

# Luxury Ecotourism: The Benefits of using Social Media Platforms

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**Abstract:** Tourism is one of the biggest industries that has ever growth in the past few decades. Within the industry, ecotourism stands out to be a new norm of tourism, where tourists visit the wildlife, and nature habitat without damaging the environment and being within the area. Therefore, ecotourism become popular and well-known within the industry and with tourists around the world. However, the concept of luxury ecotourism is still new to many people. The idea of luxury ecotourism is to give the consumer the satisfaction of visiting wildlife, communities, and space, where remaining the luxury of the trip. The approach is applying ethical to luxury tourism, making the customer feel comfortable about not damaging the area they visit. The idea is fascinating but the popularity of this still needs work. That is where the benefit of technology comes in. The paper is focusing on the factor that can help spread luxury ecotourism to more customers, and in this case, is social media. Social media uphold the wide range and spreading speed that no other platform has, which might be beneficial to promote any kind of product or service. The paper is using secondary data from past research and paper, to form an idea of how social media can benefit the growth of luxury ecotourism.

**Keyword:** Luxury ecotourism, Ecotourism, Social media

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## 1. Introduction

In the current world, the need for entertainment for humankind is endless. People are growing bored of the classic way of entertaining, there is a great need for a new experience. Therefore, tourism become one of the biggest industries in the near decade. It gathers billions of dollars each year and the number is increasing year by year. In 2022, tourism around the world makes 1670 billion dollars, gapping 2021 to more than 300 billion dollars (Statista, 2023). However, people become picky about what they want and where they want to go. This led to the fact that the entrepreneur is trying to renew the traveling experience with something new. This is where eco-tourism took its place, and further, develop itself into luxury ecotourism. Luxury ecotourism provides people with experiences and accommodations still grandeur but also helps preserve the land, local communities, and wildlife of the area. Leisure luxury travellers come in all shapes and sizes. Some are used to luxury in their daily lives, while others save up for a special holiday. No matter their background, they like personalization that gives them the feeling their experience is “made for me”. Nowadays, many luxury travellers do not wish to put their spending on display. They want authentic, unique experiences that may be relatively expensive due to their exclusivity, rather than a high-end luxury. The luxury tourism industry immediately conjures up thoughts of exclusivity, with access to it confined to a small and elite group of travellers often located within their own social bubble. Nowadays, the internet and social media have outgrowth traditional media and become a great platform to promote any type of product. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, are becoming more and more popular with millennials and become part of their lifestyle. The amount of information and the speed of spreading information is unbelievably high. Using social media to promote and marketing for luxury ecotourism might help to spread the popularity of this kind of travel to more audiences. The growing importance of social media in today's society has substantially helped to the expansion of the tourist business (Firman, A. et al., 2022).

The paper is focusing on analysing the benefit of social media platforms and how they could possibly help to build a bigger fanbase for luxury ecotourism, a form of tourism that is still new for many. The paper is using secondary data from other research and paper in the past to gather the information and data, to form an idea about the benefits of social media in advertising this type of tourism.

## 2. Methodology

The increased emphasis on environmental sustainability, which places a higher importance on ecotourism, has compelled scholars to investigate the ramifications of ecotourism from several perspectives. Nonetheless, the extent of academic work on the inclusion of luxury aspects into ecotourism remains limited, with just a few scholars addressing the subject. This study focusing on analysing the paper in the past using systematic review. The paper is conducted using Google Scholar, Scopus, Emerald, Springer, and Taylor & Francis online. The main research keyword used is “luxury ecotourism”, “ecotourism and social media”, “social media”, “social media influence tourism”. In the literature research section, “luxury ecotourism” and “social media” keyword is used within the Google Scholar and Scopus databases. The total of paper that related to “luxury ecotourism” in Scopus

is 30 papers, where there is 12300 papers within Google Scholar. Research articles go through rigorous verification and eligibility requirements to ensure that only the best and most suitable articles are selected for the process. The selection of articles for review is confined to the English language, thus excluding articles written in other languages from consideration in the database. The scope of the selected papers encompasses the period from 2008 to 2023. This is due to the lack of literature related to “luxury ecotourism”. See Table 1.

**Table 1:** Selected papers

| Author/s                               | Titles   | Keywords                  | Key findings  |
|--|--|---------------------------|---|
| de-Miguel-Molina, B. et al. ( )        | Luxury sustainable tourism in Small Island Developing States surrounded by coral reefs   | Luxury Eco-tourism        | Luxury factor and sustainable factor can co-exist in SIDS.  |
| Jones, G. (2020).                      | Luxury Tourism and Environmentalism  | Luxury Eco-tourism        | Environmental education has been a prominent focus of luxury travel companies. Ecotourism initiatives have lately proliferated, while traditional luxury hotel corporations have targeted sustainability certification. |
| Ryan, C. & Stewart, M. (2009).         | Eco-tourism and luxury - The case of Al Maha, Dubai  | Luxury ecotourism         | Luxury resort Al Maha contributing more to the environment of Dubai than damaging it, which indicate the possibility of luxury ecotourism.  |
| Moscardo, G. & Benckendorff, P. (2012) | Sustainable luxury: oxymoron or comfortable bedfellows?  | Luxury ecotourism         | According to the report, creating a link between luxury tourism and sustainability might be a difficult challenge. When seeking to establish luxury ecotourism, organizations may face a number of problems.            |
| Chatterjee, J. & Dsilva, N, R. (2021)  | A study on the role of social media in promoting sustainable tourism in the states of Assam and Odisha   | Ecotourism & social media | Identify the significance of social media platforms in promoting sustainable tourism in the states of Assam and Odisha  |
| Firman, A. et al (2022).               | The impact of eco-innovation, ecotourism policy and social media on sustainable tourism development: evidence from the tourism sector of Indonesia | Ecotourism & social media | The findings revealed a favourable relationship between eco-organizational innovation, eco-product innovation, eco-process innovation, eco-tourist policy, and social media and sustainable tourism growth.             |

| Author/s                                | Titles   | Keywords                  | Key findings   |
|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| Xiang, Z. & Gretzel, U. (2010).         | Role of social media in online travel information search | Ecotourism & social media | The research revealed that social media accounts for a significant portion of the search results, implying that search engines most likely drive passengers to social media sites. |
| Saravanakumar, M. & SuganthaLakshmi, T. | Social Media Marketing                                   | Social media              | Social media is certain to bring in more clients for the business as well as additional promotions and marketing, making social media the best marketing tool.                     |
| Vukasovic, T. (2013).                   | Brand Relationships Developing through SocialMedia       | Social media              | The study discusses online marketing efforts that have aided in the development of a relationship with the brand.  |

The scarcity of literature on "luxury ecotourism" may be adding to the difficulty in establishing a sustainable relationship between luxury tourism and environmental concerns.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Luxury Eco-Tourism

In the current world, the need for entertainment for humankind is endless. People are growing bored of the classic way of entertaining, there is a great need for a new experience. Therefore, tourism become one of the biggest industries in the near decade. It gathers billions of dollars each year and the number is increasing year by year. In 2022, tourism around the world makes 1670 billion dollars, gapping 2021 to more than 300 billion dollars (Statista, 2023). However, people become picky about what they want and where they want to go. This led to the fact that the entrepreneur is trying to renew the traveling experience with something new. This is where eco-tourism took its place, and further, develop itself into luxury ecotourism. Luxury ecotourism provides people with experiences and accommodations still grandeur but also helps preserve the land, local communities, and wildlife of the area. Leisure luxury travellers come in all shapes and sizes. Some are used to luxury in their daily lives, while others save up for a special holiday. No matter their background, they like personalization that gives them the feeling their experience is "made for me". Nowadays, many luxury travellers do not wish to put their spending on display. They want authentic, unique experiences that may be relatively expensive due to their exclusivity, rather than a high-end luxury. The luxury tourism industry immediately conjures up thoughts of exclusivity, with access to it confined to a small and elite group of travellers often located within their own social bubble. Many established luxury hotel chains have adopted sustainability initiatives and obtained certification to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices to cater to the desires of luxury tourists who seek to reconcile their high expenditures with a desire to minimize their impact on the natural environment (Jones, G., 2020). The cohabitation of luxury with ecotourism raises several issues that must be addressed (Ryan, C. & Stewart, M., (2009). Moscardo, G. & Benckendorff, P. (2012)).

Eco-tourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations (Ceballos- Lascuráin, 1996). The benefit of ecotourism is seen by many, and with the trend of everything being eco-friendly, it catches the attention of plenty of travelers. Because of this trend of protecting the planet, many organizations have to change their marketing strategy to match the flow of consumer needs and wants. However, even though people are interested in helping the environment, some of them still want to stand out, and still want to have the elite experience. This is where the luxury comes in. Luxury

ecotourism is the kind of tourism where people are living and enjoying the environment, appreciating the beauty of mother nature, but keeping the luxury factor alongside it. This approach opens a whole new meaning of tourism.

Luxury resorts that promote sustainable management are frequently ready to forsake some activities and amenities to maintain their sustainability commitment (de-Miguel-Molina, B. et al., 2014). The luxury phenomenon or practice may be more meaningful to some and not to all tourists. Those who place great value on improving social standing and demonstrating social status through the acquisition and consumption of products or services will be more likely to visit destinations that are more prestigious, noticeable, and conspicuous. The luxury factor is also a different standpoint for the plenty area around the world. Some tourist destination is famous because of their fanciness, which catches the attention of the elite or people who want to have a high-standard trip. The reason for this is people often look for attention and approval, and in this era, it's through social media. The fancy lifestyle is always drawing more attention and click from the mass. The relationship between tourism and luxury is especially complicated in more remote and peripheral destinations (Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2021). Thus, people are always demanding more while they travel. Despite being on an eco-friendly trip, people will still want a pool, spa, and gym for their own liking, even a casino. The issue of the compatibility of luxury with sustainability is so critical for many vacation locations. Conspicuous tourism is still a subject that deserves more attention from researchers, in particular, attention to deriving a scale to measure the level of luxury attained to each destination, and the prestige that is attained to the social and cultural backgrounds of such tourists.

### **3.2 Social Media**

The internet blows up in the recent decade and it became part of the lifestyle of people all around the world. Following the growth of the internet is the development of plenty of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and so on. The reach and spread of social media are all around the globe and are undeniably the biggest media in this day and time. People are using social media on a daily basis, and it creates an opportunity for entrepreneurs to market and promote their products through it. Social media or online marketing became a trend in recent years, where the marketer is taking advantage of it to promote their product and service.

## **4. Social Media Factor That Affects Luxury Eco-Tourism**

### **4.1 The range of Audience**

The fact that the Internet developed far enough for anyone to sit at home and know, see, and judge everything and every matter in the world through a personal device is proof that humans have gone a long way. In the meantime, there is plenty of social media platform that growth and become well-known all around the globe, such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok. Presently, TikTok is undoubtedly one of, if not the biggest social media in the world, and the majority of users of this platform are teenagers. In 2022, TikTok have reach 1.534 billion users, of which 1.5 billion are actively using the application (Ruby. D, 2022). Along with TikTok, Facebook has 2.9 billion users that use the platform monthly, with a wide range of ages and regions (Globaldata, 2023). The number of people using social media on daily basis is rapidly growing month by month, which creates the biggest platform to reach more audiences.

The millennial is the most used social media group, which is a group of people who were born in 1980-2000s, also called generation Y. According to statistics, the Millennials are the biggest group of people on the planet, which is around 1.8 billion people around the world, taking up 23% of the world population. This generation also one of the most use social media generations, along with generation Z. Also, with the number of members within the generation, it's easily the major economic driver in the meantime.

### **4.2 Brand Development**

The Internet grow significantly in the near decade, creating a huge opportunity for organizations and brands to promote their brand on the platform. According to Statista (2022), as of July 2022, the number of people using the Internet all around the world is around 5.02 billion people, of which 4.7 billion people are using social media. The development of social media changes the way brands all around the world advertise their product and service. Customers are using social media and the Internet more than using traditional media such as television, newspaper, and radio. The Internet makes searching and finding products or services easier for customers (Vukasovic, 2013). Therefore, customers tend to use the Internet to look for their needs. Thus, the use of social media is greatly increasing in the near decade. Social media is extensively utilized by practically everyone, and

businesses of all sizes have begun to use it in marketing and promoting themselves (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Using social media to promote and advertise luxury eco-tourism will bring more potential customers due to the number of social media users. The number of active users on social media varies during the day and the reaching of the advert will gather more attention than traditional media. Thus, social media is where people post and share their experience and thought with other and watch other news. Advertising on social media opens another opportunity to promote their product and service, which is a collab with influencers. According to Su et al. (2019), social media influencers with a significant following who share the principles of luxury eco-tourism can assist advertise the location to their followers. Social media platforms enable firms to work with influencers that have a huge following and can help market their brand. This can also aid in increasing brand recognition and reaching a larger audience.

#### **4.3 Customer as Brand-Developer**

Social media have changed the way customers interact with a brand, in this case, is tourism organization. For customers to participate in the growth of a tourism brand, social media has become a crucial instrument. For instant, social media allow customers to create content about their experience with the organization, especially tourism and travel content. Consumers may produce and share material that highlights their travel experiences, and this content can assist to generate a strong brand image for a tourist location. According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), user-generated content might include consumer reviews, images, videos, and blog articles. This information can serve to advertise a place and give social proof to future tourists. According to Marr (2021), there are 32 billion people active on Facebook daily, and there are 300 million photos uploaded per day. The number is taken out of only Facebook, and there are several popular social media.

Along with customer sharing their experience on social media, people tend to comment and talk about the subject on the platform through the comment section. This type of user-generated content is listed as electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM). E-wom is any good or negative comment made by past, existing, or previous consumers' experience regarding a product or service that is made available to a large audience via electronic media (Henig-Thurau, et al. 2004). According to a study by Kim and Ko (2019), e-wom is a significant factor in promoting businesses, in this case, luxury eco-tourism. Customers leave their comments on their thought and experience on "luxury" products and service is become a norm nowadays. Consumers who have had excellent experiences with luxury eco-tourism may share their stories on social media, travel review websites, and other online platforms, increasing the visibility of luxury eco-tourism offers.

Luxury eco-tourism businesses may also benefit from e-wom by monitoring and responding to client comments on social media and travel review websites. According to research conducted by Xiang and Gretzel (2010), reacting to client comments on social media can assist to boost customer happiness and loyalty. This way the organization will gain several loyal customers who satisfy with the services and products, thus gathering the attention of more potential consumers.

#### **4.4 Customer Communication**

In the meantime, social media have created an opportunity for organizations to give their client and customers real-time engagement. Companies that post on social media now can communicate with their customer using the comment section, where customer share their thought and experience with the company. Thus, according to Kim et al. (2018), social media allows tourist firms to engage with their clients on a regular basis and create relationships over time. This allows companies to build their brand image with their client and create a group of loyal consumers. With this, the loyal customer can help the firm to generate more clients for them through recommendations through friends and family, helping to expand the reach of the brand.

Prospective visitors prefer to learn about travel and tourism through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube rather than traditional media channels (Chatterjee, J. & Dsilva, N, R., 2021). Social media has had a tremendous influence on the tourism sector in recent years, as the omnipresent nature of social media platforms has altered the way tourists plan and experience their vacations. Prospective tourists now have access to a variety of information and user-generated material that may assist shape their travel selections, thanks to the increased availability and accessibility of social media platforms. Tourism destinations and companies can now display their products to a broader audience and engage with potential consumers in a more engaging and meaningful way by using the power of social media.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, social media has emerged as a critical instrument for promoting luxury eco-tourism, allowing firms in this area to engage with consumers, grow their brands, and display their environmentally friendly and sustainable practices. Customers may become brand advocates by sharing their experiences, offering feedback, and creating user-generated material that promotes the company on social media.

According to the literature, consumer interaction, customer-generated content, customer reviews, and social media influencers all play important roles in promoting luxury eco-tourism on social media. Companies must actively connect with their audience on social media, respond to criticism and reviews, and showcase their eco-friendly activities to develop a positive reputation and attract new consumers.

Social media has also helped luxury eco-tourism enterprises to broaden their reach and target a bigger audience that was previously ignorant of sustainable tourist possibilities. Businesses may reach a broad and younger audience by collaborating with social media influencers that share their brand values and image, producing a feeling of authenticity and confidence in their brand.

Overall, social media may have an impact on how luxury eco-tourism companies sell their brand, communicate with clients, and encourage environmentally responsible practices. Businesses may attract and keep consumers, establish a loyal and involved community around their brand, and support sustainable and eco-friendly tourism activities by using the power of social media.

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