

How Sri Lanka Promotes Cultural Values through Social Media (Especially Reference to Selected YouTube Channels)

Amila Lokumannage
Department of Mass Media, Sri Palee Campus,
University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

This study examined how Sri Lanka portrayed culture in perspective of world tourism through YouTube. Central to the study is to find out what ways videos and information are used on promoting Sri Lankan culture through YouTube. YouTube videos which were published in 2023/2024 analyzed YouTube channels and the selected YouTubers were interviewed. An analysis of traveling videos of YouTubers was done to ascertain how Sri Lanka is portrayed in context of global tourism. The interviews and text analysis provided data needed to answer the research questions. Previous research findings and the text analysis revealed that the Sri Lanka YouTubers mostly introduce Sri Lanka as a destination for diving area and didn't create a special channel for traveling. In conclusion the study suggested different areas for improvement so as to make Sri Lankan YouTubers more effective on advertising the tourism industry of the country globally as well as constructively attracting local people to engage as operators in tourism related business, while at the same time painting the image of the country so as to attract more foreign tourists.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Tourism, Social Media, Culture, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a native habitus for many and is a place for performing various roles in their society, as a professional, a parent, an acquaintance, and a colleague. Looking especially at local culture on YouTube, Sri Lankan youth is not the only group using YouTube as a medium of creativity in video uploading and benefit. Young people from several countries have done the same. Some of the YouTube channel, followed by hundreds of thousands of users indicates that YouTube as new media has a positive side to their group.

This revolution is purported to unfold in the realm of imagination, not in the sense of what is possible in a symbolic world collectively inhabited and invested in, but in the more traditional sense of individual creativity: a freeing of mind to think and rethink what is possible (McLuhan, 1964).

Previous research indicated that people's social use of communication technologies varies as a function of the purpose of communication and relational as well as geographic distance between communication partners (Yang, 2014). Most of the research was conducted before social networking sites became a fixture in local culture. The study was conducted on college students. It seems likely that college students will choose technologies with features that match the communication pattern of a relationship, given its level of relational development. While some earlier studies touched on the issue, many merely speculated on the reasons for the observed patterns without providing data that directly addressed the association between media features and media choice.

The key is individuation: it is only through self-expression that the individual is able to shake off the deadening, flattening pressure of market forces. The difference lies in the consequences of those cultures, subsuming the individual to a collective product on one hand,

and enabling individuals to be heard by at least a minimally attentive and comprehending audience on the other.

Consequently, the two research questions to be identified are:

1. How Sri Lankan YouTubers represent Sri Lanka in context of global tourism?
2. What is socio-culture significance of social media for YouTubers and its viewers?

Local cultures are examined in this study and assessed and narrowed in some areas, tourist sites, and local community life. The second key word is tailored to the global tourism and creativity in YouTube network.

Heritage tourism definitions are approached by some authors from a purely descriptive point of view, in categorizing the components what heritage tourism should include (Timothy & Boyd, 2022).

Cultural heritage not only determines the image of the city, but is also essential for establishing the context that stimulates creativity. Cultural heritage reflects the context the soul of the city, and contain the essential elements to build a sustainable future. Cultural heritage is a magnet for the tourist, and new tourism strategies have to offer both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage that includes monuments, architecture, galleries and museums, as well as events, music, exhibitions, theatre, film and knowledge, experience and customs of a community (Fusco Girad et al., 2003).

Social media is a broad term covering a growing range of peer-to-peer and many-to-many form of communication conducted via computer and, increasingly, mobile devices (Harcup, 2014). Social media includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, path, WhatsApp's video, WordPress, BlogSpot, YouTube and countless other forums. In just a few years they have become an important way journalists find stories and sources for their brands. Social media has allowed for more direct communication and interaction between journalist and audience, with information and comment flowing from both directions.

Social media has become a platform for exercising one's agency as its users have been given an opportunity to be creative, outspoken, and active; however, it has also become clear that never before have the critical thinking and digital literacy skills been more important than they are during the social media era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Tradition of Tourism

Tourism can be defined as the process, activities, and outcomes arising from the relationships and the interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host governments, host communities, and surrounding environments that are involved in the attracting and hosting of visitors (Goelder & Brent Ritche, 2012). Tourism is a composite of activities, services, and industries that deliver a travel experience: transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishment, shops, entertainment, activity facilities, and other hospitality service available for individuals or group that are traveling away from home.

As there are many types of tours and tourists. It was an upscale version of what has been called cultural or educational tourism. Another way to put it was that tourism had coopted ethnography. The existence of groups of tourists travels to provide convenience for every tourist to visit a place without obstacles.

The similarities between tourism and ethnography have been explored with irony and insight by Crick. Both tourists and ethnographers travel to foreign areas, reside there temporarily, observe native peoples, and return with accounts and stories of their observations. Tourism and ethnography (and colonialism) are relatives. As they arise from the same social formation and are different forms of Western expansion into the Third World. Social media like YouTube add a new field of study for different streams of research.

Creativity and culture are also important in tourism development and planning as well as being significant contributors to economical and spatial development (Yigitcanlar, 2009). Creative production processes are known to attract enterprises and individuals from the cultural sector. They also have a significant impact on other economic sector, particularly tourism, generating important induced effects on city image, attractiveness and consumption pattern (Harcup, 2000).

Tourism

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett regards 'tourism as a species of ethnographic discourse'. Colonialists frequently yearn for the traditional native culture that they have destroyed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1989). Echtner and Brent Ritchie (1991) argued that the compile analysis of a tourist destination image should include attributes that span the range of being functional-psychological, attribute-holistic and common-unique (Echtner & Brent Ritchie, 1991). Various studies argue that originality and diversity of cultural provision protect local identity, attract creative people and promotes sustainable destination competitiveness. Cities worldwide are employing culture and creativity for branding.

In this digital era, social media plays a significant role in our lives. All the way from magazines and movies to the popular media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, media are constantly involved in everyday reality (Lokumannage, 2020). Culture tourism is an interaction between the tourists and host society because of cultural pull forces at the destination i.e. culture and social values including tangible and intangible elements of culture. Ritchie and Zins (1978) have acknowledged the twelve cultural essentials, which pull tourists at the destinations. In brief these elements are the historical monuments, the art, architecture, handicrafts, the traditions, the gastronomy, the leisure activities, and the dress. They also identified the educational system and the religions, faith, language, sculptures. In modern years there have been increases in domestic and international tourism for the purpose of expressing another type of culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study conducted a text analysis of videos related to the Sri Lankan tourism in YouTube's video from 2023 to 2024. This research also conducted an interview to in-depth description.

Interviews

Burgess (1984), notes that interviews allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. The use of interviews involves the act of speaking to respondents who are selected to provide answers to research questions based on a particular topic under study (Hart, 2008). Their major purpose is the understanding of the interviewee's experience and perspective through stories, accounts and explanations. As the questions posed in the data collection for this paper are designed to facilitate a detailed enquiry into the writer's opinions and beliefs on certain matters, interviews are the ideal qualitative method to use.

The scholar conducted interview from the YouTube user in their channel using online interview. The scholar asked several questions to the users through the commentary column, discussion section or email.

Text Analysis

In the final step of the analysis, the study conducted a content analysis on a probability sample of videos collected in step one above. These sampled videos serve as the core data set for findings reported in this article.

Qualitative content analysis is one of numerous research methods used to analyze text data. Research using qualitative content analysis focus on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Budd, 1967). The data is 50 videos of local YouTube channels. All videos have coding and decoding. The researcher watched all of videos and created the subject that related to this study on coding paper. The coding subject has selected is covered people, nature, location, diving and underwater, sea, food, art, and culture. Later on, the coding data analyzed by the researcher in describing analysis.

Population and Sampling

Population

A population is a set of subjects (such as individuals, groups, institutions, countries etc.). It exists if and only if its subjects can be distinguished from other subjects that do not belong to the very population. The populations of this subject are all YouTubers.

Sample

The YouTube channel chosen by researcher had conducted local culture in early 2023 to end of 2024. Videos from these channels have broadcasted on YouTube. Therefore, the sample was derived from the documents, participants with two exercises:

1. 20 YouTubers.
2. The viewers' comments on each video, which had been broadcasted.

The sample method involves taking a representative selection of the population and using the data collected as research information. A sample is a "subgroup of a population" (Lawrence, 2000). The sample of this research conduct to 50 videos about the local culture of young YouTubers.

DATA ANALYSIS

Culture and Its Importance in Society Enhancement

Some channels are dedicated to the promotion of the countries' cultures throughout Sri Lanka as YouTube became an educational platform in this country: arts, dances, musical performances, traditional meals and language. Sites like Sri Lanka Tourism and Sri Lanka's Discover promote cultural places, traditional temples, and festivals and draw awareness toward these valuable cultural assets. For instance, by displaying the Kandy Esala Perahera, a religious ceremony of honoring the Sacred Tooth Relic, YouTube allows its viewers from all over the world to learn more about the cultural heritage that lies at the core of the Sri Lankan nation's identity.

Alongside, the religious and cultural festivities, educational channels also provide awareness about indigenous culture and artistry. For instance, channels that specialize in showcasing Sri Lankan craft products such as batik, pottery and mask making offer demonstration on how these arts are made, and how future generations can learn them.

Advancement and Sponsorship of Sri Lankan Arts and Performance

Traditional music and dancing arts in Sri Lanka have identified a new home in the YouTube platform. The classical dances of Sri Lankan such as Kandyan dances and the low country dances are being performed and shared on various YouTube channel like Sri Lanka dance, academy etc. Such performances not only orient global viewers to the beauty of the Sri Lankan spiritual world but also help keep the art traditions of the state alive. Sri Lankan artist and performers are getting more exposure within the region and beyond hence boosting appreciation for the country's diverse art.

Moreover, important examples of modern art are also presented to show how the idea of the time-honored culture can fit into modernity. By cracking out musical shows that fuse Western and oriental music forms including jazz and pop music, Sri Lanka is nurturing dialogue and ushering the formation of its music culture.

Preserving Sri Lankan Cuisine

Another facet of the culture that is being marketed through YouTube is Sri Lankan cuisine. Sri Lanka Food Channel is just one example of several online channels that provides videos and tutorial of different Sri Lanka foods including rice and curry, hoppers, and kottu. These channels do not only present the flavors to international communities, but also highlight the cultural aspect in cooking and eating in Sri Lanka society.

Food also has importance social aspect in Sri Lanka and is associated with both hospitality and religion. Cooking channel of YouTube emphasizes the presentation of the concept of sharing food during Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Vesak, and other religious festivals where food is an indication of the cultural practices.

Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Tourism is an important industry for Sri Lanka and since the advent of YouTube; Sri Lanka has been willingly showcasing its historical and cultural beauties. YouTubers share ad-free exotic Sri Lankan videos and vlogs which include beautiful sceneries, archeological places and monuments. Actors like Sri Lanka Tourism or more numerous Explore Sri Lanka independent travel bloggers offer not only fun but also knowledge to promote the cultural experience of other global travelers.

For instance, representation of such ancient cities as Anuradhapura and Sigiriya increases people's knowledge about Sri Lanka and its role as a unique Buddhist country and also contributes to the general perception of Buddhist tradition worldwide. It offers a persuasive call to watch Sri Lanka as much more than a mere tourist attraction but as an opportunity to live in an ethnically rich culture.

Language Promotion

Sri Lanka has two official languages namely – Sinhala and Tamil both treasure literary values and aesthetic features. Linguistic diversity is promoted by channels that teach these languages or offer a translation of traditional texts on the YouTube platform. Tamil learning channel teaches lessons about Grammar, pronunciation and Conversation and through such lessons the global audience can listen and learn Sri Lanka's language. Another element that is of benefit when popularizing these languages via YouTube is the creation of intercultural communication. This is particularly pertinent to Sri Lankan post-war reconstruction discourse, where expanding and celebrating the island's linguistic richness is vital to healing the wounds of the country.

Building an Online Repository of Cultural Practices

YouTube enables authors to post videos and reach people all over the world, thus saving Sri Lanka's cultural practices online. Independently from the-initiated-performers you can hear and watch how kavi, a traditional poetry is performed; one can watch religious rituals. It helps to enrich generation gap to make easier for the young generation to obtain something they have no closer contact in the modern society due to the fast speed of development.

In the many parts of the country where people still continue with their traditional customs, YouTube is turning out to be a social hub through which people give an account of the nature of their customs and other practices within the global society. This has also created

a demand in cultural tourism, which tourists are eager to explore by being able to embrace Sri Lanka culture as seen in You Tube contents.

CONCLUSION

The Island nation of Sri Lanka with colorful cultural backgrounds has been under more and more extend utilizing digital media to introduce its culture, beliefs, and traditions globally. Of the mentioned platforms, YouTube has now become a strong tool for cultural promotion and shares a platform for users, groups, channel, and even governmental organizations to promote Sri Lankan culture, art, language, and history. In this article, Sri Lanka's attempts to promote its cultural identity to its domestic and overseas viewers through YouTube is discussed.

This shows how important YouTube has become for the marketing of Sri Lanka's valuable culturally related products. By means of a video, the indigenous people are telling the rest of the world about the island's traditions, music, dance, gastronomy, and languages, making the global audience aware of their cultural identity. With increasing acceptance by more Sri Lankans and organizations to use YouTube for cultural marketing, it will still be the main tool internationally to the promotion of Sri Lanka and its identity in global cultural landscape.

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