

10 Hashtags: #LocalEvents and #SocialMedia Engagement

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Introduction

Events present different purposes and forms, such as cultural celebrations, political activities, art entertainment, business trade, educational events, and sports competitions. The scale of events can range from local or community events (e.g., local art markets) to mega events (e.g., Olympic Games). Unlike mega-events, local events with high community involvement emphasize social values, reinforce local belongingness, and improve residents' mental health and quality of life (Jepson et al., 2019; Mair & Duffy, 2018). During the pandemic, residents struggled to maintain social interactions when facing the lockdown and mandated governance. Hence, the resilience of destination tourism needs to strengthen the social bonding of local communities (Sharma et al., 2021). With the reopening around the world, local events played an increasingly significant role in rebuilding the relationships among the residents and enhancing the sense of community. Therefore, increasing engagement in local events continues to be a critical focus to aid in improving well-being and social cohesion among stakeholders at tourist destinations in the post-pandemic age.

Social media has become a significant marketing tool in the tourism and event industry to drive users' online engagement and emotional attachment to events in order to enhance their intentions of attendance (Harb et al., 2019; Hudson et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2021; Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2019). Social media can afford the possibility of acquiring information and enabling interactive communications between users and managers or even among users (Cabiddu et al., 2014). Event planners are proactive in using social media to promote local events and empower residents to engage in the process of planning local events (Chen et al., 2021). For users, social media helps identify information about events, encounter reviews, and create more public relationships before making decisions (Kim et al., 2021).

The chapter identifies several gaps in the literature. Previous studies about social media focus on user-generated online reviews (Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2019; Oliveira & Casais, 2018; Thomsen & Jeong, 2020), but hashtags as user-generated content have received less attention among scholars. In the event indus-