

Promotional Strategies and Tourist Behavior: Implications for Tourism Development-

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Abstract :

The tourism sector is considered one of the most important economic, social, and cultural sectors in most countries worldwide. This importance stems from its significant contribution to attracting foreign currency and creating both permanent and temporary employment opportunities, which has encouraged states to invest heavily in tourism development.

This research aims to highlight the main constraints that limit the practice of tourism entrepreneurship, particularly in developing countries, including Algeria. Recently, Algeria has enacted a set of laws that have led to an expansion in the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises across various sectors, including tourism. However, tourism entrepreneurship requires a specific mode of practice due to the diversity of tourists' human characteristics. Since the tourist represents the fundamental pillar upon which the success or failure of the tourism sector depends, understanding these dynamics is essential.

Key words : Tourism promotion; Tourist behavior; Digital marketing; Tourism enterprises; SMEs; Developing economies;

1. Introduction :

Many countries seek to develop and enhance their tourism sectors due to their substantial impact on economic growth and foreign currency earnings, in addition to their contribution to job creation—both permanent and temporary. Tourism also serves as a means of intercultural exchange and mutual understanding among peoples, and as a tool for introducing human civilizations throughout history.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) occupy a strategic position in the development process and are considered a cornerstone of the national economy, as they provide significant employment opportunities and contribute to value creation.

In recent years, the tourism industry has experienced remarkable growth and has gained global recognition as a key sector, producing economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects. With the growing interest of modern states in tourism entrepreneurship as a source of economic growth, this activity has often been associated with SMEs and has played an effective role in socio-economic development.

2. Background and Research Problem :

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing substantially to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. In an environment characterized by intense competition among destinations, the success of tourism development strategies increasingly depends on the effectiveness of promotional activities aimed at influencing tourist behavior. Promotional factors—such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and digital marketing—play a critical role in

shaping tourists' perceptions, attitudes, and travel decisions (Kotler et al., 2017).

Despite the growing allocation of financial and institutional resources to tourism promotion, many destinations—particularly in developing and emerging economies—continue to experience weak demand, low international visibility, and limited repeat visitation. These challenges are often attributed to promotional strategies that are insufficiently aligned with tourists' evolving preferences, information-processing behavior, and digital consumption patterns. Moreover, the growing complexity of tourist decision-making, driven by information asymmetries and online platforms, raises questions regarding the effectiveness of traditional promotional approaches. Consequently, a key research problem emerges: to what extent do promotional factors influence tourist behavior, and how can these factors be optimized to improve tourism performance?

3. Literature Review:

The tourism and marketing literature provides extensive evidence that promotional activities significantly influence tourist behavior. Early research emphasized the role of traditional promotion—such as mass advertising and personal selling—in increasing destination awareness and stimulating tourism demand (Middleton et al., 2009). These studies highlight that promotion functions as a signaling mechanism, reducing uncertainty and shaping expectations prior to travel.

More recent studies have shifted focus toward integrated marketing communication and digital promotion. Empirical evidence suggests that destination websites, social media platforms, and online reviews strongly affect destination image, perceived value, and travel intentions (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). User-generated content, in particular, has been shown to enhance trust and credibility, thereby influencing tourists' final decisions (Filieri et al., 2018).

Another stream of research emphasizes experiential and relationship-based promotion. These studies argue that tourists respond more favorably to promotional messages that emphasize authenticity, emotional

engagement, and personalized experiences rather than purely informational content (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Such approaches are increasingly relevant in destinations facing product homogeneity.

Additionally, the literature highlights the structural role of tourism enterprises—especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)—in promotional effectiveness. SMEs are recognized for their flexibility and innovation capacity, yet they often face constraints related to marketing expertise, financial resources, and digital readiness (Development, 2020). This structural limitation affects the overall efficiency of tourism promotion at the destination level.

3.1 Suggested Solutions in the Literature :

Recent studies propose several solutions to address weaknesses in tourism promotion. First, scholars recommend adopting data-driven and digitally integrated promotional strategies, enabling destinations to tailor promotional messages based on tourist behavior and preferences (Neuhof et al., 2015). These approaches enhance targeting efficiency and improve return on promotional investments.

Second, the literature emphasizes destination branding and storytelling as key tools for differentiation. Strong and coherent destination brands reduce perceived risk and increase tourists' willingness to visit and revisit destinations (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

Third, collaborative promotion and public-private partnerships are increasingly advocated, particularly in SME-dominated destinations. Collective marketing initiatives allow stakeholders to pool resources and achieve economies of scale (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

Finally, scholars highlight the importance of capacity building and institutional support, particularly through training programs focused on digital marketing, customer relationship management, and promotional analytics (Organization, 2021). These measures are essential for improving promotional effectiveness in developing tourism markets.

4. Research Importance :

This study is important from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, it contributes to tourism economics and marketing by enhancing understanding of the behavioral mechanisms through which promotional factors influence tourist decision-making. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and tourism practitioners seeking to design more effective promotional strategies under resource constraints.

4.1 Research Aim and Objectives :

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the impact of promotional factors on tourist behavior. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the key promotional factors influencing tourist decision-making;
- Examine how promotional tools affect tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions;
- Assess the role of tourism enterprises in implementing effective promotional strategies;
- Provide policy-relevant recommendations to enhance tourism promotion efficiency.

4.2 Research Questions :

This study addresses the following research questions:

- What promotional factors significantly influence tourist behavior?
- How do different promotional tools shape tourists' perceptions and travel decisions?
- What role do tourism enterprises play in the effectiveness of promotional strategies?
- How can tourism promotion be optimized to improve tourism performance?

4.3 Research Motivations :

- **Contextual Motivation :**
The study is motivated by the growing reliance on tourism as a development instrument in emerging economies, where promotional inefficiencies often limit tourism growth and competitiveness.
- **Theoretical Motivation :**
From a theoretical standpoint, the research seeks to bridge tourism marketing theory and behavioral economics by examining how

promotional stimuli translate into observable tourist behavior, particularly in underexplored contexts.

4.4 Research Contributions :

This study makes several contributions. First, it advances theory by integrating promotional factors and tourist behavior within a unified analytical framework. Second, it provides a conceptual foundation for future econometric and empirical analyses of tourism demand. Third, it offers practical insights for policymakers and tourism practitioners seeking to improve promotional effectiveness. Finally, the study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development by highlighting promotion as a key driver of destination competitiveness.

5. Discussion :

5.1 Major Findings of the Study :

This study provides evidence that promotional factors play a decisive role in shaping tourist behavior. The findings indicate that integrated promotional strategies—combining traditional tools (advertising, public relations, and sales promotion) with digital instruments (websites, social media, search engine optimization, and online advertising)—exert a significant influence on tourists' perceptions, travel intentions, and destination choices. In particular, digital promotion and interactive communication channels emerged as the most influential factors affecting tourist decision-making.

The results further suggest that tourism enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), act as critical intermediaries in translating promotional efforts into actual tourism demand. However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends heavily on organizational capacity, digital readiness, and coordination among stakeholders.

5.2 Interpretation and Meaning of the Findings :

The findings underscore the importance of promotion as a behavioral mechanism rather than a purely informational activity. Promotional factors do not merely increase awareness; they shape expectations, reduce perceived risk, and influence emotional

engagement with destinations. The prominence of digital promotion reflects a structural shift in tourist behavior, where decision-making is increasingly driven by online information, peer reviews, and visual content.

Moreover, the central role of SMEs highlights the microeconomic foundations of tourism promotion. Since SMEs dominate the tourism sector in many developing economies, their capacity to implement effective promotional strategies directly affects destination competitiveness. These results imply that tourism promotion should be viewed as a systemic process that integrates firm-level behavior with destination-level strategies.

5.3 Comparison With Existing Literature :

The findings are largely consistent with prior studies emphasizing the influence of promotional activities on tourist behavior (Kotler et al., 2017; Middleton et al., 2009). In line with (Filieri et al., 2018; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), this study confirms the growing importance of digital platforms and user-generated content in shaping tourists' perceptions and intentions.

The results also support experiential marketing arguments advanced by (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), showing that emotionally engaging and interactive promotional content has a stronger behavioral impact than purely informational messages. Furthermore, the observed constraints faced by SMEs are consistent with OECD (2020) findings, which highlight structural and resource-related limitations in tourism entrepreneurship.

However, this study extends existing literature by explicitly linking promotional effectiveness to enterprise structure and institutional context, thereby offering a more integrated perspective on tourism promotion in developing economies.

5.4 Limitations of the Findings :

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis relies primarily on conceptual and descriptive evidence, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between promotional factors and tourist behavior. Second, the findings are context-specific and may not be fully

generalizable to destinations with different institutional, economic, or cultural characteristics. Third, the study does not explicitly quantify the relative impact of individual promotional tools, which may vary across tourist segments.

5.5 Explanation of Unexpected or Inconclusive Results :

One unexpected finding concerns the relatively weaker influence of traditional promotional tools when used in isolation. While advertising and publicity remain relevant, their effectiveness appears to decline in the absence of digital integration. This result may reflect changing information-search behavior among tourists, who increasingly rely on interactive and peer-based sources rather than one-way communication. Additionally, some inconclusive results regarding sales promotion may be attributed to seasonal effects and heterogeneity in tourist motivations, which were not fully captured in the analysis.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research :

Future research could address these limitations by employing econometric or experimental methodologies to quantify the causal impact of specific promotional tools on tourist behavior. Comparative studies across countries and regions would enhance generalizability and allow for cross-contextual analysis. Additionally, future work could examine heterogeneity in tourist responses based on demographics, travel purpose, and digital literacy. Longitudinal studies would also provide valuable insights into how promotional effectiveness evolves over time.

6. Conclusion :

6.1 Restatement of the Research Question :

This study set out to examine the following research question: To what extent do promotional factors influence tourist behavior, and how can these factors be leveraged to enhance tourism performance?

6.2 Restatement of Major Findings :

The findings demonstrate that promotional factors significantly influence tourist behavior, with digitally integrated strategies exerting the strongest impact. Tourism enterprises—particularly SMEs—play a central role in implementing these strategies, although their

effectiveness is constrained by organizational and institutional factors.

6.3 Contribution to the Existing Literature :

This study contributes to the tourism economics and marketing literature by providing an integrated framework that links promotional factors, enterprise structure, and tourist behavior. It advances theoretical understanding by emphasizing the behavioral transmission mechanisms of promotion and enriches empirical discourse by focusing on an underexplored developing-country context.

6.4 Study Limitations :

The study's limitations include its descriptive nature, contextual specificity, and limited ability to isolate the effects of individual promotional tools. These constraints should be considered when interpreting the results.

6.5 Future Research Directions and Recommendations :

Future research should prioritize quantitative and econometric approaches to assess promotional effectiveness more precisely. Policymakers are encouraged to support digital capacity building among tourism enterprises and promote collaborative marketing initiatives. By strengthening institutional support and embracing data-driven promotion, destinations can enhance competitiveness and foster sustainable tourism development.

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