

## **SOCIAL MEDIA ACCEPTANCE IN PROMOTING DOMESTIC TOURISM TO LOCAL TOURISTS IN JAPAN**

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### **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence Japanese tourism customer decision-making. It was conducted to measure the relationship between the dependent variable, Japanese tourism customer decision-making and independent variables online contents, social media advertisement, and authenticity of online user account. The Customer Decision Process framework is applied as the underpinning theory. This research is conducted using a quantitative research method, and the primary data collected are analysed by using the Social Science Statistics Package (SPSS) software.

**Keywords:** *Customer Decision, Online Content, Social Media, Authenticity*

## 1.0 Introduction

Japan is located 3,000 km to the east of the Asian continent. It consists of four main islands, and they are Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Hokkaido, with more than 4,000 other smaller and scattered islands. These are referred to as the Japanese archipelago. The land area is about 378,000 square kilometres, which is slightly larger than Malaysia and 1/25 of China. The Japanese archipelago has several volcanoes and is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan. As a result, the terrain is varied, rivers are short and rapid, deep canyons are formed in the mountains, and coastlines are intricate. There are many scenic spots and hot spring locations to be found. In addition, two-thirds of Japan's land area is mountainous, and Japan has the second-highest forest rate in the world. A rich natural environment is a characteristic of Japan (Komura, 2021). Thus, the Japanese tourism industry could play an important role in promoting these locations to both local and international tourists.

Currently, reducing the number of domestic tourists is becoming an issue in Japan. According to Japan Tourism Agency (2020), 1,620,000 Japanese spent their holiday abroad, and 604,720,000 had their holidays domestically in 2015. However, in 2019, the number of Japanese who spent their holidays overseas has risen to 2,008,000 people, as compared to 587,100,000 people who spent their holidays locally. These numbers have shown that spending holidays abroad are more popular among Japanese, and the number of Japanese visiting domestic locations is declining despite having interesting places to visit within the country. Therefore, is this phenomenon due to lacked publicities and promotions of Japan's local tourist attractions to locals. Is there enough information about these attractions being relayed to them? How prompt this information could reach them, and is the authenticity of the information extended? Moreover, through which media platforms are this information being frequently distributed?

Nowadays, social media is seen as one of the popular platforms being used by individuals and companies in promoting products and services. It is a medium that uses the Internet, and a two-way communication that anyone can participate in". According to Okuyama (2019), various social media platforms such as blogs, Social Networking Sites (SNS), video sharing sites, Frequent Asked Questions (FAQ) sites, and online encyclopedias are widely used in Japan. Among these social media platforms, the usage rate of SNS such as Facebook, Twitter Instagram, and mixi has increased rapidly in recent years, and they are popular among the younger generation.

SNS has emerged as an important communication tool between businesses and consumers as these platforms help to attract online viewers' attention to products, issues and news, as well as spread information to societies at large. There is a phenomenon that many users accumulate in the short term and affect the consumers' decision-making when an individual expresses an attitude by "like" and conveys information by "share" on his or her SNS page (Matsui, 2020). According to Smm (2021), Instagram has become widespread in Japan and is used by a wide range of age groups. According to a survey conducted by Allied Architects in December 2020, Instagram usage by age group was 65% for 15-19 years old, 57.3% for 20s, 47.8% for 30s, 40.2% for 40s, and 29.4% for 50s. Thus, Instagram is the most popular social media platform in Japan. Nevertheless, could Instagram's features that focus on photos, videos and short messages be useful when promoting Japanese tourism locations and attractions?

## 1.1 Problem Statement

Online content refers to information provided in the form of texts, images, and videos that are posted on websites, SNS, blogs, e-mail and instant messages (Shimoyama, 2021). Photos and videos about tourists destinations and facilities provided by travel agents, airlines, hoteliers, and advertising companies together with reviews from on SNS of people who have experienced travelling on some tourists destinations could generate interest among other online viewers to visit these locations as well (Tachibana, 2019). Nevertheless, the problem with online content is that at times it is difficult to

understand and interpret messages posted by individuals. Finding the right and understandable messages can be a daunting task for most people. What are the types of online content that could be useful in generating more understanding for internet viewers?

Advertisements that are posted on social media platforms are referred to as social media advertisements, and they are increasing over the years as Internet users whether individuals or companies are actively advertising their products and services over these platforms (Mukai, 2020). As a result, they could generate more audiences through online presence as social media platforms can attract more people who may spend long hours engaging themselves on these platforms. Besides, viewers could socialise and engage with others to discuss their favourite products, which could be useful feedback for both individuals and tourism industry players. Thus, it could be more lucrative for companies to acquire more customers on social media (Murayama, 2021) which is less costly as compared to the traditional. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of social media advertisements is questionable as to how they could influence local tourists to decide on the local places that they would like to visit in Japan.

SNS accounts operated by individuals are good at gathering high empathy, but their reliability is low. One of the major reasons is the anonymity of the account owners. Individuals can disseminate information without disclosing their identity or personal information on SNS and may not be responsible for the content that they have posted (Orita, 2016). Here, the issue of online user authenticity and their social media account validity is questionable in persuading local tourists to make decisions on the local places that they want to visit in Japan.

## **1.2 Research Question**

- What is the relationship between the types of online content and tourism customer decision-making?
- What is the relationship between the effectiveness of social media advertisement through online information exchanges and tourism customer decision-making?
- What is the relationship between the authenticity of online user account and tourism customer decision-making?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Customer Decision-Making Process**

It would take some time for consumers to become aware of a particular product or service before consuming it as consumers need to gather information about these products and services, process emotions, and compare and evaluate with other products of the same nature. This series of processes from the recognition of a product or service to the purchase is called the “decision-making process” (Axis, 2020) as according to Sirai (2020), consumers want "better consumption" and "no regrets".

Tsukada (2020) mentions that consumer decision-making has a five-step purchasing decision-making process advocated by Philip Kotler. There is a step-by-step process before consumers make a purchase decision, and only those who successfully overcome this barrier are considered "worthy of purchase". Incu (2020) explained that the five steps are awareness, information retrieval, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decisions, and post-purchase behaviour. The first step is awareness whereby consumers would become aware of his or her needs. The second step is information retrieval in which consumers would gather more information about a product that he or she wishes to acquire. In this situation, the most notable points for marketers are the main sources of information that are consumed by consumers and the relative influences that each source would lead to their purchasing decisions. The third step is the evaluation of alternatives. Consumers process information based on available and competing brands in a market and make final purchasing decisions based on the

information gathered and evaluations made. The fourth step is purchasing decisions. At this evaluation stage, consumers make selection decisions among the brands that they intend to buy. The fifth step is post-purchase behaviour in which marketers need to monitor post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase behaviour, and post-purchase product specifications among consumers to gain sustainability in the market.

## **2.2 Online Content**

Shimoyama (2021) refers to online content as text, images, videos, and photos that are posted on websites. It also includes content that is posted on SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blogs, and photo-sharing sites, as well as online reviews by online viewers about products available on these sites. This content could be created and posted by anyone and at any time (Muraoka, 2016). Online viewers could access more current information about products and services that are posted on these platforms. According to Tachibana (2019), online content is important for the tourism industry. Photos and videos provided by travel agencies and advertising companies, as well as other tourists' posts and reviews on SNS would assist in promoting tourists' locations. Nevertheless, what is the most preferred online content among consumers when making decisions on tourist locations to visit?

H1: There is a relationship between the types of online content and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

## **2.3 Social Media Advertisement**

Social media advertisement is becoming popular as more people spend more time on social media platforms Murayama (2021). Thus, companies could gain more audiences by engaging contact points with target users virtually. Mukai (2020) states that unique targeting using first-party data is possible. For example, Twitter has the characteristic that follow-up is created for each hobby and interest, and it has a good reputation for targeting based on the interests of these users. In addition, since Facebook and Instagram have a real name registration system, the registered information such as demographic information is highly accurate, and highly accurate targeting can be used. In this situation, social media advertisement is an advertising measure that can deliver targeted advertisements from various perspectives according to the purpose of the advertisement and the focused target group that a digital marketer wants to reach.

Social media advertisements are delivered through videos and photos that promote online engagement between sellers and buyers. In addition, buyers who are highly motivated to purchase products would participate through word-of-mouth searches via Twitter and Instagram. Social media advertisement enables sellers to reach users in a wide range of phases, such as from consumers whose needs have not yet become apparent, to consumers who are actively seeking product information, and existing customers. For instance, the tourism industry may depend on social media content posted by travel agents and tourism boards to generate popularity among internet viewers that could be measured by the number of "likes" that are stated by other internet users (Comnico, 2021; JTB, 2021). Nonetheless, could these online engagements between sellers and buyers boost local tourist destinations in Japan?

H2: There is a relationship between the effectiveness of social media advertisement and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

## **2.4 Authenticity of Online User Account**

The anonymity of information sources that are posted on social media occurs when individuals do not disclose their identities or personal information. Therefore, the authenticity and validity of these messages are questionable. This is supported by Orita (2016) that social media accounts operated by individuals are good at gathering high empathy, but their authenticity and reliability are low.

Nonetheless, visual anonymity has been reduced as more photos are posted on social media account holders' profiles, but nonverbal information in real-time conversations is still lacking its sources.

Another issue of anonymity is whether to call oneself "real name, pseudonym, or anonymity." The displayed name looks like a real name, but someone may be impersonating the person. On the other hand, although the real name is unknown, posts with a specific nickname and reputation may be accumulated, and the identity by that name may be clarified. If a user decides to use a real name like Facebook, or if users are originally acquainted with each other like LINE, it is almost like the real name, but since users are free to give the name on Twitter, users can trust it even though it is a pseudonym. For this reason, official accounts of companies and local governments on social media have mutual links between their official websites and the relevant social media with a certification mark that they are official websites.

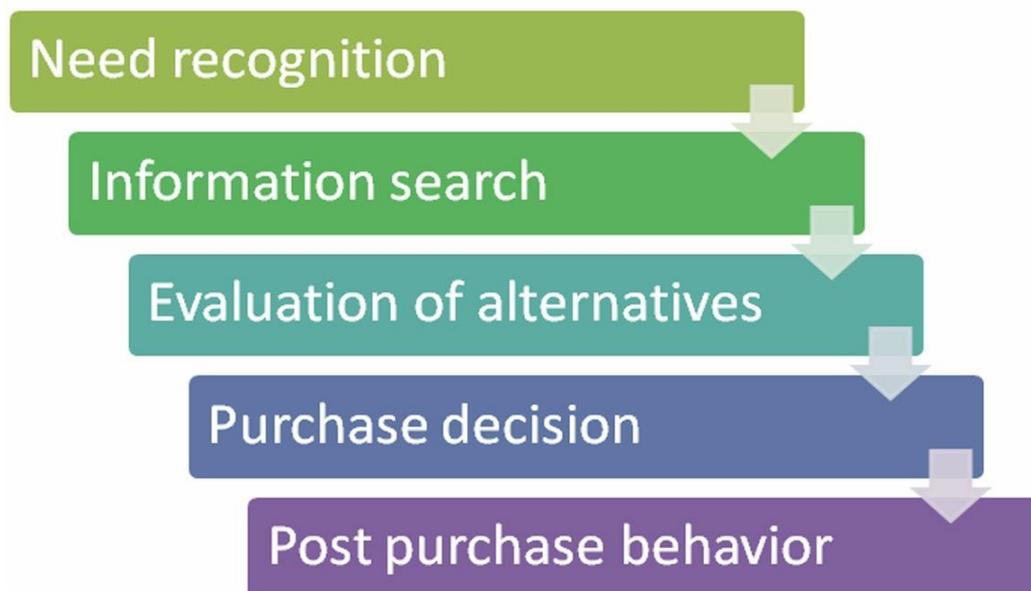
H3: There is a relationship between the authenticity of online user account and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

### 2.5.1 Customer Decision Process

The purchasing decision-making process consists of five steps, and they are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Wakayama, 2021).

*Figure 1: Consumer Buyer Decision Process (Askew, n.d.)*

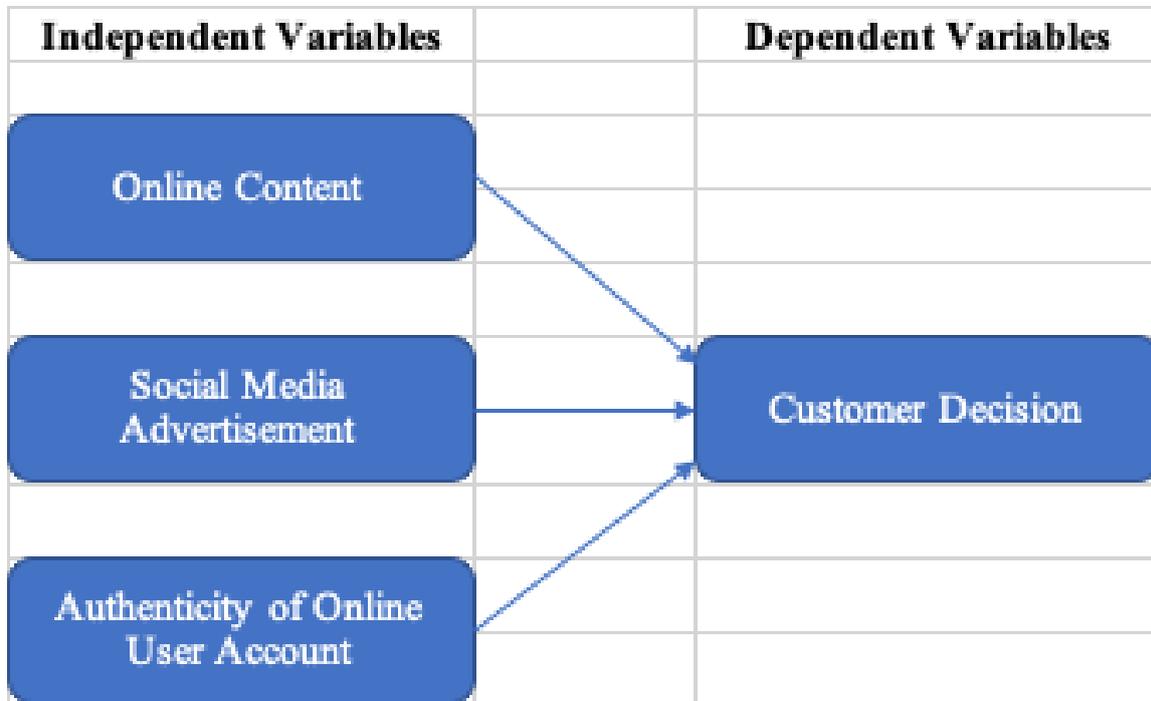


The purchasing process begins when consumers become aware of a need to consume products or services. This leads them to search for information on these products and services which they rely on information provided by marketers. Nevertheless, before the decisions are made, consumers would generally evaluate the alternatives available in the market. Here, consumers gather information from competing brands and make final value decisions. At the evaluation stage, consumers make decisions about which product brands they would want to acquire. This forms the intent to buy the brand the consumers like the most. At the post-purchase behaviour, marketers need to monitor consumers' post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase behaviour, and post-purchase product specifications Incu (2020) in ensuring the sustainability of their product's demand.

### 2.5.2 Research Framework

The research framework is constructed based on a dependent variable, that is customer decision, together with three independent variables, which are online content, social media advertisement and authenticity of online user account.

Figure 2: Factors Influencing the Travel Decision-Making



### 3.0 Research Methodology

This research applies the quantitative research method, in which the primary data is collected through surveys (questionnaires). The target population of this survey are Japanese. According to the statistics by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the population who are living in Japan as of December 1, 2021, is 125.47 million people, with 60.99 million men and 64.48 million women (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2021). Thus, the sample size for this research is calculated based on 125.47 million people by using Raosoft derived from the outcome of 120 respondents. This reflects a 92% confidence level with a margin of error of 8%.

### 4.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### 4.1 Demographic Analysis

In this research, the demographic analysis consists of research data namely respondents' profiles such as gender, age, educational background, occupation, monthly income, and social media usage. The number of respondents to this survey was 120.

##### 4.1.1 Gender

In this survey, 120 responses were collected, and they were Japanese in which 44.2% of the respondents were male and 55.8% were female.

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	53	44.2	44.2	44.2
	Female	67	55.8	55.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 1: The frequency distribution of respondents according to gender*

#### 4.1.2 Age

The respondents' age groups fall into 5 categories. The largest respondent group in this research is between 20 to 29 years old which represents 65.8%, and the smallest group is 50 years old and above with 4.2%.

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	19 years old and below	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
	20 - 29 years old	79	65.8	65.8	70.8
	30 - 39 years old	15	12.5	12.5	83.3
	40 - 49 years old	15	12.5	12.5	95.8
	50 years old and above	5	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 2: The frequency distribution of respondents according to age*

#### 4.1.3 Education

Out of 120 respondents, the postgraduates represent 50% of the total respondents.

		Education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Diploma	1	.8	.8	5.8
	Degree	42	35.0	35.0	40.8
	Post graduate	60	50.0	50.0	90.8
	Others	11	9.2	9.2	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 3: The frequency distribution of respondents according to education*

#### 4.1.4 Occupation

In this research, 40% of the respondents were students, 45% were employed people, 10% were self-employed people, and 5% were others.

		Occupation			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	48	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Employed	54	45.0	45.0	85.0
	Self employed	12	10.0	10.0	95.0
	Others	6	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 4: The frequency distribution of respondents according to occupation*

#### 4.1.5 Monthly Income

In this research, the respondents come from various salary ranges with the highest number earning RM7,001 and above. The income range stated after conversion from Yen.

		Monthly Income			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	RM 1,000 and below	25	20.8	20.8	20.8
	RM 1,001 - 4,000	27	22.5	22.5	43.3
	RM 4,001 - 7,000	14	11.7	11.7	55.0
	RM7,001 and above	54	45.0	45.0	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 5: The frequency distribution of respondents according to monthly income*

#### 4.1.6 Social Media Usage

This research analyses whether respondents use social media daily, and it shows that 99.2% of the respondents answered “Yes” and 0.8% answered “No”.

		Social Media 1			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	119	99.2	99.2	99.2
	No	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 6: The frequency distribution of respondents according to social media usage*

#### 4.1.7 Time Spend on Social Media Daily

This survey analyses how long the respondents spend their time on social media daily. The result shows that 49.2% of the respondents spend between 1 to 3 hours engaging on social media.

**Social Media 2**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 hours and below	14	11.7	11.7	11.7
	1 - 3 hours	59	49.2	49.2	60.8
	3 - 6 hours	37	30.8	30.8	91.7
	6 hours and above	10	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

*Table 7: The frequency distribution of respondents according to social media usage*

#### 4.1.8 Customer Decision Making

This research examines whether social media content may influence the Japanese to choose and visit their local tourism destinations. Table 8 states the percentage of responses based on the feedback from questionnaires.

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
CD1	Do you use social media to view domestic tourism destinations?	0%	3.3%	10.8%	39.2%	46.7%	Strongly Agree
CD2	Does social media influence your domestic tourism travelling decisions?	0%	4.2%	9.2%	38.3%	48.3%	Strongly Agree
CD3	Does social media influence you to visit a particular domestic tourism decision? (Is it suitable for the promotion of tourism destinations?)	0%	5.8%	10.0%	44.2%	40.0%	Agree
CD4	You use social media to gather information about domestic tourism because you can see many pictures and videos on social media.	0%	3.3%	7.5%	22.5%	66.7%	Strongly Agree
CD5	You use social media to gather information about domestic tourism because you can see reviews based on actual experience.	0%	5.0%	10.0%	40.8%	44.2%	Strongly Agree

*Table 8: The itemized questionnaire of the Customer Decision part*

Table 8 shows that 46.7% of the respondents strongly agree that they use social media to view domestic tourism destinations, 48.3% strongly agree that social media influence them to visit local tourism destinations, 44.2% agree that social media influence them to visit a particular domestic tourism decision, 66.7% strongly agree that they use social media to gather information about domestic tourism because they can see many pictures and videos on the social media, and 44.2% strongly agree that they use social media to gather information about domestic tourism because you

can see reviews based on actual experience. Hence, social media play important role in promoting local tourism destinations to Japanese. They found that social media could influence them through online content such as pictures and videos, as well as other tourists' online reviews based on their experiences when visiting these places.

#### 4.1.9 Online Contents

This research analyses the effectiveness of online content that influences the Japanese to decide to visit local tourist locations.

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
OC1	Online posting has a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.	4.2%	16.7%	30.8%	31.7%	16.7%	Agree
OC2	Information on social media has a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.	0.8%	5.0%	28.3%	45.0%	20.8%	Agree
OC3	Pictures on social media have a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.	0%	0%	5.0%	35.8%	59.2%	Strongly Agree
OC4	Videos on social media have a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.	0%	1.7%	7.5%	38.3%	52.5%	Strongly Agree
OC5	Reactions to social media posts (likes, spreads, comments) have a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.	5.0%	14.2%	24.2%	38.3%	18.3%	Agree

**Table 9: The itemized questionnaire of the Online Contents part**

Table 9 shows that 31.7% of the respondents agree that online posting whether they are by the public, celebrities, and businesses may influence them to make decisions to visit local tourism locations. In addition, 45.0% agree that information that is available on social media and 59.2% strongly agree that pictures posted on social media have a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions. Moreover, 52.5% strongly agree that videos that are available on social media could assist them in making decisions to visit local tourist locations. Finally, 38.3% agree that reactions to social media posts (likes, spreads, comments) have a particular influence on domestic tourism decisions.

Therefore, online content such as pictures, videos, and internet users' engagements through their "Likes", electronic-word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and comments are the influencing factors for local tourists to decide to visit the local tourist places of attractions in Japan.

#### 4.1.10 Social Media Advertisement

This research analyses the effectiveness of social media advertisement that influences the Japanese to decide to visit local tourist locations.

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
AD1	Social media tourism advertisement influences my domestic tourism decisions.	0.8%	5.0%	20.8%	42.5%	30.8%	Agree
AD2	Social media tourism advertisements are attractive to me.	0%	5.0%	15.0%	44.2%	35.8%	Agree
AD3	I prefer to visit tourist destinations based on social media advertising suggestions.	3.3%	15.8%	29.2%	35.8%	15.8%	Agree
AD4	I prefer to suggest domestic travel destinations to friends and family based on social media advertisements.	4.2%	13.3%	25.8%	40.8%	15.8%	Agree
AD5	I am likely to change my attitude towards certain domestic tourism destinations if I read positive comments, suggestions, or reviews through social media advertisements.	0.8%	7.5%	18.3%	37.5%	35.8%	Agree

**Table 10: The itemized questionnaire of the Social Media Advertisement part**

Table 10 shows that 42.5% of the respondents agree that social media tourism advertisement influences their domestic tourism decisions, 44.2% agree that social media tourism advertisements are attractive to them to decide, 35.8% agree that they prefer to visit tourist destinations based on social media advertising suggestions, 40.8% agree that they prefer to suggest domestic travel destinations to friends and family based on social media advertisements, 37.5% agree that they are likely to change their attitude towards certain domestic tourism destinations if they read positive comments, suggestions, or reviews through social media advertisement.

Therefore, social media advertisements could play an important role in promoting local tourism destinations in Japan. The respondents would suggest specific tourism destinations that attract their attention from social media advertisements to their families and friends. They also may form some views to visit these locations by reading positive comments, suggestions and reviews from other internet viewers who have visited those places. All these are gained from social media advertisement.

#### 4.1.11 Authenticity of Online User Account

This research analyses whether the authenticity of online user account in which social media advertisements are viewed influences the Japanese to decide to visit local tourist locations.

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Median
AU1	I trust information about domestic tourism on social media.	0.8%	8.3%	25.8%	48.3%	16.7%	Agree
AU2	I think social media domestic	4.2%	10.8%	33.3%	32.5%	19.2%	Neutral

	tourism information is more reliable than mass media information.						
<b>AU3</b>	I check the authenticity of the social media account owner when I gather information about domestic tourism on social media.	0.8%	14.2%	28.3%	28.3%	28.3%	Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
<b>AU4</b>	I am likely to trust postings about domestic tourism if it is contributed by a travel agency or a company that provides tourism-related services.	0.8%	10.0%	16.7%	34.2%	38.3%	Strongly Agree
<b>AU5</b>	I am likely to trust information that is posted on social media if the sources come from the public at large.	1.7%	5.8%	20.0%	45.0%	27.5%	Agree

**Table 11: The itemized questionnaire of the Authenticity of Online User Account part**

Table 11 shows that 48.3% of the respondents agree that they trust information about domestic tourism on social media, 33.3% remain neutral on the reliability of information posted on social media as compared to mass media, 28.3% agree that they check the authenticity of social media account owners when they gather information about domestic tourism and could also be neutral on that matter, 38.3% strongly agree that they are likely to trust the information if this information is posted by a travel agency or a company that provides tourism related services, and 45.0% agree that they are likely to trust information in which the sources come from the public at large.

Therefore, from the survey, the Japanese are more likely to trust information that is posted by tourism-related agencies and the public at large. They are more likely to remain neutral when it comes to checking the authenticity of social media account holders as they may perceive that the authenticity of these account holders is valid.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Hypothesis Testing**

Regression analysis is an analysis for estimating the relationship between the dependent variable "Customer Decision" and the independent variables "Online Contents", "Social Media Advertisement", and "Authenticity of Online User Account". Table 12 below indicates the regression coefficient analysis in which the Beta value of "Social Media Advertisement" (TotalAD) is the highest, Beta = 0.330, and the significance value is  $p = 0.001$ . Therefore, it shows that "Social Media Advertisement" has the greatest influence on Japanese tourism customer decision-making. In addition, the second most influential factor is "Online Contents" (TotalOC), which has a Beta value of Beta = 0.291 and a significant value of  $p = 0.003$ . Lastly, the factor with the least influence is "Authenticity of Online User Account" (TotalAU), which has a Beta value of Beta = 0.036 and a significant value of  $p = 0.708$ . If the significance value is less than 0.05, the independent variable contributes significantly to the dependent variable. Therefore, "Social Media Advertisement" and "Online Contents" contribute significantly to the dependent variable "Customer Decision".

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.391	1.822		5.154	<.001		
	TotalOC	.324	.106	.291	3.064	.003	.649	1.540
	TotalAD	.268	.080	.330	3.365	.001	.609	1.643
	TotalAU	.036	.096	.036	.376	.708	.627	1.594

a. Dependent Variable: TotalCD

**Table 12: The regression coefficient analysis**

In this research, it is taken that when the significance value is  $p < 0.05$ , the hypothesis is highly evaluated. As per the correlation test analysis, the significant value of "Online Contents (H1)" is 0.003, "Social Media Advertisement (H2)" is 0.001, and "Authenticity of Online User Account (H3)" is 0.708. Thus, the hypothesis of H3 was rejected because the value of H3 was above 0.05. For H1 and H2, the values were less than 0.05 and were accepted. Therefore, there are relationships between the types of online content and tourism customer decision-making, and between the effectiveness of social media advertisement and tourism customer decision-making.

Hypothesis	Significance	Findings	Results
<b>H1:</b> There is a relationship between the types of online content and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.	0.003	$P < 0.05$	Accepted
<b>H2:</b> There is a relationship between the effectiveness of social media advertisement and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.	0.001	$P < 0.05$	Accepted
<b>H3:</b> There is a relationship between the authenticity of online user account and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.	0.708	$P > 0.05$	Rejected

**Table 13: Hypothesis testing of this survey**

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

#### 4.3.1 Discussion for Hypothesis 1

**H1:** There is a relationship between the types of online content and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

Based on this survey, the result indicates that there is a relationship between the types of online content and Japanese tourism customer decision-making. The Beta value of "Online Contents" was  $\text{Beta} = 0.291$  and the significant value of  $p = 0.003$ . Therefore, it shows that "Online Contents" could influence Japanese tourism customer decision-making. Online content such as pictures, videos and internet users' reactions to these postings have a positive impact on Japanese in making decisions to visit their local tourist attraction locations. They could view pictures and videos to give them deeper interests and understanding to get to know more and visit these locations (Tachibana, 2019).

### 4.3.2 Discussion for Hypothesis 2

**H2:** There is a relationship between the effectiveness of social media advertisement and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

Based on this survey, the result indicates that there is a relationship between the effectiveness of social media advertisement and Japanese tourism customer decision-making. The Beta value of "Social Media Advertisement" was the highest, and that is 0.330, and the significance value is  $p = 0.001$ . Therefore, it shows that "Social Media Advertisement" has the greatest influence on Japanese tourism customer decision-making. Comnico (2021) also indicates that social media advertisement is very important for tourism customer decision-making because the percentage of people who find out about tourism destinations on social media or learn about tourism destinations through social media is increasing.

This is supported by a survey conducted in 2020 on Kochi Prefecture Tourism Official Twitter and Instagram accounts, in which their social media advertisements had a great influence on tourism customer decision-making. Approximately half a year after it started, Kochi Prefecture conducted an online survey on SNS viewers to investigate whether there are changes in their attitude towards social media advertisement. The questionnaire was posted on Twitter and Instagram, and the number of valid responses was 531 (followers: 365, non-followers: 166). As a result, 33% of the followers answered that they visited Kochi prefecture for sightseeing, and it became clear that the economic effect estimated from the average tourism consumption was about 650 million yen. Even though it is less than 50%, it is still proven that social media advertisement plays an important role in influencing tourists to make decisions about their preferred holiday locations.

### 4.3.3 Discussion for Hypothesis 3

**H3:** There is a relationship between the authenticity of online user account and Japanese tourism customer decision-making.

Based on this survey, the result indicates that there is no significant relationship between the authenticity of online user account and tourism customer decision-making. The Beta value of "Authenticity of Online User Account (IV3)" was  $\text{Beta} = 0.036$  and the significant value of  $p = 0.708$ . Therefore, it shows that "Authenticity of Online User Account" has the least influence on Japanese tourism customer decision-making. However, Orita (2016) indicates that the authenticity of online user account plays an important role in influencing user decision-making. Nonetheless, this survey result has shown otherwise.

According to Sasakawa (2019), the way of thinking about reliability changes greatly depending on whether a contract or payment of money occurs. For example, if people were to check information about tourist destinations offered by company A through their brochures, and purchase the travel plan, then these people would be sensitive to the reliability of the information provided. On the other hand, if people use social media just to gather travel information, some of them may think that the reliability of information gathered from social media account, and the authenticity of the owner from which the information is generated is not very important.

## 5.0 Implications of Research

With the rapid spread of the Internet and smartphones, the usage rate of social media has also increased rapidly in recent years. Social media is becoming more diverse in features and users, and current research in its applications is important in facilitating both sellers and buyers to trade and consume. The survey also reveals the factors that could have a significant impact on the Japanese tourism industry. Furthermore, it would provide support for other researchers to do research in this field in the future by exploring discoveries that leads to a better understanding of how social media

applications could create awareness about products and services, particularly those that are new in their respective industries. In addition, Orita (2016) indicates that the authenticity of online user account influences user decision-making, but based on this survey, it has shown that there is no significant relationship between the authenticity of online user account and customer decision-making among Japanese. Thus, it could be considered a new dimension for future research.

From the practical implications point of view, this survey is very informative to maximize the influence of social media on the Japanese tourism industry. The Japanese tourism industry is facing the problem of a decrease in domestic travel and the accompanying depopulation of rural areas. Therefore, it is expected that the promotion of tourism destinations will be activated by investigating the factors that influence decision-making.

## **6.0 Limitations and Recommendations**

The results of this survey report depend on the authenticity of the respondents when conducting the questionnaire. Therefore, there were some limitations to this survey. Firstly, the respondents of this survey are a small sample, so the results of this survey could not be concluded as an overall result. The expected number of respondents of this survey was 150-180. However, since only 120 responses were collected, the analysis of the data relied on only 120 responses. Secondly, there are cost-based restrictions because the researcher does not have access to documents that require payment. Finally, the survey is limited to three independent variables but there may be other variables that may influence customer decision-making.

In this survey, as social media is becoming very popular over the years, it was not possible to conduct a separate survey by age group., especially among young people. Thus, it is expected that the results will be quite different for each age group. Therefore, it is recommended that future research will be conducted separately based on age group.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

Based on this research, it can be seen that social media plays important role in promoting the tourism industry to the Japanese. Effective online content such as pictures and videos, as well as online engagement with other internet users enable local tourists, particularly Japanese to decide on the locations where they would want to spend their holidays and vacations. In addition, social media advertisements enable the Japanese to view these locations, evaluate and decide which one may attract them most to visit. Nevertheless, the authenticity of these information sources does not present an issue for the Japanese as they well accepted that information available online.

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