

Tourist Motivations and Behavior: Selfie Tourism and Its Implications for Tourist Experience and Self-Confidence

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Abstract

The development of technology and social media development has enabled tourists to share their travel experiences online, particularly on social media platforms. Given the nature of travel experiences, sharing information on social media is recognized as an important source of information that can influence travel decision-making for potential tourists. This study explores tourist motivations and behaviors within the context of selfie tourism and its impact on the tourist experience. Selfie tourism refers to the phenomenon where tourists actively seek iconic and aesthetically pleasing locations to take photos of themselves. The aim of this study is to understand the factors that motivate tourists to engage in selfie tourism and how this activity affects their perceptions and satisfaction with their travel experiences. The research method employed in this study is a survey-based approach using descriptive analysis and a quantitative methodology. A sample of 100 respondents was selected for this study.

Keywords: selfie tourism, travel experience, tourist motivation, tourist behavior, Maslow's theory

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries in terms of both income generation and job creation (Thullah & Jalloh, 2021). Based on this, tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors worldwide, influencing the economy, culture, and environment in various regions. With advancements in technology, transportation, and global connectivity, access for tourists to explore new destinations has increased. Based on Dann's model from 1977, Crompton (1979) identified seven socio-psychological motivations and two cultural factors that influence visitors in choosing their tourist destinations. Among these factors are "escape from an environment," "self-esteem," "enhancement of family relations," "prestige," and others. In 1982, Iso-Ahola confirmed that two of these factors were primary motivators associated with travelers (Prayag Girish & Ryan Chris, 2011). Later, in 1987, Iso-Ahola identified two main types of push and pull motivators: personal and interpersonal (Brahimi et al., 2023). Various factors can motivate tourists to explore different destinations. These motivations range from the desire to experience unique cultures, natural wonders, and historical sites to modern interests such as culinary exploration, adventure sports, and wellness retreats. The rapid growth of tourism is driven by the complex interaction of economic, social, and personal factors, reflecting the evolving preferences and interests of tourists. By examining these motivations, we can understand how destinations can better meet the diverse needs of travelers, thus enhancing the tourism experience and contributing to sustainable sector growth.

Motivation is the state or tendency within a person that stimulates, directs, and sustains behavior to achieve goals. As used here, motivation refers to the processes that initiate and sustain goal-directed activities (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014). Motivation affects a person's enthusiasm, direction, and the quality of actions. It is also linked to an individual's needs, interests,

expectations, and values. Human motivation can be classified into various categories depending on its goal. During travel, this motivation can be classified as tourist motivation. Tourist motivation refers to the drives or reasons that lead tourists to decide to travel. This motivation is highly varied and influenced by several factors, including psychological, socio-cultural, economic, individual, and physical factors. During their travels, these motivations can be reflected in the activities undertaken by tourists. Tourist behavior refers to the patterns of actions, decisions, and interactions of tourists, from planning to the day of travel. Key aspects of tourist behavior include planning and decision-making, consumption patterns, social interactions, behavior at destinations, and tourists' experiences and satisfaction levels. Understanding tourist behavior is crucial for developing tourism businesses, especially destination selection, destination evaluation, and tourists' future behavioral intentions (Zhang et al., 2014). In these contexts, knowledge of the stages in tourists' decision-making processes is important. Research by Wu et al. (2011) revealed that several factors can influence tourists' behavior when selecting destinations. First, tourist-specific decision-making factors include age, gender, marital status, income, education, lifestyle, personal values, and travel motivations. Second, destination-specific factors or attributes include tourist attractions, tourism resources, facilities, services, and accessibility. Third, situational factors include weather conditions, the destination's culture, and social factors such as political stability and destination selection. Travel motivations are seen as part of the psychological and biological needs and desires, which include both push and pull factors that drive individuals to engage in tourism activities (Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1982; Uysal & Hagan, 1993; Iso-Ahola, 1991; Yoon & Uysal, 2003). Push and pull factors complement each other, forming a combined motivation that integrates the attributes of a destination (Gnoth, 1997: 283). In essence, there is no significant difference among experts regarding the definition of motivation and the factors that motivate individuals to travel. Ultimately, motivation is the key factor that prompts an individual or group to decide to travel. Push motivation in tourism is influenced by three key factors: individual factors, the desire for escapism, and the pursuit of knowledge and cultural experiences. Meanwhile, pull motivation is shaped by three main elements: information about the destination, ease of access, a distinctive image, and personal considerations (Duong et al., 2023). Motivation can stem from both internal and external sources. Internal motivation may arise from tourist preferences or psychological and emotional needs such as seeking an escape from daily life, adventure, education, and self-fulfillment. On the other hand, external motivational factors can stem from the destination itself, such as cost, accessibility, and attractions.

This trend is driven by the development of social media and the desire to share visual experiences with friends, family, and online followers. The digital era refers to a period dominated by digital technology and the internet, which influences various aspects of human life, including communication, information sharing, and even the economy. This era began with advancements in computer and internet technology at the end of the 20th century. The launch of platforms such as MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), and Twitter (2006) marked a new era in online communication, allowing users to share content, interact with friends, and follow news or trends in real time. Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), and TikTok (2016) introduced new formats for sharing visual content and short videos. Taking selfies and sharing them on social media with friends and followers has now become a common part of daily life. Most of us do this almost instinctively. According to Dr. Mimi Li, selfie tourism is a form of "ego-tourism," where tourists are motivated by the desire to capture and share their experiences visually on social media platforms. This creates a drive to seek out "Instagrammable" locations or places with strong visual appeal, making them ideal for social media content. Sharing photos from selfie tourism on social media is not only a form of self-expression but also a way to gain recognition and validation, which can enhance tourists' self-esteem and emotional well-being. Thus, sharing photos on social media plays a significant role in how people receive social recognition, build and strengthen their self-identity, and capture beautiful moments as cherished memories. The combination of these influences can significantly enhance self-esteem and emotional well-being.

This paper will explore several key aspects of selfie tourism. First, it will identify the primary motivations driving tourists to engage in selfie tourism by examining the psychological and social factors that inspire individuals to capture and share their travel experiences visually. Then, the importance of taking selfies while on a holiday, and finally, this paper will assess how selfie tourism affects tourists' self-esteem, viewing it as a form of self-fulfillment aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where the need for self-esteem is achieved through recognition and validation from others. Overall, this discussion provides insights into the motivations, behaviors, and psychological impacts of selfie tourism on modern travelers for further research and development in the tourism sector.

METHODS

This study employs a survey research approach, focusing on quantitative data analyzed descriptively, supplemented by qualitative insights where relevant. The primary data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, targeting 100 respondents from diverse demographics, including various age groups (from adolescents to the elderly) and occupational backgrounds. This approach ensures a broad understanding of responses across different demographic segments. Secondary data was obtained through a literature review to provide additional context and enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

The structured questionnaire used for data collection was designed to capture specific insights aligned with the study's objectives. It included both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data on key variables such as motivation, frequency, and importance of selfies while traveling, as well as qualitative perspectives on tourists' experiences and self-confidence. To ensure the discussion remains focused on the research topic, the researcher limits the scope of the study to tourists' motivations for taking selfies while traveling and its implications for their travel experience and self-confidence. Tourists' motivation will be measured by examining what drives them to take selfies, the frequency or how often they take selfies, and how important selfies are to them while traveling. Tourists' experiences will be assessed from the perspective of their satisfaction while traveling and taking selfies, as well as their emotional engagement. Self-confidence will be evaluated based on tourists' self-esteem and self-perception after taking selfies during their travels and uploading them to social media.

Once data collection was complete, responses underwent descriptive statistical analysis. Frequency distributions were generated to visualize trends and significant patterns within the sample. Key findings were presented through frequency tables and charts, providing a detailed overview of participant feedback. Sample tables summarizing the primary findings highlight the range of responses observed across different demographic categories.

FINDINGS

This study was conducted to understand the behaviors and perceptions of tourists in selfie tourism activities. We explored the social media platforms most frequently used to share selfie photos, tourists' views on the importance of selfies while on vacation, and their feelings after taking them. Additionally, we examined the social interactions that occur after the photos are uploaded, the effects of photo editing before posting, and its impact on self-esteem. Relevant data will be presented in tables to provide a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon.

Table 1. Social Media Platform for Posting Selfie Photos

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
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Instagram	69	70 %
Facebook	7	7 %
Twitter	3	3 %
TikTok	2	2 %
WhatsApp	19	20 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

Table 1 shows that 70% of respondents are using Instagram to share their selfies, it emerges as the leading platform for this purpose due to its visual-centric appeal for tourists. In contrast, Facebook (7%), Twitter (3%), and TikTok (2%) have significantly lower usage for selfie sharing, indicating that they are less effective for visual documentation. Meanwhile, WhatsApp, used by 20% of respondents, serves as a more personal tool for sharing photos with friends and family rather than for public display. The dominance of Instagram usage may contribute to higher satisfaction levels after taking a selfie, as the platform is visually focused and encourages interaction through photos. This needs to be further explored, especially regarding the importance of taking selfies while traveling, which will be addressed in the next table.

Table 2. The Importance of Selfie While in a Holiday

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	19	19 %
Important	18	18 %
Quite Important	29	29 %
Not Very Important	33	33 %
Not So Important	1	1 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

Table 2 shows surprising results, indicating that the majority of respondents believe taking selfies is not that important during a holiday. Responses to the question, "How important is taking selfies to you while traveling?" Of the respondents, 19 people (19%) answered "Very Important," 18 people (18%) said "Important," and 29 people (29%) indicated "Quite Important." The highest response rate was for "Not Very Important," with 33 people (33%), while the lowest response, "Not Important at All," came from only 1 person (1%). This indicates varying levels of importance that respondents place on taking selfies while traveling.

Table 3. Feelings After Taking a Selfie at a Tourist Spot

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Very Satisfied	12	12 %
Satisfied	53	53 %
Neutral	34	34 %
Dissatisfied	1	1 %
Very Dissatisfied	0	0 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

This reflects an interesting contradiction: although selfies are not considered a priority, the activity still provides emotional satisfaction for tourists. This may suggest that even though selfies do not define the primary purpose of a holiday, capturing moments through selfies remains a positive experience. Table 3 shows responses to the question, "How do you feel after taking a selfie at a tourist spot?" Of the respondents, 12 people (12%) answered "Very Satisfied," while the majority, 53 people (53%), reported feeling "Satisfied." Additionally, 34 people (34%) indicated feeling "Neutral," and 1 person (1%) answered "Dissatisfied." There were no responses for "Very Dissatisfied." This indicates that the majority of respondents feel satisfied after taking a selfie while traveling.

Table 4. Social Interaction that Happens While Posting Selfie Photos in Social Media

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	7	7 %
Agree	59	59 %
Neutral	30	30 %
Disagree	4	4 %
Strongly Disagree	7	7 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

In this era, with the advancement of technology, posting selfies on social media while traveling has become a common practice. Table 4 shows, which poses the question, "Do you feel that posting your selfies while traveling increases your social interactions on social media?" seven respondents (7%) answered "Strongly Agree," while the majority, 59 respondents (59%), indicated "Agree." Additionally, 30 respondents (30%) felt "Neutral," 4 respondents (4%) answered "Disagree," and 7 respondents (7%) answered "Strongly Disagree." This indicates that, with the highest frequency, respondents agree that posting selfies while traveling enhances their social interactions on social media.

Table 5. Editing Photos Before Sharing on Social Media

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Always	16	16 %
Sometimes	64	64 %
Never	20	20 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

Table 5 shows, which asks the question, "Do you edit or modify your selfies before sharing them on social media?" 16 respondents (16%) answered "Always," while the majority, 64 respondents (64%), indicated "Sometimes." Additionally, 20 respondents (20%) stated "Never" (they shared directly on social media). This indicates that, with the highest frequency, respondents sometimes edit their photos before sharing them on social media.

Table 6. Editing Photos Affects Self-Confidence

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Affects	6	6 %
Affects	43	43 %
Neutral	40	40 %
Does Not Effect	9	9 %
Strongly Does Not Effect	2	2 %
Total	100	100 %

Source: author's research

Table 6 shows, which asks the question, "Does editing and modifying your selfies before sharing them on social media affect your self-confidence?" 6 respondents (6%) answered "Strongly Affects," while 43 respondents (43%) indicated "Affects." Additionally, 40 respondents (40%) felt "Neutral," 9 respondents (9%) answered "Does Not Affect," and 2 respondents (2%) answered "Strongly Does Not Affect." This indicates that editing photos before sharing them on social media has an impact on a person's self-confidence.

Table 4 reveals that the majority of respondents agree or strongly agree that uploading selfies while on holiday increases their social interactions on social media, especially on platforms like Instagram. This connection becomes even more intriguing when we look at the results in Table 5, where most respondents (64%) occasionally edit their selfies before uploading them, possibly to enhance visual appeal and maximize social interaction. This photo editing seems to be done to create a better impression on social media and gain more engagement from friends or followers. Overall, the data suggests that although respondents do not always consider selfies to be important, they still find

personal satisfaction and social benefits in this activity. The trend of photo editing indicates an effort by respondents to appear more attractive on social media, in line with their view that selfies increase social interaction.

DISCUSSION

In this rapidly advancing digital era, the phenomenon of selfie tourism has emerged as one of the most prominent trends in the tourism industry. This trend refers to tourists taking self-portrait photos at popular tourist destinations and sharing them on social media. Social media platforms play a crucial role in spreading this trend, reflecting tourists' tendency to capture moments at various destinations and share them online. From the data gathered, it is evident that Instagram dominates as the platform used by respondents to share selfies while traveling (Table 1). With 70% of respondents choosing Instagram, it is clear that the platform provides a visual space that is ideal for showcasing travel experiences. This is supported by the ease of interaction that Instagram offers, which encourages users to share their experiences through photos and receive responses in the form of "likes," comments, or messages from their followers.

However, Table 2 shows that despite Instagram being the primary choice for sharing moments, most respondents do not actually consider selfies to be very important when traveling. A total of 33% of respondents stated that selfies are "Not Very Important," while only 19% consider them "Very Important." This contradiction suggests that although selfies are not the primary motivation for their travels, the importance of selfie tourism varies among individuals. It indicates that selfies hold different values for each tourist depending on personal preferences, culture, and social media influence. Some view selfies as a way to document memories or gain social validation, while others focus more on the direct experience without feeling the need to share those moments. These differences are influenced by factors such as age, culture, and personal needs. The existence of platforms like Instagram still provides an added incentive to document moments, even if it is not the primary goal of the trip. This shows that while selfies may serve as a way to preserve experiences, their perceived importance differs for each tourist. In other words, although the desire to take selfies does not dominate their travel purpose, respondents still find satisfaction and social benefits in this activity, as evidenced by Table 3 and Table 4.

According to the survey asking respondents, "Which social media platform do you most frequently use to share selfies while traveling?" it was found that 70% upload their selfies on Instagram. The motivations behind tourists taking selfies while traveling include the need to document moments, express their identity, and gain social recognition from their online community. The importance of selfies during travel significantly impacts tourists' experiences and self-esteem, making it important for them to capture these moments as a form of documentation. However, the survey results related to the question, "How important is a selfie to you when traveling?" reveal a surprising finding: the highest response category was "Not Very Important," with 33% of respondents selecting this answer. This is interesting because it shows that the majority of respondents do not consider selfies to be essential while traveling.

Furthermore, Table 3 shows that after taking a selfie, most respondents feel "Satisfied" (53%) or even "Very Satisfied" (12%). This satisfaction may not only stem from the experience of capturing the moment but also from the expectation of social interaction after uploading the photo. In Table 4, 66% of respondents agree or strongly agree that posting their selfies enhances their social

interaction. This reflects that the satisfaction felt after taking a selfie is often driven by the expectation of receiving attention or social validation through social media platforms like Instagram. This observation aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly at the fourth level related to self-esteem. To achieve the level of self-esteem, one needs several key components, one of which is confidence, often gained through external validation. Our research findings indicate that those who travel and take selfies tend to feel satisfied with the results. Moreover, most respondents feel that posting their travel selfies increases their social interactions on social media, even though they believe this has little impact on their self-image. This suggests that increased social interaction on these platforms can serve as a form of social validation.

Before sharing their selfies on social media, many respondents tend to edit their images or photos, indicating their awareness of the importance of presenting an attractive self-image to gain social recognition from friends and other online followers. This is supported by Table 5, where the majority of respondents (64%) occasionally edit their photos before sharing them. This editing may aim to enhance the visual appeal of the uploaded photos to attract more interaction from followers. When individuals feel their selfies are more attractive and appreciated after editing, they often experience a boost in self-confidence and feel more competent. This is in line with the findings in Table 6, where 49% of respondents feel that photo editing positively impacts their self-esteem. This suggests that photo editing and the social recognition it generates can help fulfill the self-esteem needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

When comparing these findings to previous research, several parallels and distinctions emerge. For instance, earlier studies explored the impact of social media on travel experiences and found that travelers often feel a heightened sense of satisfaction when sharing their experiences online. Similarly, other studies emphasized the role of social media in creating a feedback loop, where positive interactions and feedback from peers enhance the perceived value of the travel experience. However, unlike these studies, our findings reveal a nuanced perspective—while tourists enjoy sharing selfies, they do not necessarily prioritize this activity over the intrinsic value of their travels. Furthermore, our research highlights the role of photo editing, an aspect often overlooked in earlier studies, demonstrating its impact on self-esteem and social interaction. This underscores the evolving nature of selfie tourism and its complex relationship with personal identity and digital validation in the modern age.

This indicates that photo editing and the social recognition it produces can help meet the self-esteem needs described in Maslow's hierarchy. However, overemphasizing selfie-taking can diminish the overall quality of the experience. Tourists may become too focused on finding the perfect angle or background, missing the opportunity to truly engage with the culture, history, and ambiance of the destination. Additionally, the pressure to present a perfect image on social media can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction if the resulting photos do not meet individual expectations. These concerns can create a cycle where tourists compare their experiences with those of others online, potentially damaging their self-esteem and enjoyment of the trip. The desire for social recognition can blur the intrinsic value of the journey itself, shifting the focus from authentic experiences to curated presentations.

By examining the relationship between selfie tourism and Maslow's theory, we can see how the need for social recognition and self-esteem are interconnected. Taking and sharing selfies not only

documents the travel experience but also serves as a way to assert self-worth through social media interactions. This dynamic reinforces the importance of social recognition in fulfilling the psychological needs of tourists, ultimately highlighting how personal experiences in tourism can impact broader concepts of self-esteem and identity in the digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

In this study, although 33% of respondents stated that selfies were "not very important" to their travel experience, it is important to note that 67% of the other respondents actually placed more importance on the activity, with the majority considering selfies to be "important" or "somewhat important." This indicates that while selfies may serve as a way to capture experiences, their perceived importance varies among travelers. Instagram's dominance as the primary platform for sharing selfies also reflects the importance of visual documentation in today's tourism. Although not all respondents view selfies as a priority, they still see value in documenting and sharing their experiences with others. This is closely tied to the social need to share experiences and receive recognition or social interaction through social media.

Furthermore, although most respondents felt that selfies were not very important, the study's findings show that they still felt satisfied after taking selfies, and over 60% believed that posting selfies could increase their social interactions on social media. These findings align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly in the context of self-esteem, where social media interactions provide a platform for social validation. The respondents' tendency to edit their photos reflects the desire to present the best version of themselves, which in turn increases social interaction and self-confidence. Therefore, although selfies may not be considered important by everyone, their role in fulfilling psychological needs and building connections in the digital world cannot be overlooked. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of understanding how personal experiences in tourism intersect with broader concepts of identity and self-esteem in the social media era. Future research could explore the impact of social media on travel motivations over time and examine demographic differences in the role of selfies in travel experiences. Other relevant topics include the effects of social validation on mental health, the impact of "Instagrammable tourism" on destination sustainability, and the role of AR and VR technology in encouraging sharing behavior. This focus reflects a strong interest in understanding social media's impact on tourism and its psychological effects on modern travelers.

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