger zone; have you ever tried or considered to use social media to change such a false image?
- What is the extent of collaboration between public and private sectors to develop a marketing strategy based on social media?
- What type of collaboration with the universities have been realized, especially to utilize social media to attract Edu-tourists (foreign students)?
- North Cyprus is a destination popular with sun, sea, sand, gambling and educational tourism; have you considered highlighting these attractions in social media?
- Nowadays, destinations are becoming smart (smart destinations); do you have any idea about the concept of smart destination?
- What are the main sectors that should be collaborating in order to build a smart destination?
- Smart destination requires new idea and smart technology (social media, internet, and various applications); what have you done in this regard?

Table 6.3: Characteristics of the interviewees.

Organization	Interviewees' Position	#
Eastern Mediterranean University	Professor of sustainable tourism	1
Eastern Mediterranean University	Assistant professor of tourism	1
North Cyprus Ministry of Tourism	Director of tourism ministry	1
North Cyprus Ministry of Tourism	Undersecretary of tourism ministry	1
North Cyprus Ministry of Tourism	Deputy director of promotion and marketing sector of tourism ministry	1
North Cyprus Ministry of Tourism	Visual communication and social media responsible of tourism ministry	1
Cyprus Turkish Tourism and Travel Agents' Union (KITSAB)	Head of KITSAB, former director of marketing and promotion of tourism ministry, owner of a travel agency	1
Cyprus Turkish Tourism and Travel Agents' Union (KITSAB)	General secretary of KITSAB, Pars tourism and travel agency director	1
Limak hotel	Promotion and marketing manager of Limak hotel	1
Paisan Educational and Immigration Institute	Director of Paisan institute, social media Influencer with 61K followers	1
Total		10

6.4 Data Analysis

The first step for data analysis began with transcribing the interviews and notes by converting them to text for content analysis. This process included multiple-evaluations and reviews that eventually resulted in the identification of the main codes, themes, and categories. In grounded theory, the researcher does not wait for the data collection to be completed and then analyze and interpret the data. Hence, as soon as

the first data is obtained, the analytical review operation begins. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) (p. 6). This is also known as the ‘iterative’ approach. In this approach, “researchers regularly consult collected data during all stages of qualitative research and use what they learn to develop and inform what they do next” (Mack et al., 2005) (p. 2016).

In total, 21 themes were identified and then fed into the Atlas ti-9 software (*Atlas. Ti Qualitative Data Analysis (2021)*, n.d.) for the distribution of the ideas, concepts, and themes, which were coded to fit the categories. Due to the volume of the data, besides the identification of the main themes, subthemes were also revealed and highlighted. (Baralt, 2012) (p. 3) noted that “in this case, the code needs to be broken down into sub-codes in order to better organize the data” (see also Figure 3).

Since the method of research design is grounded theory, data collection and analysis continued throughout the research process (Corbin, 2017). This contributed to the clarification of the codes from the beginning of the process that was performed based on the interview questions. The foundation of data analysis in this approach is laid out by code generation through content analysis of the data and constant comparison that provides names for the codes based on the imagery they evoke, or, to use the actual words in the literature, “in vivo” (Gramenz, 2014). (Corbin, 2017) (p. 302) noted that “identifying, integrating, and developing concepts is achieved by continuously comparing similarities and differences between the data collected.”

Nevertheless, the first step in the coding process began with reading the transcripts and identifying the incidents, events, and happenings as indicators of phenomena, which were given conceptual or theoretical labels. For instance, by far, the majority of

respondents (by comparison) believed that social media platforms are powerful tools to advertise, market, and disseminate the true image of the destination to millions of people. The concept labeled as “influencer” is a manifestation of this phenomenon. In grounded theory, the coding process includes three steps. First, open coding, which allowed us to reveal new theoretical and conceptual possibilities based on the transcripts, which were then divided into distinct parts and coded/labeled. Second, axial coding, which allowed us to draw connections between constructed codes to form a category. Third, selective coding, which facilitates building a central category based on previously formed codes and categories that relates all the codes from the analysis, which also captured the essence of our research. Categories are concepts that indicate and allow the researcher to judge what are the themes and sub-themes (Corbin, 2017). Validation of the themes and subthemes was accomplished by constant comparison of interviews and information obtained from respondents.

Finally, through a review of the themes and subthemes and flexible use of procedures, the development of a theoretical framework that fits the data emerged. Such a framework allowed the researchers to understand the extent of tourism operators’ commitments to utilize social media platforms to bypass the political impasse that curtails the tourism sector to realize its potentials.

Bracketing was applied to avoid possible presumption and bias; That is, the researchers must suspend all their previous theories, assumptions, prejudices, or experiences that may interfere with observing and interpreting phenomena (Fischer, 2009).

Another important issue is reflexivity, which indicates the researcher's self-awareness and active presence in the research process. To what extent a researcher has information and knowledge of the subject under study. As in quantitative research, the results of the two validity and reliability indicators show the value of research; in qualitative studies, the two indicators of credibility and dependability are considered two vital indicators. The credibility index includes that the results of qualitative research are valid and credible from the participant's point of view in the research. Therefore, to increase the credibility of the results, we used the verbal description of the participants to support our research findings. We asked some participants to study the validation research to reflect on the interpretation of the answers and the full coverage of the topics. (respondent validation) (Mabuza et al., 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015). To further the credibility of the results (confirmability/objectivity), triangulation of the findings was confirmed by two researchers (colleagues), which is a test for improving the validity and reliability of the research (Golafshani, 2003).

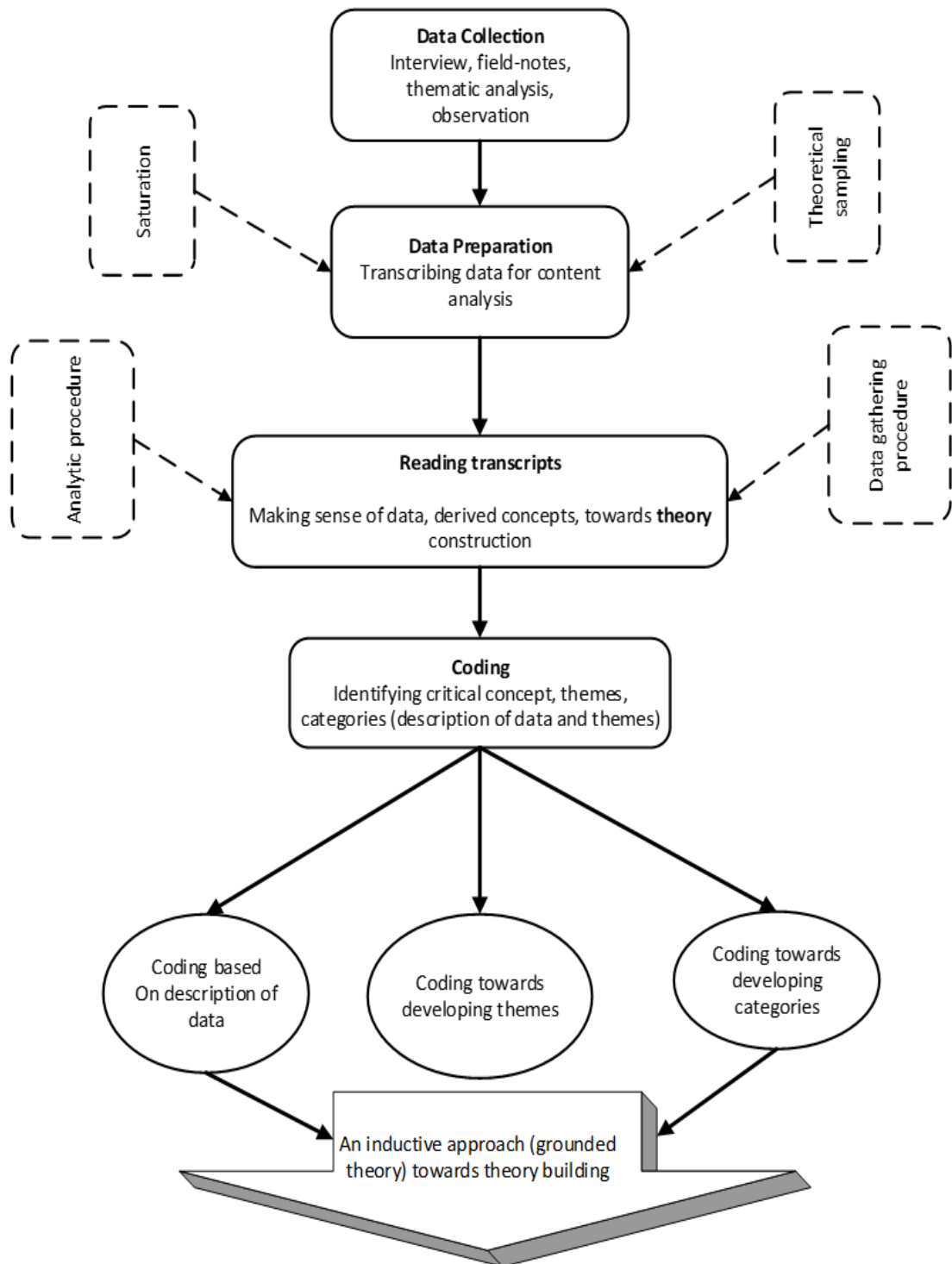


Figure 6.1: Grounded Theory Research Process. Source: Adopted from(Corbin, 2017; Gramenz, 2014).

6.5 Findings and Discussions

The data analysis process proceeded through the creation of analytic codes, themes, categories, and concepts from data and not by preexisting theoretical framework (Figure 6.1). We adhered to the canons of the grounded theory method: “In theoretical research, meaning is made socially by individuals and in interaction with their world. The goal is to identify, integrate, and development of concepts. Hence, individuals are not the object of analysis, but the concepts expressed by individuals are the main purpose of analysis. (Corbin, 2017) (p. 301).

6.6 Extraction of the Themes and Subthemes

For extraction of the themes and subthemes that are fundamental in grounded theory, we adhered to Krueger’s (Krueger, 1994) suggestion who recommended a framework in the context of grounded theory wherein raw data is analyzed, descriptive statements established, and interpretation opens the way for final themes and subthemes as the findings (Rabiee, 2004). Extraction of the themes and subthemes is divided into two sections. First, the data analysis matrix focused on coding relevant to “social media” (Table 6.4). The second section focused on coding relevant to political deadlock and its implications (Table 6.5). In the first section, 12 themes and 33 subthemes were extracted, which were organized into three categories (Table 6.4). In the second section, 9 themes and 21 subthemes were extracted, which were organized in one category (Table 6.5) The most emphasized themes that indicated by the respondents in the first section of data analysis matrix were (i) acknowledgment of social media platforms’ significance, (ii) failure to capitalize on social media in the tourism sector, (iii) failure to utilize social media to bypass political obstacles, (iv) lack of social media infrastructure, (v) lack of utilizing social media toward reimagining, and (vi) failure to utilize social media for tourism marketing (refer to Table 6.4). The second section of

the data analysis matrix, as shown in Table 6.5, reflects the respondents' views through 9 themes and 21 subthemes with prevalent emphasis on political deadlock hampering tourism development. The main themes that coding produced in this section were (i) lack of direct flight due to political deadlock that hampers tourism, (ii) lack of recognition as a nation-state by the international community, (iii) lack of investment, (iv) negative propaganda by south Cyprus that creates a negative image for north Cyprus, and (v) lack of cohesive governance and clear policy (Table 6.5).

At the same time, findings reveal that notwithstanding the acknowledgment of social media platforms' significance as a decisive medium to bypass the political barriers, tourism sector operators in both public and private sectors have failed to utilize these platforms to combat the negative propaganda by the opposing party in the political conflict. Furthermore, lack of commitment to the utilization of social media platforms, as the study revealed, is a failure in the supply side of the tourism sector (C.A. Gunn & Var, 2002) in the case of north Cyprus.

Nowadays, studies have revealed that digital platforms are playing a decisive role in destination marketing and image improvement (Barefoot & Szabo, 2009; Stocks, 2014). (Chester & Montgomery, 2017) (p. 3) noted that "as a consequence, the advertising industry performed a pivotal role in forming the operations of applications and platforms in the digital media ecosystem. Digital marketing is now well organized and thriving." However, our study revealed that tourism operators and managers in both public and private sectors failed to take advantage of social media platforms to minimize the negative impacts of political deadlock. The majority of the respondents expressed that there is a "lack of budget, clear strategy and commitment to utilize social media platforms towards marketing and advertising north Cyprus' tourism

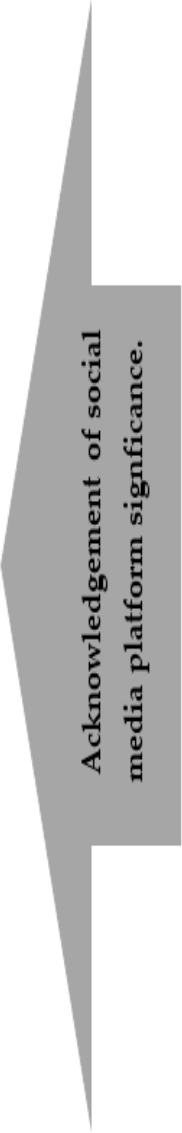
sector in the wider world.” Our study findings are also consistent with the findings of (Pickering et al., 2020), who explored how user-generated content on social media platforms enhanced the image of nature-based tourism in Australia and influenced the views of the tourists through geo-data from texts on Twitter. Scholars argue that “Analyzing some data with social media agencies is somewhat cheaper, faster, and easier than some traditional data sources. For example, analysis of geographical data, including the study of biodiversity of different species, the survey of individuals, etc.” (as cited in (Pickering et al., 2020) (p. 2)).

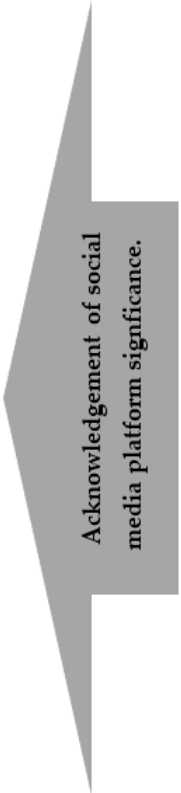
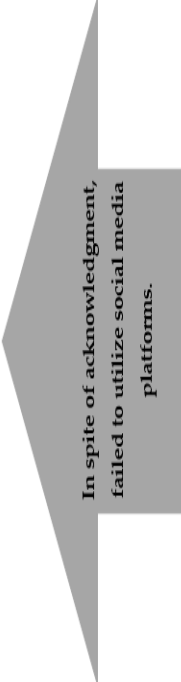
Lack of coherent policy on how to utilize and capitalize on social media to overcome the political barriers in the tourism sector was expressed by the respondents frequently in the context of the absence of formidable governance due to frequent changes of government in north Cyprus. Such disarray in governance and clear strategy contradicts the fact that the relationship between consumers and industry is getting change, so the use of the Internet is a necessity to create new tourism, cultural and commercial opportunities (Mendes et al., 2012) (p. 250). When asked about the cooperation and partnership among the stakeholders, which are the principles of governance, respondents were critical of the lack of partnership to strategize social media platforms toward positioning the tourism sector within the global tourism market. This was revealed in light of the fact that for governance, the principle of partnership and cooperation is essential if the aim is long term and targets sustainable visibility of the destination that is affected by political deadlock. According to the respondents, the tourism operators failed to get more brand visibility, understanding of the significant economic of scale, and qualified and distinctive interpretations of the visit through access to and widespread use of multidisciplinary digital content.(Mendes et al., 2012) (p. 250).



Overall, findings revealed that destinations with political conflict face numerous challenges, specifically if tourism is one of the main sectors for socioeconomic development. The framework and theoretical concept emanating from this study underscore the severity of the challenge.

However, with the invention of social media platforms and communication technology, the negative impacts of such a challenge can be mitigated if destination managers and tourism operators come up with a coherent policy and planning structure to utilize social media platforms. (Lojo et al., 2020) (p. 497) stated that “today, the internet is the primary image communication channel (as a secondary or external source) for private and public tourism organizations.” We argue that social media has transformed the way destinations are imagined. (Ghazali & Cai, 2013) (p. 75, 82) stated that due to the facilities available on social media and the diversity of these media, information about the destinations and access to this information has become very easy. Ease of access to information has made customers more active in seeking information. In addition, social media users are customers who frequently share their ideas, opinions, and reactions about products, services, businesses with other users. Therefore, customers' opinions and satisfaction in social media platforms have a great impact on brand awareness and customers' mental image. According to social movement studies, (Jensen, 2017) (p.24) reiterated that “the role of social media in creating opportunity structures, organizational infrastructures, and spaces for the formation of counter-publics.”

Table 6.4: Data analysis matrix focused on social media platforms

<p>Themes/Codes Relevant to Social Media Platforms Utilization</p>	<p>Subthemes</p>	<p>Categories</p>
<p>Awareness of social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media is a powerful tool (10) * • Social media is inexpensive to utilize (8) • Social media is a significant domain for dissemination of information (9) • Social media can bypass the political obstacles that can popularize the destination (7) 	 <p>Acknowledgement of social media platform significance.</p>
<p>Social media and tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of social media in tourism is paramount (9) • Social media can reach worldwide audience • Social media platforms have become the main source of information for travelers (10) • Social media influencers motivate travelers (10) 	

<p>Social media and destination image</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media is a powerful tool for destination image building (9) • Social media can provide virtual images about destination (8) • Social media platforms are accessible worldwide (10) 	 <p>Acknowledgement of social media platform significance.</p>
<p>Investment in social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Cyprus tourism institutions failed to invest in social media for the purpose of tourism (8) • North Cyprus's tourism sector failed to utilize social media intensively (7) • North Cyprus's tourism sector failed to invest in social media infrastructure (8) 	
<p>Commitment to utilizing social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of commitment to social media platforms utilization (6) • Rhetoric instead of action (9) • Postponement of policies to improve human resources and budget (8) • Lack of coordinated national policy to utilize social media platforms in tourism (9) 	 <p>In spite of acknowledgment, failed to utilize social media platforms.</p>

<p>Social media and marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media platforms are efficient marketing domain (10) • Social media platforms are inexpensive marketing tool (8) • Social media platforms catalyst to digital marketing (9) 	 <p>In spite of acknowledgment, failed to utilize social media platforms.</p>
<p>Social media and networking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media platforms are efficient tools for networking (7) • Social media platforms are efficient tools for communication (8) • Social media platforms are efficient tools for information dissemination (9) 	
<p>Social media and regional marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media platforms are efficient tools for regional marketing (8) • Social media platforms are efficient tools to enhance regional marketing share (6) 	 <p>Failure to utilize social media platforms</p>
<p>Lack of policy on social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear policy on utilizing social media in tourism (8) • Lack of strategy to capitalize in social media (9) 	

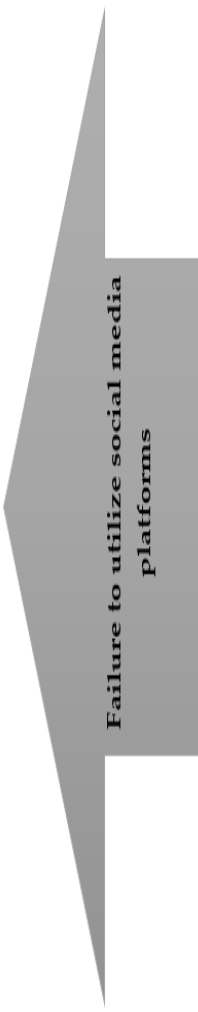
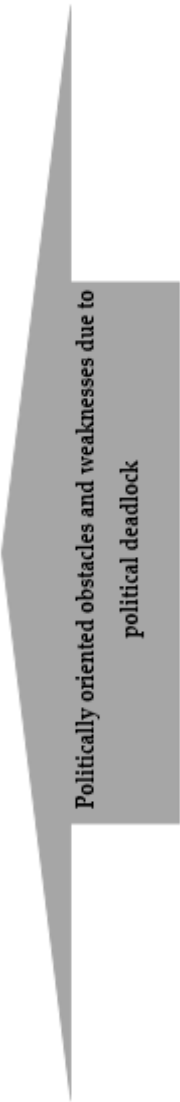
Budget deficiency	Insufficient budget for utilizing social media (10)	
Lack of infrastructure	Inadequate social media infrastructure (10)	
Lack of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collaboration between sectors, organizations and institutions (8) • Lack of information sharing among institutions (7) • Lack of collaboration among institutions (8) 	

Table 6.5: Data analysis matrix focused on implications of political deadlock

Themes/Codes Relevant to Political Deadlock Undermining Destination Image and Development	Subthemes	Categories
Lack of direct flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of direct flight as the main obstacle to tourism (10) * • Insufficient transportation infrastructure (9) 	
Lack of investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of investment (8) • Difficulty attracting investors (9) • Uncertain political environment hampering investment (10) 	
Lack of recognition	Lack of recognition as a nation-state undermining development strategies (10)	
Frequency of governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent changes of government undermining cohesive and long-term strategy (9) • Lack of established and sustainable governance (8) • Institutional disarray (8) 	

Lack of partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of partnership between public and private sectors (9) • Lack of institutional collaboration (8) 	
Lack of strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of long-term vision (10) 	
Lack of collaboration with the universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a disconnect between tourism policymakers and universities (7) • There is hardly any collaboration with the universities on tourism projects or tourism co-creation (9) 	
Lack of institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficit of institutions (7) • Weak state of NGOs (9) • Absence of public participation in decision making (10) 	
Distribution of negative image by political adversary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant propaganda by south Cyprus (9) • Hampering north Cyprus to represent in international tourism fares (8) • Lack of genuine cooperation between south and north Cyprus (9) • Dissemination of negative image by south Cyprus in the international tourism market (8) 	

Online sources and social media, in addition to facilitating information access and immediacy, are essential to the multilayered formation and transmission of destination image. The role of social media in tourism highlighted furthermore by (Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2021)(p. 1) who noted that Social media has revolutionized many areas, especially the tourism industry, in the way information is sought, experiences shared, and travel planning. The findings of this study revealed two outcomes pertinent to the study's research questions. First, destination managers and tourism operators failed to appreciate and utilize social media platforms and their efficacy in bypassing political barriers in tourism development and marketing. Secondly, the study revealed that in order for social media platforms to be implemented effectively, destination managers

and tourism operators in north Cyprus need to have coherent governance (Nunkoo, 2017), effective partnership (Errichiello & Marasco, 2017), institutional co-operation (Suherlan, 2017), and allocation of adequate budget (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011).

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

7.1 Conclusion

This study highlighted the role and effectiveness of social media platforms in disseminating information, affecting the perception of tourists, and promoting the real image of destinations that are challenged by the political impasse. We examined the case of north Cyprus, which is an attractive tourist destination; however, it has been negatively affected by political deadlock that manifested in embargos and sanctions for over four decades (*The Unresolved Cyprus Problem*, n.d.). In the meantime, north Cyprus is highly dependent on tourism with tremendous potentials for both mass and alternative tourism. Its advantages lie in its proximity to the main market (Europe) and year-round pleasant climate (Olya & Alipour, 2015).

Nevertheless, the ongoing political impasse has resulted in north Cyprus's real tourism image being camouflaged by various means including the constant spread of propaganda by the opposite side of the political conflict. In this context, this study tried to answer the question "what is the extent of utilization of social media platforms by destination managers and tourism operators to overcome the political hurdles that curtails this destination's realizations of its potentials? (Knowing the fact that social media platforms have become formidable means in the dissemination of the true image of the destination's promotion and marketing)" (Ghazali & Cai, 2013; Hyangmi Kim & Chen, 2016; Minazzi, 2017; Song et al., 2020). Alas, in the case of north Cyprus,

findings revealed that tourism operators both in private and in public sectors failed to take advantage of the power of social media (Song et al., 2020) to mollify the political obstacles in the tourism sector. To achieve this, destination policymakers, along with various stakeholders, need to strategize social media platforms in this case as well as in other cases with political challenges. Such a strategy should contain clear goals and a conspicuously detailed action plan. Last but not least, the significant and distinct role of social media platforms has been proven to be a powerful tool for marketing destinations (Ghazali & Cai, 2013; Song et al., 2020); however, it is the responsibility of the tourism practitioners and tourism institutions to utilize such ubiquitous domain which is available and accessible worldwide.

7.2 Managerial and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study have several managerial implications for destinations with political deadlocks. First, while political deadlocks are hampering tourism development and creating the wrong image, social media platforms are means available for, and accessible to, destination managers and tourism operators to be utilized to market, advertise, and connect to millions of users. Such a vast target market should not be taken for granted and complacency of destination managers and planners, as revealed in this case, will result in a lack of competitiveness as well as sustainability. (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011) (p. 27) argued that “social CRM or SCRM is a business strategy that aims to gain customer trust and focuses on connecting with customers and providing them with the services, products, and consumable experiences they need to form a personalized relationship with the company through the social media platform. We assume that the lack of investing in social media infrastructure is tantamount to failure in laying the supporting factors as the foundation for a competitive and sustainable tourism system (J. B. Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Secondly, this study informs the tourism operators and destination managers who are challenged by political conflicts to realize the value of social media in overcoming some of the challenges in the case of north Cyprus and similar cases. As the findings revealed, a unified strategy among the stakeholders toward investing in social media is left to be desired. Third, there is a need for a governance model to unify all the stakeholders (i.e., knowing that tourism is an amalgamation of numerous organizations and agencies) (Hall, 2008) to collaborate under a common strategy, which is well integrated, well networked, and everyone is responsible for social media.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study offers an eye-opening contribution to research on social media platforms' capability and engagement literature. Albeit north Cyprus's case, which revealed a failure of a destination in the utilization of social media platforms, this study strengthens the role of social media in influencing tourists' behavior during trip planning. This is the case as "the content quality that engages social media users directly influences reputation, which is fundamental for marketing tactics" (Song et al., 2020). This study is also in line with the findings of Song et al., who rationalized those social media platforms facilitate engagement through actions such as , comment, and share, which are effective elements to disseminate information and knowledge. Thus, destinations with political deadlock that camouflage their true image should invest in social media platforms for marketing and promotion. This study can also contribute significantly to the research on image destinations in the field of hospitality and tourism by calibrating social media platforms' use, especially in destinations with challenges of political deadlock.

This is the first study to calibrate social media and the image (i.e., environment, culture, history, hospitality, and safety, etc.) of a destination that is tarnished because

of unresolved political conflict. The study has focused on the tourism sector, which is negatively affected by the present political impasse. The study has also, for the first time, explored the destination policymakers' attitude and extent of their utilization of social media to mitigate the negative impacts of the ongoing political deadlock. These gaps have been bridged to some extent; however, further studies are also suggested. For instance, the triangulation of the mixed method through quantitative and qualitative designs can provide better insights into the utility of social media to portray true image (e.g., induced image) (Currie, 2020) of a destination with political deadlock.

However, albeit the ubiquity of social media, it is up to the commitment of destination policymakers to utilize it toward an induced image that corresponds to the reality, which is distorted due to political situation. The contribution to the knowledge of this study is twofold. First, it strengthens the argument forwarded by social influence theory (SIT), which claims "individual behavior is affected by three social processes: compliance, identification and internalization" (T. Zhou, 2011). All three processes have been experienced with the online community (T. Zhou, 2011). Secondly, the study contributes to the field of crisis communication and image restoration in destinations affected by negative portrayal by opposing party. Finally, yet importantly, it provides a tangible framework for destinations entangled in a crisis period to commit to connecting to the online community.

The study has also enhanced our knowledge regarding DIT. Scholars concede that destination image consists of two components induced image & organic image (Currie, 2020; D. Wang et al., 2015). Induced image "is a result of being exposure to guidebooks, advertisements, journals from destination promoters" (as cited from (D.

Wang et al., 2015) (p. 826)). Organic images come from informal and non-commercial sources with no marketing or advertising purposes, such as social media, schooling, popular culture. (as cited in Wang et al., (p. 861)). The relevancy and use of social media platforms are highly conducive to image formation, especially in the case of north Cyprus that is challenged by negative propaganda by the opposing party in existing conflict. This argument is highly plausible because people should be encouraged to participate in online community discussions as well as review UGCs. Organizations and tour operators should evaluate the impact of news published in relation to the destination image and adopt an appropriate strategy to neutralize or moderate distorted interpretations of destination (D. Wang et al., 2015)(p. 872). Alas, destination marketers and tourism institutions in north Cyprus have failed to take advantage of social media to minimize the distorted image that is created due to political conflict.

7.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. The first limitation is related to the sample size. As the duration of the research continued through the COVID-19 pandemic, contacting and arrangement of interviews became a challenge. Nevertheless, the sample size generated enough data to justify the sample size. However, “determining sample size a priori is fundamentally challenging in qualitative research” (Sim et al., 2018) (p. 2). Nevertheless, in qualitative research, if the grounded theory is employed, the principle of “saturation” rectifies the sample size issue in terms of “informational redundancy,” as well as the adaptive and emergent nature of sample size in the qualitative method (M. Sandelowski, n.d.). Another limitation is that we were not able to quantify the present encounter of tourists and social media domains relevant to north Cyprus. Future studies might consider this aspect. Future studies can also measure the “image”

of north Cyprus and similar destinations in light of political deadlock and negative propaganda from visitors' points of view. Another issue is that in this study, we used the bracketing method to limit the interference of our presumption with the research results to prevent bias. Future researchers can also use the Delphi method to increase the quality of results. "The Delphi method is a process used to reach a group opinion or decision through a survey of a group of experts. Experts answer several rounds of questionnaires, and the answers are collected after each round and shared with the group. As a result, experts can adjust their answers in each round based on how they are interpreted as group responses. So, the ultimate goal is to have a real consensus on what the group thinks"(Twin, 2021).

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