



Exploring behaviors of social media-induced tourists and the use of behavioral interventions as salient destination response strategy

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms, like Instagram, have played a significant role in augmenting the profile of several previously obscure destinations. However, some of these places were subsequently 'ruined' due to related impacts associated with the type of visitor behaviors that are social media-induced. It is thus critical to better understand how to overcome such issues by discerning salient destination response strategies that cater to the cognitive biases of such travelers. This research explains the effectiveness of behavioral intervention approaches to manage the impacts of social media-induced tourism by analyzing four destination strategies that have addressed photographic practices: 1) Vienna, Austria, 2) Faroe Islands, 3) Yellowstone National Park, USA, and 4) Gion District of Kyoto, Japan. The key findings that carry theoretical and practical significance include the explication of tourists' cognitive biases targeted by various behavioral interventions, and the leveraging of social media as a tool to implement choice architecture that subtly encourages desirable traveler behaviors congruent to each destination among social media-heavy travelers. The applications of this study are relevant to communities struggling with a scenario of overdevelopment due to popularity on social media and are therefore receiving increasing deterioration in quality of life.

1. Introduction

Research has shown that many individuals perceive any intrusion into their residential spaces as the cause of a deterioration in their quality of life (Yang et al., 2013; Kock et al., 2017). The arrival of tourism in new spaces has sometimes been associated with triggering this decline, especially in cases where it is unexpected and unwanted. Originally referred to as *carrying capacity*, wherein the maximum number of users has been reached without a decline in the visitor experience (Coccosis & Mexa, 2004; Wagar, 1974; Wall, 2019), the term 'overtourism' was more recently coined and refers to a situation in which there are more visitors to a certain destination than the host facilities can handle as well as a resulting clear deterioration of the quality of life or experience in that place.

Social media has been cited as a major cause of overtourism (Gretzel, 2019). Travel has dramatically evolved over the last decade due to the rise of smartphone and social networking usage with the nature of media content in the travel sector shifting towards aspirational consumption to display on one's personal profile(s) (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013; Liu, Wu, & Li, 2018; Lyu, 2016; Siegel, Tussyadiah, & Scarles, 2022; Wang, Xiang,

& Fesenmaier, 2016). However, social media-induced tourism is distinct from what is considered overtourism; Shin and Xiang (2020) define social media-induced tourism as people who travel to a destination or an attraction as a direct result of being exposed to certain social media content. Much like other forms of media-induced tourism like film or TV-induced tourism, exposure to the destination through a principal form of media is the primary motivation for wanting to visit (Beeton, 2010; Connell, 2012; Jenkins, 2003; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998; Su, Huang, Brodowsky, & Kim, 2011).

For example, the social media platform, Instagram, has augmented the profile of several previously obscure destinations. Dickinson (2019) provided some examples of places that became popular because of Instagram and were subsequently 'ruined' as a result. Trolltunga in Norway received fewer than 1000 visitors in 2009; there was no cell phone service in this remote part of the world, which requires a difficult 10-h hike to access. Ten years later, in today's Instagram-fueled world, the nearest village receives nearly 100,000 visitors annually, and there is a queue to take photos. The amplification of destinations through social media can have devastating consequences, especially as the behaviors of social media-induced tourists are a newly unfolding phenomenon

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(Siegel, Tussyadiah, & Scarles, 2020).

Alongside the increase in visitors (Falk & Hagsten, 2021), the behaviors of travelers that are motivated by social media can be irresponsible (Siegel et al., 2022). Satirical Instagram accounts now exist like “@influencersinthewild” which acknowledge the negative and oftentimes inappropriate behaviors of aspirational content creators engage in to create the type of content that is assumed to garner the most attention from their followers (Mangalindan, 2022). Accounts such as this highlight certain accompanying behaviors such climbing trees for pictures which can cause irreversible damage (Tan, 2020; Roy, 2020), posing for fatal selfies with dangerous animals in the wild (Crawford, 2022), or even dressing extremely disrespectfully in a religious setting or a memorial like the Auschwitz Concentration Camp (Drury, 2019). These behaviors can cause detrimental impacts including destruction of the physical environment, overcrowding, and severe disruptions to local communities and subsequent social impacts like resident resentment towards tourism and cultural dilution.

Unfortunately, this inappropriate behavior is increasingly becoming the social norm (Cohen et al., 2022; Siegel et al., 2022; Smith, 2019), which, defined by Cialdini et al. (2006), are shared rules about how to behave as a member of society. While it is acknowledged that the number of social media-induced tourists continues to grow, there is still the challenge of identifying the most salient approach to manage these unique visitors. Because of the strong behavioral influence that social networking platforms (SNSs) like Instagram have, there are calls for more salient interventions like choice architecture (Huh & Lee, 2016). Oklevik et al. (2019) recommends that destinations seek to better understand their markets in order to develop sustainable frameworks that will contribute to economic growth without overwhelming local ecosystems or communities.

As destinations begin to respond to this phenomenon, potential paths to response strategies range from ‘softer’ approaches to stricter rules and regulations. A softer approach can unfold as an online campaign for awareness, which has been the case in destinations such as Vienna, Austria and Yellowstone National Park in the USA (Buckley, 2018; Wastradowski, 2019). Alternatively, stricter approaches have been taken by a variety of destinations where complete tourist bans have been implemented, such as in the Phi Islands of Thailand and Boracay, Philippines, and a ban on tourist photography has been enforced in the Gion neighborhood of Kyoto, Japan (Hess, 2019; L. Marcus, 2020; Morris, 2018). Furthermore, there is choice of roll out method: online and through social media, or as part of governmental policy, or a combination of both.

Different forms of messaging techniques can have distinct impacts on visitor behaviors, with behavioral interventions being some of the most effective (Nisa et al., 2017). Thaler and Sunstein (2008) define nudging as a ‘soft’ paternalism that applies lessons from behavioral research in order to nudge users toward better decisions without restricting their options or taking away their freedom of choice. Soft paternalistic approaches reframe the choices available to increase the likelihood that people will make decisions that are beneficial to them. Nudges are not mandates; nudging is a softer approach that in many cases provides a more suitable solution while avoiding some of the challenges of more vertically-oriented approaches such as costly procedures and invasive choice regulation (Hansen, 2017). Nudging differs from other persuasion techniques because it involves more indirect modes of persuasion than direct enforcement or instruction.

This research explores strategic approaches for destinations to guide traveler behavior with regards to their photographic practices. The aim of the study was to evaluate the strategies that destinations have used to shape visitor behavior of social media-induced tourists and consider potential strategies that destination stakeholders can implement to help educate and guide responsible behaviors among these tourists. To achieve these objectives, a case study approach was used. Four destinations that were actively addressing overcrowding and other negative behaviors due to the phenomenon of photography for social media were

chosen as case studies: Vienna, Austria; the Faroe Islands; the Gion district of Kyoto, Japan, and Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, USA. This study delineates the behavioral biases that each intervention strategy targets to provide insight on how the strategy can be implemented in similar scenarios. Finally, a framework is introduced that provides hospitality and tourism destination stakeholders with a model for best practice to manage onsite behaviors and impacts from social media-induced travelers.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Social media-induced tourism

For the purposes of this study, it is important to define how social media-induced tourism differs from overtourism, in which there is already significant existing research (Atzori, 2020; Dodds & Butler, 2020; Gössling et al., 2018; Koens et al., 2018; Mihalic, 2020; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019; Oklevik et al., 2019; Phi, 2020; Zmyslony et al., 2020). General overtourism can be caused by a variety of factors including the more recent affordability of travel, new groups of tourists from economically emerging regions and poor destination management (Dodds & Butler, 2020). However, in recent years, there has been an uptick in visitors fueled by the temptation to photograph themselves in highly photogenic, or ‘Instagrammable’, locations. It has been cited in literature as a motivation to travel and, furthermore, as a byproduct of social status to convey an idealized, globetrotting lifestyle (Hajli et al., 2018; Lyu, 2016; Lo & Mc Kercher, 2015; Siegel & Wang, 2019; Boley, Jordan, Kline, & Knollenberg, 2018). In fact, seeing one’s friends post about their travels creates so-called “travel envy” (Hajli et al., 2018) and can even critically influence how SNS users structure their travel experiences and how they behave onsite (Gretzel, 2019; Siegel et al., 2022). In this way, social media-induced tourism differs from overtourism because of not only the motivations for traveling but also the behaviors of the tourists once they are at their intended (highly photogenic) destination. Siegel et al. (2022) describe the physical onsite manifestations of this behavior including loitering in residential spaces, inappropriate clothing, and noise pollution.

Moreover, because travelers arrive in a destination already knowing exactly the types of ‘templatable’ photos they will aim to capture for (and of) themselves (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Nikjoo & Bakshi, 2018; Smith, 2019), there is a high propensity towards ‘e-lienation’ which impedes tourists’ ability to authentically connect to destinations and keeps them more interested in the activities going on at home than in their travel experiences that are unfolding in real time (Tribe & Mkonu, 2017). Social media-induced travelers often fail to connect with a destination and local culture due to a hyper-focus on their self-presentation-based photo-taking endeavors. These travelers devote more attention to their technological devices and online interfaces than to forming an authentic connection with the destination, which alters the experience of place for both themselves and the host community.

Because these potential onsite behaviors can cause significant disturbances to the host community and could potentially continue to escalate in the absence of intervention, it is important to understand the reasons why certain tourist behaviors associated with social media-induced tourism can result in negative impacts on members of local communities (Coghlan, 2019; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012). Research can play an important role in helping to achieve this outcome.

2.2. Salient response strategies for social media-induced destinations

As the phenomenon of social media-induced tourism escalates, destinations are increasingly employing strategies to counteract the associated impacts. Scholars such as Zmyslony et al. (2020) have proposed that solutions to overtourism-related social conflicts need to consider the broad context of the given situation and establish an environment that creates valuable relations between all involved or effected parties.

Doing so should inform theoretical and practical research that seeks solutions in this context and the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders (governance, residents and hospitality and tourism providers). The most appropriate intervention approach to choose is relative to the severity of the scenario of overcrowding and overall circumstances that each destination faces, which can vary significantly from one to the next (Kalisch, 2012; Marzetti & Mosetti, 2005; Popp, 2012; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011). Thus, the full scope of potential intervention approaches should be considered so that the optimal strategy can be implemented in each unique destination scenario, which is the focus of this study.

As this study focuses on a very specific type of travel behavior, any potential destination strategy must focus on the idiosyncratic behaviors of those travelers who frequently use (and are inspired by) social media. Research tells us that there is a strong concosiation between recurrent SNS use and narcissism (Bergman, Fearrington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Canavan, 2017; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Weiser, 2015), which adds an extra hurdle to guide responsible visitor behavior and emphasize the importance of respecting and preserving local communities.

Thaler and Sunstein (2008) define nudging as a ‘soft’ paternalism that applies lessons from behavioral research to nudge users toward better decisions without restricting their options or taking away their freedom of choice. Soft paternalistic approaches reframe the choices available to increase the likelihood that people will make decisions that are beneficial to them. A cognitive bias is an error in cognition that arises in a person’s line of reasoning when decision-making is flawed by personal beliefs; nudging can provide techniques that compensate for individuals’ ability to apply judgement in complex and uncertain environments (Baumeister, 1998; Cantarelli et al., 2018; Loewenstein et al., 2003; Cislighi & Heise, 2018; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Nudges are not mandates; if an unfortunate behavioral or decision-making pattern is the result of cognitive boundaries, biases or habits, an individual may be ‘nudged’ toward a better option by integrating insights gained on the type of behavior being exhibited (Hansen, 2017). A list of common cognitive biases is available in Table 1.

Nudging has been studied in hospitality and tourism settings and has been found to be a promising tool for steering travelers towards sustainable consumption (Lehner, Mont, & Heiskanen, 2016; Smallman & Ryan, 2018; Tyers, 2018). Thus, this research will explore nudging as a salient approach to identify and address the cognitive biases of social media-induced tourism.

2.3. Research methodology

To address the research objectives, we analyzed the content of

Table 1
Common cognitive biases.

Cognitive Biases	Definition
Social Norms	Beliefs about what others do and what others think we should do, within some reference group, can guide a person’s actions in social settings
Status Quo	Preference for maintenance of one’s own current or previous state of affairs and not to undertake any action to change this state
Framing	People decide on options based on how the option are presented
Suggestibility	Tendency to fill in gaps in memory with information from other that may well be incorrect
Decision Fatigue	Deteriorating quality of decision making by an individual after a long session of decision making
Identifiable Victim Effect	People are more likely to offer help to a known individual or group rather than a vague and unknown one
Ostrich Effect	Tendency to avoid dangerous or negative information by simply closing oneself off from this information
Projection Bias	When one assumes their future preferences will remain the same as their current preferences

marketing materials, combined with stakeholder interviews in the four destinations. A case study approach was chosen because while there is much recent emerging theory on the behaviors and impacts of social media-induced travelers, there is still a gap in the management strategies that are most suitable for this subcategory of visitors. Case study research provides an *applied* approach to realize the objective of this research: to evaluate the strategies that destinations have used to shape visitor behavior of social media-induced tourists and consider potential strategies that destination stakeholders can implement to help educate and guide responsible behaviors among these tourists. The four case studies were chosen through purposive sampling as they were targeting behavior that accompanies social media-induced tourism and are thus relevant for the purpose of this study.

Content analysis was conducted to gain insights on the dissemination and media coverage of the tourist campaigns of the four case studies. The materials through which each campaign was advertised (including social media channels, websites, blogs, etc.) were analyzed to build an understanding of the campaign. Additionally, stakeholder interviews were conducted with those responsible for developing and managing the strategies in each respective destination, as denoted in Table 1. The interviewees were each in managerial roles within the destination organization team for each case and also had close experience with the strategy deployed in each instance.

The in-depth interviews with the destination managers were semi-structured with questions to examine how campaigns were launched and used as paternalistic strategies to address visitor behaviors and explore the potential for other destinations facing similar conditions to implement related techniques. There was one destination manager that acted as the point-of-contact for each case studied. Stakeholder interviews are valuable because the participants already have a wealth of knowledge on the subject being discussed, which contributes significant insight to the research (Dorussen, Lenz, & Blavoukos, 2005). The procedures for stakeholder interviews consist of several stages: preparation and planning, interview, transcription, and data analysis and interpretation (Kvale, 1996). In preparation for the interviews, background desk research was done on the destination organizations as well as the potential insights each interview participant might add. The data from both the interviews and the content analysis was transcribed, and thematic analysis was applied. Micro case-studies were built based on these destination response strategies. When presenting findings from the interviews, the interviewees will be denoted by ‘DM’ for ‘destination manager’ (see Table 2).

2.3.1. Reliability and validity

Ensuring reliability and validity within a qualitative study establishes confidence in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish validity, this research made use of multiple cases (Golafshani, 2003) and verbatim interview transcripts (Hirschman, 1986), which include assurance of meaningful parallelism of findings across multiple data sources (Yin, 1994). Additionally, a case study database was developed at the end of the data collection phase of the research, which provided a characteristic way of organizing and documenting the mass of collected data and established reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

2.4. Case studies

2.4.1. Case 1: Vienna’s “un-hashtag” campaign

In a move to counteract the adverse effects of Instagram travel behavior, the Vienna Tourist Board (VTB) introduced an “unhashtag” campaign in 2018 to encourage visitors to stay offline and see the city without their smartphones or access to social media (Buckley, 2018). There were several events that were a part of the rollout of the campaign. First, traditional print advertisements carrying the slogan “See Vienna, not #Vienna” were placed around the Vienna airport as well as London’s tube stations to target the sizeable population of English tourists who visit the city. The campaign imagery features travelers

Table 2
Destination campaign cases.

	Destination	Managing Body	Campaign Title(s)	Campaign Description
DM1	Vienna, Austria	Vienna Tourist Board	Unhashtag Vienna – See Vienna. Not #Vienna	Viral campaign implemented through traditional advertising channels to encourage visitors to put their phones away and disconnect. Influencers were invited to visit the city and given analogue cameras with only 10 photos available for their entire stay in place of their smartphones or professional photography equipment.
DM2	Faroe Islands	Faroe Islands Tourist Board	Closed for Maintenance	Entire island destination closed to tourists for 1 week per year, with an increase to 2 weeks in subsequent years. In place of visitors, volunteers were welcome (through an application program) to help locals clean up public areas.
DM3	Yellowstone National Park, USA	Yellowstone National Park Office of Strategic Communications	#YellowstonePledge #TakeThePledge	Hashtag implemented online to nudge visitors to follow destination regulations for their own safety and for the preservation of the park. Many of the restrictions were a result of photographic practices.
DM4	Gion, Kyoto, Japan	Municipality of Gion	(Photography ban)	Tourist photography ban implemented in Gion neighborhood of Kyoto, Japan wherein tourists are fined ¥10,000 for taking photographs without a permit

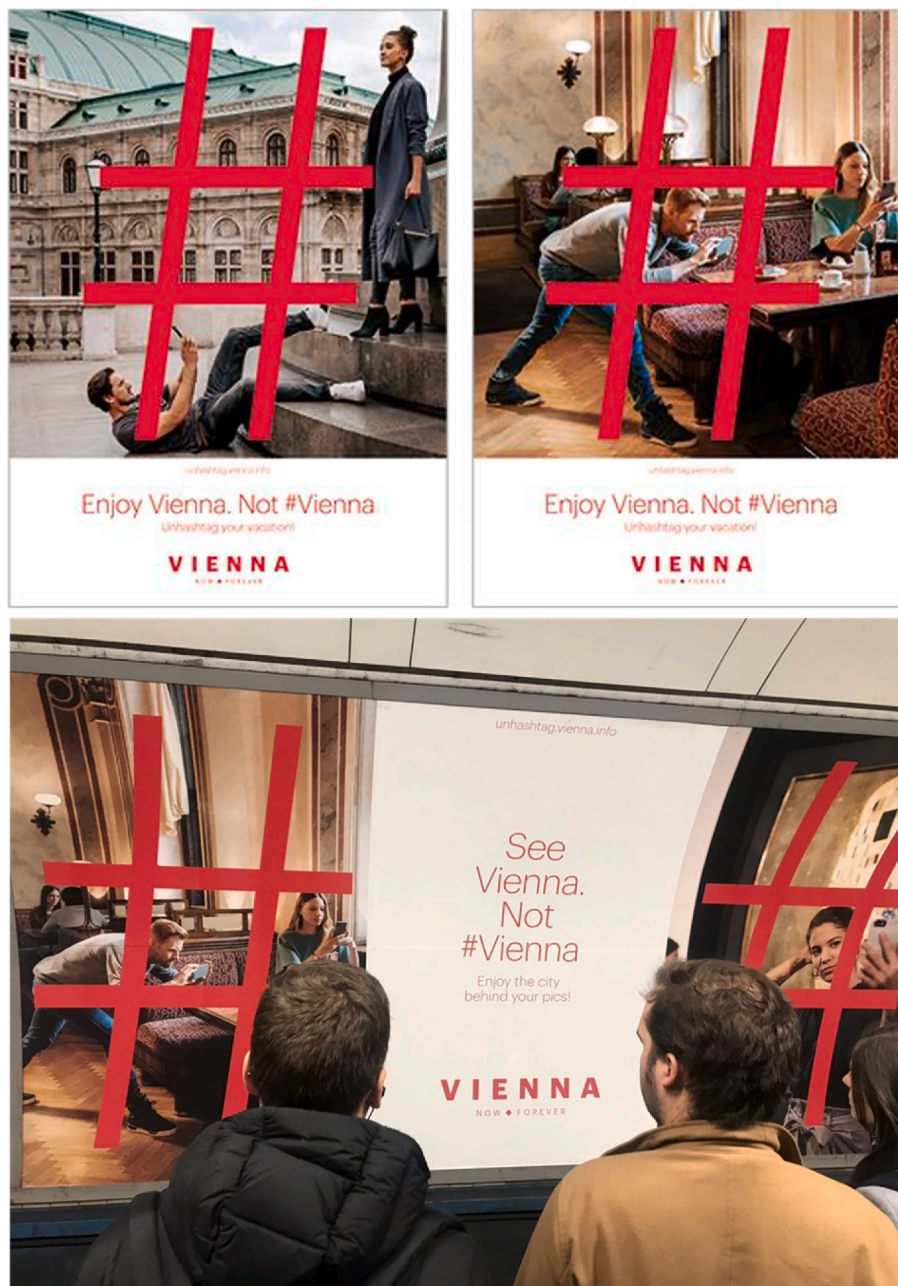


Fig. 1. Marketing materials as part of the rollout of Vienna’s “unhashtag” campaign. (Source: Vienna Tourist Board, 2019).

going to great physical lengths to capture photos along with a large ironic hashtag overlay in red (Figs. 1 and 2).

Because the most reported discontent came from tourists' constant need to be on their phones to stay socially connected while traveling in the city, the 'unhashtag' campaign leveraged this behavior and disseminated a campaign that would reach their visitors online through *social proof*. Past literature (Beall, Boley, Landon, & Woosnam, 2020; Boley et al., 2018; Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013; Liu et al., 2018; Siegel & Wang, 2018) has indicated that many travelers look to social media for proof of how others behave socially. Thus, because Vienna's "unhashtag" campaign shone a spotlight on the negative behaviors in which travelers engage in, and because the campaign was disseminated online via a hashtag, social proof is provided. This can show travelers the inherent silliness of their behaviors and, through peer influence, demonstrate how to act more appropriately. This can also subtly encourage them to re-evaluate their travel motivations.

For the second campaign event, a group of social media influencers were invited to visit Vienna and were asked to refrain from using their normal equipment, including their smartphones, and were instead provided with disposable cameras that limited them to taking only a few photographs per day. The participating influencers provided very positive feedback about their experience and said that the experience helped them to realize they were spending much time on their devices and worrying about taking photos. For instance, *Twins that Travel* reflected (see Table 3 for quotes from others who participated in the challenge):

"With no mobile phones to distract us, we spent a lazy hour [drinking coffee] simply catching up. It sounds strange but despite traveling together, the pressure to be continually documenting our experiences online means that we rarely take the time to really enjoy each other's company. To get you really thinking, try to remember your favorite three travel memories of the last year. I bet none of them were memories that were captured or shared on social media." [unhashtag.vienna.info, 2019]

The feedback provided by the influencers reinforces *Tribe and Mkono's (2017)* concept of 'e-lienation' wherein technology causes a barrier in the host-guest relationship. This includes problems of feeling disconnected from the local culture that one is visiting in favor of concerns for social media postings instead, and motivations for traveling to create social media posts that present an idealized lifestyle instead of seeking truly enriching offline travel experiences.

Table 3
Influencers' comments on unplugged experience in Vienna.

	Influencer	Comment
IF1	Dan Rubin	"Being disconnected in Vienna was dreamy — the city is already one of my favourites: the architecture and winding streets making you feel like you've stepped back in time. So, getting to spend a long weekend without using my smartphone to document my experiences — or even navigate — gave me the opportunity to do the thing our devices seem to prevent more than anything else: Interact with other people."
IF2	The Jetsetter Diaries	"It was so refreshing to visit places and actually get to enjoy them before reaching out for my phone or camera and taking hundreds of photos. Usually, I would arrive to a beautiful spot and the first thing I would think of is where to get that perfect Instagram shot. I spent hours in some of the amazing museums in Vienna walking around by myself. Instead of reaching out for my phone and documenting everything, I was completely immersed in whatever I was doing in that moment."
IF3	Passport Voyager	"My time in Vienna forced me to re-examine why I share. I started asking myself why I do this work. Sharing on social media once felt like a joy, but I'll admit, it starts to feel more like a chore when you're obligated to do it every day. I've been searching for ways to change the way I share and communicate these travel experiences, and visiting Vienna gave me a completely fresh perspective."
IF4	Taygnaz	"Once you make the decision to put your phone away and live in real-time, you transform from an outsider looking in into a genuine part of the experience. Vienna speaks to the innate wanderlust in all of us and reminds us of what it is to truly live in a world immersed with culture and natural beauty."

2.4.2. Case 2: Faroe Islands "Closed for maintenance"

The Faroe Islands had not experienced mass tourism until the last few years, when images of the islands' scenic landscape began to circulate online (Karantzavelou, 2019). Due to its small population size of 52,154 (Statista, 2020), it would be easy for the tourist numbers to outweigh those of local population. Indeed, the Faroe Islands average 110,000 visitors per year ("Why We're Closing - Again," n.d.). The tourist board surveyed the locals about their general feelings towards tourists, and to determine if they felt that there was overcrowding or had other complaints and those who lived in specific photogenic locations had a greater tendency to experience incidents of photography-seeking travelers negatively impacting their daily lives and, in some cases, damaging their land. In one incident, a shepherd tending his flock on a privately-owned mountain range claimed that his work was regularly



Fig. 2. Red hashtag placed in front of famous Klimt in Vienna. (Source: Vienna Tourist Board, 2019).. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

interrupted by traffic by tourists whose only interest in being there is to photograph his property. The problem had gotten so severe that the shepherd had to ensure that there were no tourists standing outside when he used his bathroom or shower.

Although incidents such as this have increased more recently, DM2 noted that tourism is still important to the Faroese economy: *“It is becoming increasingly difficult to make a living from farming alone. The prospect of tourism revenue can be a welcome complement to local income, so long as it is managed well, and arrival numbers are monitored.”*

Therefore, as a proactive measure, the Tourist Board created the *“Closed for Maintenance”* campaign whereby for two weekends in spring, the country was wholly closed to tourists, although visitors could apply to enter as ‘voluntourists.’ The initiative aimed to attract ‘good’ travelers who like to meet local people and feel that they have made some kind of positive contribution to the places they have visited (Ecott, 2019). The voluntourists would work alongside locals to clean and preserve the areas most affected by tourist traffic. Some of the tasks were previously done solely by locals, however, the recent tourist influx had made the work too overwhelming. For example, on a steep mountain climb on the west side of the island of Vágur, the locals regularly cleared loose stones from the path and maintained the wooden stakes that mark the route. However, this climb has become popular with travelers due to a waterfall that is one of the most-photographed sights in the Faroe Islands. Other sites selected for clean-up activities included the puffin colony on Mykines Island, the natural rock harbour at Gjógv, and the high cliffs at Trælanipa—all which are noted as ‘Instagram favorites’. One of the more significant environmental impacts faced at these sites included significant signs of erosion suffered under increased foot traffic in areas where vegetation recovers much more slowly. Thus, the consequences have potential to wreak permanent damage to the landscape and ecosystem of the Faroe Islands.

According to DM2, there was an overwhelmingly positive response to the *“Closed for Maintenance”* weekends. Not only was it a way to guide visitor behavior, but the locals also got to spend quality time with travelers, thereby contributing to a better relationship, as DM2 explained:

“[There were] various [local] people involved in other ways like making dinner and one night was entertainment night, so bringing their guitars along and singing along. So, it was a great experience and especially for the workers in the municipality, who are usually working quite a lot alone.”

These types of cultural exchanges between tourists and locals encourage deeper connections that are mutually beneficial (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). By encouraging and facilitating genuine connections with the local community, tourist motivations can shift towards having a truly authentic experience engaging with the local culture and community. The benefits of cross-cultural experiences in tourism are nothing new and have been cited as a rich source of narrative learning, respect, appreciation, inspiration, solidarity, and equality (Butler & Hinch, 1996; Coulson, MacLaren, McKenzie, & O’Gorman, 2014; Jack & Phipps, 2005; Moyle, Croy, & Weiler, 2010; Pearce, 1995; Seyfi, Hall, & Rasoolimanesh, 2020; Wearing, 2001). Furthermore, because the Faroe Islands are remote and have a small population size, visitors rarely interact with residents. Thus, the *“Closed for Maintenance”* campaign brought together residents and *voluntourists* to bring a face to the locals instead of them existing as an unknown entity, targeting the cognitive bias, the *Identifiable Victim Effect*, in which we are more likely to help a known individual or group rather than a vague and unknown one.

2.4.3. Case 3: *“take the #YellowstonePledge”*

Yellowstone National Park located [mostly] in the state of Wyoming in the United States has outstanding natural beauty and bevy of wildlife, creating an outstanding draw for visitors. The park’s many types of wildlife are especially chased for photographs and resultingly, there was an accompaniment of an increase in dangerous incidents in and around

the park. Thus, an initiative was launched encouraging visitors to take the *“#YellowstonePledge”* throughout social media and on the park’s web pages, with the hope that visitors will behave more responsibly and receive guidance from park management more effusively.

When devising elements of the pledge, park management turned to local law enforcement and asked them what they were seeing in the field, including which types of infractions were the most common. This strategy highlights the effectiveness of including the people ‘on the ground’ in the response process. Furthermore, Yellowstone Park already had a large community following on social media, but they did not have much online content about safety, including both visitor safety and safety for the preservation of park landscape and wildlife. They had already developed the Yellowstone Pledge and considered that it would be the perfect framework to convert to a social media promotion (Fig. 3).

When deciding on the messaging, it was important for park management to avoid language that could come off as too authoritative, as DM3 denoted:

“We tried to avoid using the words “don’t” and “no”. We don’t tell people what not to do, we tell people what to do. It’s practice safe selfies and stay on the boardwalk, it’s not like don’t do this, don’t do that. We tried to make it positive language giving people a framework of what to do for people who really care about National Parks and want to help their friends and family and just the general public to protect these places ... we basically gave them the tools about what to say if they want to help promote positive behavior.”

Thus, the park management authorities decided to create a campaign in the form of a hashtag: take the #YellowstonePledge. The pledge campaign also featured an accompanying video on the official Yellowstone web page highlighting some elements of the pledge. In the video, a group of visitors are taking photos of each other using their smartphones with the dramatic park landscape serving as backdrop with accompanying text: *“take care of the places that take your breath away. Take the Yellowstone Pledge.”* There is also an alternative video in which a park ranger explains some of the elements of the pledge, and then encourages viewers to share the campaign slogan on their social media accounts. It is noteworthy that the many of the specific pledge elements chosen for the video—such as keeping far from animals for ‘safe selfies’—were based on visitor photography.

The first step that the team at Yellowstone National Park took before designing their awareness campaign was to consult with those ‘on the ground’ to identify the main issues they were facing. At the management level, there can be a disconnect on the precise issues that communities are facing every day in the physical locations that are popular for photography. As Yellowstone is a national park and there is not a robust local community, the management turned to local law enforcement to advise on the types of incidents to which they were responding.

Prior to their pledge campaign, Yellowstone Park had visitor rules and regulations in place that were distributed physically (in a manual), but they were not effective as there were increasing incidents taking place in and around the park. Thus, they needed to reconsider the *framing* of their message. The newly developed materials that were shared included explanations and background information on why the elements of the pledge were important, such as the safety of the park’s wildlife and natural terrain. *Framing* is a fundamental concept in behavioral science and choices can be framed in a way that either encourages positive behavior or highlights the risks of negative behavior (Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998); a nudge must be framed in the simplest messaging possible (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008).

DM3 revealed that indeed the campaign launch had resulted in a decrease in incidents in the park. Moreover, a by-product of making the safety guidelines of the park more visible through social media, visitors had begun reporting misdemeanors they witnessed in the park through direct messaging on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. In this way, the park developed a civilian ‘task force’ to track irresponsible visitor behaviors, further demonstrating the effectiveness of the online

NPS.gov / Park Home / Plan Your Visit / Take the Yellowstone Pledge

Take the Yellowstone Pledge



DURATION: 50 seconds

Take care of the places that take your breath away.

Take the pledge. Tell a friend. Protect the park.

The National Park Service works hard to protect Yellowstone and we need your help. The best way to start is by taking the **Yellowstone Pledge**. It's a personal promise you make to yourself and the park. It can be taken anywhere: it doesn't need to be taken out loud or in front of anyone. Tag #YellowstonePledge and encourage others to do the same.

Fig. 3. Yellowstone Pledge as it appears on the official government website (Source: nps.gov, 2022)..

dissemination of the campaign.

2.4.4. Case 4: photography ban in Gion District, kyoto

The profession of *Geiko* or *Maiko*, commonly known as Geishas, is an ancient Japanese tradition and Kyoto is home to the highest concentration of *geiko*, especially concentrated in the Gion neighborhood ("Gion," 2020). In this neighborhood, known as the 'geisha district', the *geiko* entertain in small private teahouses, or *ochaya*. This practice has been a highly respected profession in Japan for centuries, one that requires many years of training and practice. Thus, it is expected that the *geiko* be respected and admired from afar. It is an exclusive and expensive opportunity to witness a geisha performance, and therefore, it can prove quite tempting to photograph them or take a selfie with them for tourists who perhaps cannot have this opportunity ("What Is a Geisha" 2019).

Unfortunately, the prospect of capturing a selfie with an authentic geisha has proved too tempting for many visitors, and negative tourist behaviors have led to an increasing and unmanageable amount of incidents. Amid a flurry of complaints about harassment and dangerous behaviors, the Gion district municipality recognized that tourism was becoming a threat in the area. Thus, a questionnaire was sent to 300 area restaurants and shops to gauge what core issues needed to be addressed. The researchers were given access to the compiled responses, and extensive insights were obtained on the scenario facing this area as a result of tourism. Some of the reported incidents are included in Table 4.

While there has previously been signage around the area asking tourists to be mindful when taking photographs, the reactionary outcome of this process was a complete photography ban in the Gion neighborhood, instituted in October 2019, and includes a fine up to 10,000 JPY (approximately USD\$100) for those found taking

Table 4

Tourist incidents in Gion, Kyoto as reported by local business owners.

Comments from Business Owners in Gion, Kyoto
"The Japanese lantern of my shop was pulled and broken by someone taking pictures."
"A taxi carrying a maiko was surrounded by tourists, creating a very dangerous situation."
"People taking pictures constantly block the entrance to my shop which creates a hindrance and makes me lose business."
"The streets become very dirty because people throw their ice cream cones and Starbucks cups on the ground."
"Photo shoots in the alleys makes congestion and blocks others from walking through."
"Glass in my store was broken by a selfie stick."
"People taking pictures cross into private homes and property and urinate, leave behind trash or kill the flowers by standing on them."
"Tourists standing or lying in the streets blocks traffic and creates many problems."
"Tourists chase after geiko or maiko for a photo down the alley."

photographs without a permit on private roads in the district (see Fig. 4). DM4 explained that visitors had widely ignored a previous measure entailing posting warning signs throughout Gion asking visitors not to take photos of the *geiko*. It was only after they included a monetary penalty that visitors started paying attention. As DM4 said, "locals living on the side streets or setting up shops there, and they tell me that tourists don't take pictures at all anymore and they are happy about this."

According to the complaints received by residents of the Gion neighborhood of Kyoto, tourists were ignoring local customs and all signs that indicated that photographic should be kept respectful towards the local community and especially the *maiko*; the Ostrich Effect is a cognitive bias wherein negative information is ignored and corresponds to this scenario of the signage being ignored by tourists. While a photography ban might not at first seem like a nudge or behavioral



Fig. 4. Photography ban signage in Gion district of Kyoto, Japan. (Source: Asahi, 2019).

intervention, because there was a penalty in place for visitors, there is still a choice.

Introducing the penalty had been very effective: DM4 revealed that visitors no longer wandered into private alleyways for photos, there was less congestion on the streets because tourists were not lingering, and the *geiko* were no longer being harassed. The locals who had complained about the photoseeking tourists shared that the ban had resolved the problem and they were experiencing far fewer incidents from travelers. Hence, the local community felt satisfied with the actions taken by the stakeholders. Their positive reactions may have also been influenced by a perception that those stakeholders have prioritized the interests of the community over the revenue gained from tourism.

3. Discussion: building an effective destination response strategy

It is important to emphasize that each destination’s strategic response should create a strategy that sustains esteemed relations

between all involved parties (Zmysłony, Kowalczyk-Anioł, & Dembińska, 2020). It is through understanding the varied context within each destination’s ecosystem that the most suitable framework can be established without overwhelming that system (Oklevik et al., 2019). The four cases of destination response strategies to increases in social media-induced irresponsible tourist behavior provide key lessons on how to build a salient destination response strategy. Additionally, the cases inform the effectiveness of the various intervention methods against different cognitive biases of the tourists targeted involving actions and interactions amongst various destination stakeholders.

Any destination strategy that addresses social media-induced tourism must be considered from several perspectives. Fig. 5 illustrates a framework for effective destination response strategy in photogenic destination experiencing influxes of social media-induced tourism. The framework demonstrates the interplays between the relevant stakeholders: at the destination and/or governmental level, the local host community and tourism-related businesses, and finally, travelers themselves.

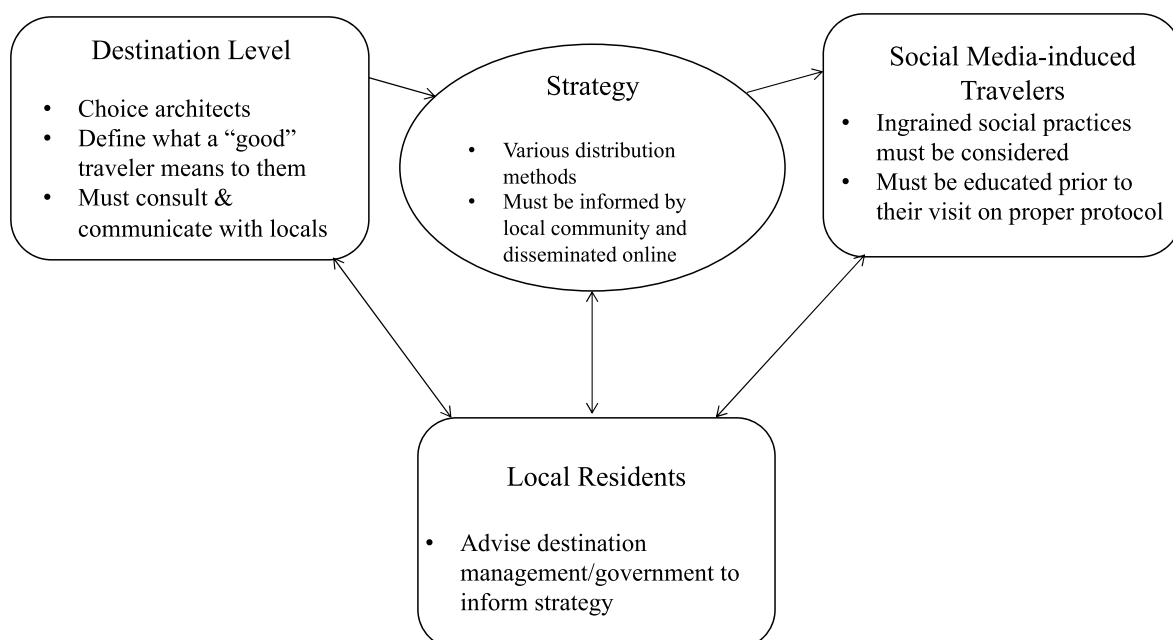


Fig. 5. Framework for effective destination response strategy.

At the destination level, *choice architects* design the range of available choices as well as the layout, sequencing and framing and have the responsibility of organizing the context in which people make decisions (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). In the context of this study, the choice architects will be those stakeholders within a destination's 'system' whom design the strategy that addresses and seeks to mitigate negative consequences from social media-induced travelers. The destination stakeholders who may ultimately be responsible for the creation and dissemination of such a strategy can include governmental or municipal agencies at the regional or national levels, tourist boards or other hospitality and tourism providers (Tuohino & Konu, 2014). These policymakers need to identify situations where people's behavior can be influenced by choice architecture and where the policymaker can feasibly influence the choice architecture (Lehner et al., 2016). This means educating visitors about the consequences of their actions so that they can take responsibility and act in a more respectful and appropriate manner as well as capitalizing on their tendencies to consume information online and through social media. If consumers wrongly perceive they are behaving ethically, marketing and communication campaigns in the form of behavioral interventions can provide complementary information to correct this impression and encourage positive shifts. Lee, Bonn, Reid, and Kim (2017) encouraged destinations to utilize several different methods of communicating responsible visitor behavior to heighten the awareness of tourists' sense of responsibility. In this context, nudging and social marketing campaigns for awareness are viable strategies.

Next, the success of tourism is often dependent on the support of local communities and therefore they should be involved in the processes of decision making, planning and implementation (Deery et al., 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolkowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019). Furthermore, studies have suggested that fostering a better relationship between local residents and travelers is one of the most effective strategies for overcoming resistance to tourism from local communities (Andereck, Valentine, Vogt, & Knopf, 2007; Marzetti & Mosetti, 2005; Styliadis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014; Su, Huang, & Huang, 2018). In each of the four cases studied in this research, the locals were consulted to some extent to advise on the specific problems they were facing 'on the ground'.

Last, as elaborated in Section 2.1, in many instances travelers may not know that their behaviors are causing disturbances (Scarles, 2012), and therefore being provided with informed background about proper local protocol and etiquette prior to their visit can be effective. Moreover, because this phenomenon by nature unfolds primarily online through social media, any successful destination strategy will have to thus appeal to an online audience to ensure that travelers have a chance to see and understand more about their expected conduct before they arrive (Chung & Koo, 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

The use of hash tagging in Yellowstone Park's awareness campaign (#YellowstonePledge) meant that the pledge could be directly disseminated online using the hashtag. As DM3 conveyed, the pledge was already in existence and distributed through the welcome leaflets that visitors received. However, it was not until it was made into a hashtag campaign that it received wider attention. DM3 went on to say that the leaflet the pledge was originally distributed through was 20 pages long and given to visitors as they enter the park. So, by placing the same information in a more succinct and fun manner online, visitors could be informed prior to their visit and prepare to modify their behavior accordingly. As DM3 explained:

"Our social media community is very good about sending us photos and videos whenever somebody is breaking the law and we can't really respond by saying we're going to prosecute. So, when I receive those, I usually respond and say you know if you want to help us even more, here's the framework for you to talk about how to be a responsible visitor in Yellowstone."

By creating awareness campaigns that utilize hashtags and unfold in

online settings, social media can be made into a conduit for addressing and changing negative touristic practices.

4. Conclusion

This study used four destination case studies to consider varying behavioral intervention strategies for managing the behaviors of social media-induced tourists. Of the four cases, there were varying levels of response and degree of restriction. McKercher, Wang, and Park (2015) noted that different destinations require different strategies that are applied on a case-by-case basis in response to place change. This research used reactionary destination strategies as examples to provide empirical support for this notion.

Behavioral science was applied to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of various traveler management strategies in such scenarios. By identifying the distinct characteristics of the types of travelers that are especially unique to a destination, behavioral intervention is a useful method to devise a best practice that addresses and helps to guide this specific type of visitor behavior and especially nudging as a more subtle technique than existing visitor strategies that might be more blatant. A framework of best practices was proposed that involves destination management stakeholders, the local community, and travelers. Within this framework, stakeholders at the destination level would work closely with the local community to identify the issues they face and to define what a 'good' traveler means in their destination's context. Then, that information would be used to develop a response strategy that is tailored to the behavioral characteristics of those visitors. Online dissemination is strongly advised as the most effective means to educate visitors on local protocol prior to their visit. These practices, overall, are more subtle than the strategies employed to counteract the negative impacts associated with more mainstream tourism.

This research considers nudging as a softer approach to visitor management in instances of tourist overwhelm due to photography in the smartphone era, which provides a useful roadmap for destination stakeholders to incorporate into their destination management strategies when facing a similar situation. While there are abundant destination strategies in areas like sustainability and community-based tourism, there is not yet a unique set of strategies that address the behavior of social media-induced tourists; this study is the first empirical investigation to focus on destinations receiving influxes of social media-induced visitors. The results show that all of the interventions studied were useful in each destination case to some degree and the strategies utilized by the four cases can serve as prototypical approaches for management stakeholders in destinations facing similar visitor management difficulties. Notably, for each approach to be most effective, it must be tailored to the negative behaviors or impacts experienced in that destination specifically. These findings are important in the context of visitor management and answers calls more research into the impacts of tourist sub-systems (Coghlan, 2019). This paper's empirical findings, when considered longitudinally, can lead to strategic action to protect and preserve local communities and lands.

This research also sets pathways for future research in this area. Behavioral science can be applied in more nuanced tourist settings and subsystems (Coghlan, 2019) to subtly nudge towards more desirable tourist conduct and behaviors, which can be conducted through an experimental research design. Additionally, there is cause to continue to research the impacts of social media-induced tourism and its consequences on both traditional touristic and especially photogenic destinations alike. More research is particularly requisite to further appraise travelers' role in this phenomenon, and interviews with relevant tourists would be a most useful research approach.

Aside from the contributions, there are some limitations of the study. Although steps were taken to verify the accuracy of the interviews as described in Section 3.1.1, content analysis and stakeholder interviews as research methods inherently carry potential biases. When conducting qualitative research, it is always important not to generalize findings

beyond the group that the research was associated with. Moreover, traveler behaviors will vary by destination, region, local culture, and visitor profile; therefore, there will be varying severity of the impact of traveler footprints. As there are specific destinations studied, the findings must be carefully considered when applying the framework and future research in this area can include additional scenarios beyond the case studies used here.

Appendix

Yellowstone Pledge – Full

- 1. Give wildlife room, use a zoom.** The safest way to view wildlife is through a telephoto lens, a spotting scope, or a pair of binoculars. Park animals are wild and dangerous. Bison, bears, and elk have injured and killed people. Do not approach, encircle, follow, or feed any animal. Stay 100 yards (91 m) from bears and wolves. Stay 25 yards (23 m) from all other animals.
- 2. Follow the beaten path.** In thermal areas, boardwalks take you to amazing places, protect the park, and keep you safe. People have been severely burned and killed after leaving the boardwalk or reaching into hot water. Geysers, mud pots, and hot springs are delicate. Don't throw anything into any hydrothermal features, touch them, or change them in any way.
- 3. Be bear aware.** Carry bear spray and know how to use it. Be alert, make noise, hike in groups, and stay on trails. If you encounter a bear, never run.
- 4. Watch out for water.** Use caution around rivers, lakes, and streams. They are cold and fast and people have died from hypothermia and drowning after accidentally falling into frigid water.
- 5. Practice safe selfies.** No picture is worth hurting yourself, others, or the park. Be aware of your surroundings whether near wildlife, thermal areas, roads, or steep cliffs.
- 6. Enjoy the ride.** Drive defensively and cautiously. This park has hazards on the road you aren't used to at home (like 2000-lb. bison). Follow speed limits and stay with your car if you're stuck in a wildlife jam. When you want to take a photo or look around, use pullouts to avoid blocking traffic and damaging vegetation. Turn off your vehicle when stopped in a traffic line.
- 7. Leave your drone at home.** Drones are not allowed in Yellowstone National Park. They disturb wildlife, interfere with park operations, and bother people trying to enjoy natural sounds.
- 8. Clean, Drain, Dry.** Help us prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Clean, drain, and dry your watercraft and fishing gear before you come into the park or move from one body of water to another.
- 9. Stash your trash.** Recycle what you can and put the rest in bear-resistant trash cans so animals can't get to it. If a can happens to be full, find another.
- 10. Leave what you find.** Don't take antlers, artifacts, rocks, plants, or other objects from the park.

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