Pre-visit Perceived Images: 
The Importance of Tourism Communication in the Digital Age

Febrian

1) Vocational Education Program, University of Indonesia
Email: febrian1986@ui.ac.id
2) Corresponding author: febrian1986@ui.ac.id

Abstract
This paper examines tourism communication that shows the importance of information on a destination in various platforms and also the role of forming a pre-visit perceived image as the main thing in seeing a destination. The development of media and platforms used to access pre-visit information apart from being a promotional media is also important to be seen as an initial filter for potential visitors before determining which destination they interested in.

Keywords: Pre-visit, Tourism Communication, digital platform

Introduction
Communication behavior is a common thing done by an individual. In everyday life, the behavior of communicating both verbally and non-verbally; directly or with the mediation of technology that exists in the modern era today is always done. Scientifically, communication is defined as the behavior of collecting and disseminating information about events in an environment (Laswell). Further in its development, communication is then defined as a behavior or form of human interaction to influence each other, whether intentional or not (Shanon & Weaver)

Communication as a process of transmitting information and knowledge is able to influence a person to change his view of something. This is what becomes important when talking about tourism communication, because tourism destinations will be greatly influenced by various information that has been circulating about these destinations. In the digital era, there are many platforms that
potential visitors can access to become their source of information before deciding to visit or what is called a pre-visit overview in tourism communication.

Literature Review

Promoting tourism destinations as one form of tourism communication is an important thing in maintaining it so that it remains visited and has a positive image in the world of tourism. Wertner and Ricci (2004) show a survey that reported 30% of the American adult population used the Internet to search for travel information in 2003, while European online sales for the same period increased by 44%. The development of information and communication technology, especially the development of web platforms from traditional web 1.0 to interactive web 2.0, has resulted in a paradigm shift in online and digital promotion.

In a previous academic study, Gartner (1994) described at least three main actors as disseminators of information, especially in tourism destinations. The first is referred to as induced agents or sources of information provided by specific destinations (guide books, articles in the mass media); the second is Organic agents, namely sources of information that are sometimes done unintentionally given from person to person such as friends and family who are better known as the WoM (Word of Mouth) promotion system or word of mouth; and finally the so-called Real experience or direct real experience at a certain destination. The third actor at that time could not be obtained widely, unlike today with the presence of various technologies, especially social media, which allows the information to be widely seen and consumed by potential tourists. The communication that occurs will provide expectations, what must be prepared before visiting a particular tourism destination.

Discussing about the promotion of tourism destinations in the digital era, of course we have to see how the promotion strategy will be carried out in which digital platforms they use so that promotions run more effectively. Promotional strategies can also reflect on the pre-visit perceived image as the main thing in seeing a destination (Govers and Kumar, 2007). In the digital era, pre-visit perceived image is easy for potential tourists to find because they can search for information through online search engines or also go to social media and search for it using hashtags [#] according to the tourist destination they want to visit. This shows that destination consumption can be carried out more broadly with digital media. This is seen as an external factor in the promotion of a tourist destination. This external factor then creates a pre-visit perceived image as stated by Govers and Kumar (2007).

Tourism destinations often become objects as merchandise and become brands and selected for tourism destination value cognition brand by potential tourists (Choi, 2006) This point of view shows how an existing message and information about a destination can build
perceptions and imagery to influence others to enjoy/visit and affect travel preferences. Although these external promotional factors will be influenced by popular promotional channels that are more accessible, the more likely a destination is visited by other potential tourists, individual promotional channels still have their own promotional portion. The personal experience of the person telling the story in visiting a destination is more complex because it is usually also included with the expression. As previously explained, reporting on digital mass media is also one of the effective promotional media because it has a wide reach and is a medium for forming a pre-visit perceived image. The growth and diffusion of online tourism promotion has dramatically changed the business paradigm from supply driven to demand driven. The thing to remember in tourism promotion in the digital age is the important characteristic of Web 2.0 sites which is based on the ability to combine various technologies and applications within the site to increase functionality. This enhanced functionality is mainly attributed to those sites which can publish and display a wide variety of content - content contributed by users, or where sites can synergistically retrieve information from third parties as Web 2.0 platforms allow users to publish, display and list diverse views, opinions, images, voices, and so on, will impact content and design features not found on traditional websites (Sellitto et al, 2010). This is another advantage of web 2.0 in tourism promotion mainly to build the pre-visit images for potential visitors.

Methodology
Research done in qualitative approach. The qualitative approach aims to provide respondents with the opportunity to freely express what platforms they use to build their pre-visit images, also define the main sources they most believe can provide the most realistic experience. Research done in 2020, targeting freshman students in university that have dream destination to visit in 2020. As the pandemic occurs, all of them suspended their travelling agenda. This give perception how they trying to keep their dream alive by consuming and accessing their dream destination’s information through many platforms. Research was conducted on teenagers/young people aged 18-20 years, so the respondents were very familiar with the use of social media and digital platforms. This is intended to show the importance of their existence as potential visitors to a tourism destination in near future.

Results and Discussion
Research done via online, giving the informant open answers so this research shows what platform they access the most to gain information and creating pre-visit images of their dream destination. The results show most of them accessing video review for main platform to gain their pre-visit images because they believe it’s more reliable and
the videos from vloggers displayed attractively because it will aim to invite views. Also, the videos will show them the real experience of being there so they can try to recreate it when they able to visit their dream destinations.

![Information source for pre-visit images](image)

**Figure 1. Information source for pre-visit images**

Social media now seen as trendsetters especially photo spots, this platform also have ability to updating information and has a feedback feature in the form of a comment column. Vlogger Depends on the number of views/trending. Friends, sources of information are more reliable because they know you. The information rather feels subjective, but sometimes more informative. Other media, such as TV, printed media and Films, not as popular as modern media (social media, vlog) because it’s not their main function, also shows the shift in popular media. Those media also described as having formal language tends to be less flexible and attractive for them.

However, after they found information for building pre-visit images for their dream destinations, those who do not say that WoM (Word of Mouth) is their main source of information feels they need the second layer of information came via WoM, either through family, friends or those who have direct experience of visiting the destination who can be spoken to directly. Although some of them replace the WoM function by replying to comments in certain social media columns, most of them still choose the classic way to emphasize the building of a pre-visit image for their dream destination. The storytelling forms communication that they got build the expectation for experience they will get when they visit their dream destination.

**Conclusion**

Promotion of tourist destinations in the digital era is strongly influenced by the pre-visit perceived image created by communication process by potential tourists/visitors. As a result, tourism authorities need to understand that successful tourism promotion depends on a variety of external influences. The external influence in question is how information about a tourism destination is reported and disseminated primarily on online and digital media platforms.

![Travel decision-making cycle](image)

**Figure 2. Travel decision-making cycle**
Communication provides many things from building expectations, what to prepare before visiting a certain tourist destination to specific things such as determining the time of the visit. From the explanation of the communication function in tourism, we can see that apart from being a source of information, it can also provide a pre-visit perceived image of a destination that will become experience.

**Recommendation**

Most other sources of information besides social media and video/vlog are absent from the exchange of information which is considered a form of storytelling at a particular destination. whereas in forming a pre-visit image of a destination, its existence is very important because it is able to describe a reality that is considered impartial and comes from direct experience.

Storytelling can be shown as a means of developing and marketing a destination pre-visit images. As a form of tourism communication this form of promotion and source of information is becoming popular in the formation of pre-visit images for potential visitors. Both in the form of text and verbal, storytelling methods need to be reproduced so that potential visitors can feel that the information they get is purely based on experience which will form a more ideal pre-visit image and be able to inspire them to visit a destination.

**References**


