European Journal of Social Sciences Studies
ISSN: 2501-8590
ISSN-L: 2501-8590
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/soc

DOI: 10.46827/ejsss.v11i5.2098 Volume 11 | Issue 5 | 2025

DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CAN THO CITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract:
The study aims to analyze the role of social media communication in tourism development in Can Tho City, which is considered a distinctive tourism center of the Mekong Delta region. Survey data were collected from 200 respondents, mainly young people (82.5% aged 18–29), with high educational levels and frequent social media usage—representing the potential customer group for digital tourism. A quantitative research method was applied, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and linear regression. The results show that six key social media factors positively influence tourism development: information quality, usefulness, advertising, word-of-mouth, credibility, and social interaction. Among these, information quality (Beta = 0.402) and social media word-of-mouth (Beta = 0.385) are the most influential factors. In addition, Facebook (92%) and TikTok (85.5%) were identified as the most popular platforms for searching and sharing tourism information. The study confirms that social media communication not only guides but also significantly enhances destination attractiveness, particularly through visual content such as images, short videos, and authentic experiences. The findings suggest that the tourism sector in Can Tho should focus on improving digital content quality, effectively leveraging electronic word-of-mouth, and promoting advertising and social interaction to foster sustainable local tourism development.

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Keywords: social media, Can Tho tourism, digital communication, information quality, electronic word-of-mouth

1. Introduction

Can Tho City, in the Mekong Delta region, South of Vietnam, holds a strategic position in the heart of the Mekong Delta Region, serving as a key economic and cultural hub of the region. The city is also an important transportation nexus, integrating various modes of transport, including roadways, inland waterways, maritime routes, and air travel. Along National Highway 1A toward the northeast, Can Tho is located approximately 169 km from Ho Chi Minh City and lies within 60–190 km of other Mekong Delta provinces. Its modern and synchronized transportation infrastructure has strengthened Can Tho's role as a regional linkage center, facilitating both domestic and international trade activities.

Geographically, the city enjoys advantageous connections with neighboring localities: it borders Vinh Long and Dong Thap to the east, Ca Mau to the west, the East Sea to the south, and An Giang to the north. After July 1, 2025, Can Tho officially became a centrally-governed city, operating under a two-tier administrative system: the city level and the commune/ward level. Former district-level administrative units were dissolved, resulting in a more streamlined governance structure. The newly restructured Can Tho has 103 commune-level administrative units, including 31 wards and 72 communes. Many well-known localities have retained their names to preserve cultural and historical identity. For example:

- Ninh Kieu remains the administrative and commercial center,
- Cai Rang continues to be famous for its floating market,
- O Mon maintains its role as an area for industry and services.

Localities previously belonging to Hau Giang and Soc Trang—such as Vi Thanh, Nga Bay, Soc Trang—have become major wards within the new Can Tho, forming a broad and diverse urban landscape. Notably, eight administrative units remain unchanged: Tan Loc Ward, Truong Long Commune, Thanh Phu Commune, Thoi Hung Commune, Phong Nam Commune, My Phuoc Commune, Lai Hoa Commune, and Vinh Hai Commune. Maintaining these names helps residents retain a sense of familiarity in their daily lives.

Overall, the administrative restructuring has expanded Can Tho's territorial boundaries, transforming the city into the largest political, economic, and cultural center in the Mekong Delta. This strengthens regional connectivity, attracts investment, and supports synchronous infrastructure development, creating a strong foundation for future growth.

In the context of rapid digital transformation, social media communication has become a crucial tool for promoting destination image and influencing tourist behavior and decision-making. Can Tho possesses advantages in river-based tourism, orchard tourism, floating markets, and distinctive cultural values. However, its potential has not

yet been fully leveraged or aligned with modern media consumption trends. Therefore, the study aims to analyze the role of social media in tourism development in Can Tho. The key research questions include:

1) Which social media communication factors influence tourism development in Can Tho?
2) To what extent does each factor exert its impact?
3) What strategies can be applied to enhance the effectiveness of digital communication for local tourism?

Based on this, the study proposes hypotheses regarding the positive effects of six factors—information quality, usefulness, advertising, word-of-mouth, credibility, and social interaction—on tourism development in Can Tho City.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Social Media Communication

2.1.1. Overview of Social Media

Social media refers to online platforms that enable users to create personal profiles, upload and share content such as information, images, and videos, as well as communicate and interact with others within a digital community.

According to Clause 22, Article 3 of Decree No. 72/2013/NĐ-CP, *"a social network is an information system that provides the online community with services for storing, providing, using, searching, sharing, and exchanging information with one another, including services for creating personal webpages, forums, online chat, audio–video sharing, and similar online communication services."*

Social media constitutes a highly connected virtual environment that not only facilitates information sharing and multimedia distribution but also supports the formation of online communities through continuous interactions. With diverse functions and the ability to overcome temporal and spatial limitations, social media has evolved from a personal communication tool into a key platform in various fields—particularly communication, business, and tourism promotion in the context of digital transformation.

2.1.2. Overview of Social Media Communication

Social media communication is defined as the process of using social networking platforms to disseminate messages, facilitate two-way interactions, and build relationships with online communities. Trương Tri Thong et al. (2023) describe social media communication as a collection of applications developed on Web 2.0 technologies, enabling users to search for information, exchange ideas, provide evaluations, and promote products or services to consumers anytime and anywhere. This form of communication comprises a wide range of digital applications such as social networks, blogs, forums, image- and video-sharing platforms, review sites, and other online communities.

According to Nguyen Minh Hoat (2023), social media communication possesses several notable characteristics:

1) It is built on Internet-based Web 2.0 infrastructure, allowing two-way user interaction.
2) Its content is primarily user-generated, including posts, images, videos, and data derived from online interactions.
3) Each user can create a personal profile and establish a unique digital identity on platforms managed by social media service providers.
4) Social media facilitates the formation and expansion of online social networks by connecting individual accounts with other users or groups.

Popular social media communication platforms today include Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, Instagram, Weibo, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn. Other widely used platforms, such as Zalo, YouTube, Telegram, Pinterest, LINE, WhatsApp, and Snapchat are also considered part of the social media communication ecosystem.

In summary, social media communication can be defined as the process of exchanging, disseminating, and interacting with information on digital platforms. It combines highly personalized communication with mass reach, playing an essential role in marketing, commerce, and tourism promotion.

2.1.3. The Role of Social Media Communication

In the digital era, social media communication has become a powerful communication tool that extends far beyond interpersonal interaction, exerting significant influence across multiple sectors, including economics, education, and culture. First, it serves as a two-way communication channel between organizations and customers, enabling message personalization and fostering strong relationships.

Second, social media enhances brand communication effectiveness through rapid information dissemination and the high credibility associated with user-generated content.

Third, social media is a valuable tool for analyzing user behavior data, allowing businesses and public institutions to optimize communication strategies, predict trends, and manage crises effectively.

Within the tourism sector, the role of social media communication is evident in users' sharing of personal experiences, photos, and videos, which collectively contribute to shaping and reinforcing a destination's image. Nguyễn Xuan Nhi and Le Dinh Chanh Tue (2023) identify several roles of social media platforms in destination marketing in Vietnam:

1) Forming tourist habits,
2) Establishing trust in tourism businesses, and
3) Ensuring top-of-mind awareness among tourists.

Social media communication significantly impacts tourist behavior—from the initial idea formation and trip planning to on-site experiences and post-trip sharing.

2.1.4. Classification of Social Media Communication

Dr. Tracy L. Tulen proposed a four-category model of social media communication, which was subsequently adopted in the book *"Social Media Marketing: A Practitioner Guide"* (2017) authored by Marc Oliver Opresnik, Philip Kotler, and Svend Hollensen. The four categories include:

- **Social Commerce:** Focuses on online buying, selling, and exchanging goods and services. Users can search, compare, purchase, and pay directly through platforms such as Facebook Marketplace or TikTok Shop.
- **Social Community:** Centers on connecting individuals with shared interests, concerns, or goals. Examples include Facebook Groups, Reddit communities, and online discussion forums.
- **Social Publishing:** Supports content creation and dissemination by individuals or organizations. Personal blogs, YouTube channels, and online news sites fall under this category.
- **Social Entertainment:** Provides entertainment through online games, short-video applications (e.g., TikTok), and livestreaming platforms like Twitch.

In addition to this model, social media communication can also be classified into six common categories based on function and mode of operation:

- **Social Networks:** Platforms designed to build and maintain relationships with friends, family, and colleagues (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn). Their strength lies in broad connectivity, though they also pose risks related to privacy and unwanted contact.
- **Social News:** Platforms focused on gathering and sharing news (e.g., Reddit, X/Twitter). They offer rapid information dissemination but may contain unverified or misleading content.
- **Social Media Sharing:** Platforms specializing in sharing images and videos, such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Their advantages include visual appeal and creativity, though issues such as copyright violations and content duplication are common.
- **Social Bookmarking:** Tools that help users organize, save, and share web links systematically. Examples include Pinterest and Pocket. They support efficient information management but have a more limited reach compared to other categories.
- **Social Microblogging:** Platforms that prioritize concise messaging and rapid dissemination (e.g., X/Twitter). While highly accessible, the character limits may reduce content depth.
- **Social Blog Comments and Forums:** Spaces for discussion and opinion sharing, such as online forums or blog comment sections. They help build communities and provide peer support, yet face challenges in content moderation and preventing harmful or unregulated information.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Study Area and Research Subjects

The study was conducted in Can Tho City, the economic, cultural, and tourism center of the Mekong Delta region. The research subjects include tourists and local residents who are interested in tourism in Can Tho and who regularly use social media to search for or share tourism-related information.

3.2. Sample Size and Characteristics

A total of 200 valid questionnaires were collected through both online distribution (Google Forms) and face-to-face surveys at major tourist sites in the city. The characteristics of the sample are summarized as follows:

- **Gender:** 54.5% female, 45.5% male.
- **Age:** The majority of respondents (82.5%) were between 18 and 29 years old, representing a young and active demographic strongly engaged with social media.
- **Educational level:** 80.5% held a bachelor's degree, and 7.5% held a postgraduate degree, indicating a highly educated sample.
- **Occupation:** Students accounted for 86%, followed by government employees (5.5%), business owners (6%), and workers/farmers (2.5%).
- **Income:** 46.5% reported having no personal income, 34.5% earned less than 4 million VND per month, and 4.5% earned more than 12 million VND per month.

3.3. Research Instruments and Measurement Scales

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising two parts:

1) demographic information and tourism-related behaviors; and
2) measurement scales for factors influencing tourism development.

The measurement scales were developed based on previous studies and adjusted to fit the context of Can Tho. A total of 30 observed variables were included, grouped into six constructs:

1) Information quality,
2) Information usefulness,
3) Social media advertising,
4) Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM),
5) Credibility,
6) Social interaction.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

3.4. Data Processing and Analytical Techniques

All collected data were coded and analyzed using **SPSS 26.0** following these procedures:

- **Descriptive statistics:** Used to summarize demographic characteristics, information-seeking behavior, preferred tourism activities, and the perceived influence of social media.
- **Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha):** All constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.9, indicating excellent internal consistency.
- **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA):**
  - KMO value = 0.860 (> 0.5)
  - Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant (Sig. = 0.000) These results confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Six factors were extracted, explaining 80.77% of the total variance.
- **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis:**
  - Dependent variable: tourism development in Can Tho
  - Independent variables: the six factors extracted from EFA The regression results show an adjusted R^2 of 0.824, and the ANOVA test yielded a significant result (Sig. = 0.000), confirming that the model is statistically valid and well-fitted.

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Factors Influencing the Application of Social Media Communication in Tourism Development in Can Tho City

The results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) indicate that the collected data were highly suitable for factor extraction. Specifically, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value reached 0.860 (> 0.50), confirming the adequacy of the sample for EFA. Meanwhile, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a large Chi-Square value with Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating significant correlations among observed variables and validating the suitability of the dataset for factor extraction.

From the initial 30 observed variables, EFA extracted six latent factors, all of which had Eigenvalues greater than 1, thereby satisfying statistical requirements. These six factors include:

1) **Information Quality** – the accuracy, timeliness, clarity, and attractiveness of tourism content on social media.
2) **Information Usefulness** – the extent to which information supports travelers in researching, comparing, and making travel decisions.
3) **Social Media Advertising** – the influence of digital communication activities, promotional campaigns, and online marketing programs.
4) **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)** – the impact of reviews, shared experiences, and recommendations from online communities.
5) **Credibility** – the degree to which tourists trust the information source, including both content creators and social media platforms.

6) **Social Interaction** – the exchange, discussion, feedback, and connectivity among users during tourism information search.

The six factors explained a total variance of 80.77%, surpassing the 50% threshold typically required in quantitative research, indicating that the model captures most of the variance in the dataset. Additionally, all observed variables had factor loadings above **0.8**, demonstrating strong convergent validity within each factor and clear discriminant validity across factors.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis further confirm that the research model is statistically robust and well-fitted. The adjusted coefficient of determination reached $R^2 = 0.824$, meaning that the six independent variables explain 82.4% of the variation in the dependent variable—tourism development in Can Tho City. The ANOVA test yielded Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05), validating the statistical significance and appropriateness of the regression model. The Durbin–Watson statistic fell within the acceptable range, ruling out the presence of autocorrelation among residuals and indicating the reliability of the regression outputs.

All six factors exhibited positive standardized Beta coefficients with Sig. < 0.05, confirming their statistically significant and positive influence on tourism development. Specifically:

4.1.1. Information Quality (Beta = 0.402)

This is the most influential factor, underscoring the importance of accurate, transparent, up-to-date, and engaging social media content. High-quality tourism information enhances trust and directly encourages tourists' destination decisions.

4.1.2. Electronic Word-of-Mouth – e-WOM (Beta = 0.385)

As the second strongest factor, e-WOM plays a crucial role. Reviews, shared experiences, and recommendations from friends, online communities, KOLs, and travel bloggers exert strong social influence, affecting tourists' perceptions and behaviors. Social confirmation acts as "social proof," increasing trust and destination likelihood.

4.1.3. Social Media Advertising (Beta = 0.372)

Digital advertising campaigns on Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, or Instagram significantly enhance destination awareness. Visual storytelling, short-form videos, and promotional content attract attention and stimulate information seeking and tour bookings. Targeting capabilities further improve persuasion.

4.1.4. Information Usefulness (Beta = 0.366)

Useful tourism content provides essential support for trip planning, comparison, and decision-making. Practical and detailed guides (attractions, itineraries, cost estimates, local food recommendations) reduce uncertainty and increase visitors' confidence.

4.1.5. Social Interaction (Beta = 0.359)

Interactions on social media—comments, discussions, feedback, and group exchanges—create a sense of connection and trust among users. This community engagement enhances the digital tourism experience and encourages positive behavioral intentions.

4.1.6. Credibility (Beta = 0.345)

Although the least influential among the six factors, credibility remains foundational. Tourists prefer information coming from verified sources, official tourism agencies, or reviews backed by real evidence (e.g., images or videos). Credibility reduces perceived risk and reinforces destination confidence.

Overall, the results reveal that information quality and electronic word-of-mouth are the two key drivers of tourism development in Can Tho. Nonetheless, the remaining four factors serve important complementary roles that reinforce communication effectiveness, strengthen trust, and enhance digital tourism experiences.

In addition to the dominant factors, the importance of advertising, information usefulness, social interaction, and credibility is evident:

- **Social media advertising** expands destination visibility and attracts attention through creative visuals and promotional campaigns.
- **Information usefulness** reduces ambiguity and increases the practicality of social media as a planning tool.
- **Social interaction** fosters a sense of community and increases engagement with tourism content.
- **Credibility** addresses psychological risks, thereby facilitating informed travel decisions.

These findings reflect emerging trends in digital content consumption. Short videos, landscape photographs, and experiential clips were rated as the most persuasive content types. Notably, landscape images and scenic videos accounted for 84.9%, demonstrating tourists' strong preference for visually appealing and nature-oriented content. Short-form videos on TikTok/Reels (60.8%) show increasing dominance due to their fast, accessible, and entertaining nature—aligned with the consumption habits of younger users.

Experiential travel videos created by tourists or travel bloggers also serve as powerful persuasive tools because they present authentic journeys, convey emotions, and inspire real travel decisions. The study also highlights preferences for specific tourism types. Ecotourism (53%) emerged as the most favored, reflecting demand for immersion in natural landscapes, orchards, and floating markets—signature attractions of the Mekong Delta. Cultural–historical tourism ranked second (41%), while spiritual tourism accounted for only 6%, suggesting that Can Tho is not yet a prominent destination for this type.

These tendencies align well with Can Tho's inherent strengths as a river-based urban center that harmonizes ecological, cultural, historical, and culinary experiences.

They also reinforce the importance of vivid, visual, and experiential digital content in influencing tourism decisions.

Finally, the findings are consistent with previous studies on the role of social media in tourism and clearly reflect the evolving information consumption behavior of young travelers—who constitute more than 80% of the respondents aged 18–29. For this group, social media is not merely a supplementary source but the primary channel for researching, comparing, and making travel decisions. This demonstrates that social media communication has moved beyond traditional promotional support to become a critical determinant in shaping destination image, enhancing Can Tho's attractiveness, and fostering sustainable tourism development in the digital era.

4.2. Solutions to Promote the Application of Social Media in Tourism Development in Can Tho City

Based on the research findings, several practical management directions can be proposed to enhance the role of social media in developing tourism in Can Tho City.

4.2.1. Establishing and Strengthening Official Social Media Channels

Tourism management agencies should invest in developing official online channels, including fan pages, TikTok and YouTube channels, and interactive websites. This ensures that information about destinations, events, festivals, accommodation, and tourism services is accurate, complete, and regularly updated. Official channels increase transparency, build tourists' trust, and prevent the spread of misinformation or fake news on social media.

4.2.2. Diversifying Content Formats and Applying Digital Storytelling

Travel agencies and tourist attractions should focus on producing short videos, high-quality scenic images, and authentic experience clips, as these content types are highly appealing to younger audiences and strongly influence travel decisions. Utilizing digital storytelling tools enhances content attractiveness and effectively conveys the unique waterway culture and local identity of Can Tho, thereby improving both the usefulness and quality of information for tourists.

4.2.3. Strengthening Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

The tourism sector can leverage the power of e-WOM by encouraging visitors to leave online reviews, share personal experiences, or tag their posts with relevant hashtags. Strategic partnerships with KOLs, travel bloggers, and online review communities can amplify reach, enhance credibility, and increase the attractiveness of destinations. This aligns with the research findings, which identified e-WOM as the second most influential factor affecting tourism development.

4.2.4. Targeted Online Advertising

Online advertising should be selectively implemented and targeted at specific audiences. For example, location-based ads can reach domestic travelers and international tourists searching for information about Vietnam. Simultaneously, promotional programs, seasonal packages, and special offers should be actively communicated on Facebook and TikTok, the platforms most frequently used by the surveyed audience. This not only increases destination brand awareness but also facilitates tourists in accessing information quickly and making booking decisions.

4.2.5. Enhancing Social Interaction on Digital Platforms

Social interaction should be promoted through prompt responses to inquiries and comments, organizing minigames, livestream experiences, and maintaining Can Tho tourism community groups. Such interactions enhance user engagement, provide better experiences, and enable businesses and authorities to quickly capture tourists' needs and emerging trends.

4.2.6. Developing a Long-Term Digital Communication Strategy

For sustainable tourism development, Can Tho should implement a long-term digital communication strategy that integrates social media promotion with improvements in actual tourism services. When real-world experiences meet the expectations set by online information, the word-of-mouth effect is amplified, further establishing Can Tho as an attractive, reliable, and distinctive destination in the Mekong Delta region.

4.3. Discussion

The findings of the study provide comprehensive insights into the role of social media communication in the development of tourism in Can Tho City. By integrating descriptive statistics, reliability testing, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and multiple linear regression, the study successfully addressed the research questions and validated the analytical framework.

4.3.1. Relationship to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: Which factors on social media influence tourism development in Can Tho?

The application of EFA allowed the study to identify six *key factors*—information quality, information usefulness, social media advertising, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), credibility, and social interaction. These findings directly answer the first research question by confirming that tourism development is shaped by a combination of content quality, peer influence, platform reliability, and online engagement. The high total variance explained (80.77%) indicates that these factors comprehensively capture the main dimensions of social media's influence on tourism behavior.

Research Question 2: To what extent does each factor affect tourism development? Multiple linear regression analysis addressed this question by determining the relative strength of each factor. Information quality (Beta = 0.402) and e-WOM (Beta = 0.385) emerged as the strongest predictors. This finding aligns with prior literature emphasizing the role of accurate content and peer recommendations in shaping travel decisions. Advertising, usefulness, social interaction, and credibility also showed statistically significant positive effects, confirming that social media operates as a multi-dimensional communication ecosystem rather than a single influencing channel.

Research Question 3: How do social media platforms and content formats shape tourist behavior?
Descriptive analysis demonstrated that Facebook (92%) and TikTok (85.5%) are the dominant platforms for travel information. Furthermore, short videos, scenic images, and experiential clips were rated as the most persuasive content formats. This suggests that tourist decision-making is heavily visual and experience-driven—especially among younger audiences who formed the majority of the sample (82.5% aged 18–29). These insights confirm that platform selection and content type are crucial components of successful digital tourism strategies.

4.3.2. Link to the Analytical Tools Used

The integration of quantitative tools enhanced the robustness and reliability of the findings:

- **Cronbach's Alpha** confirmed the high internal consistency of the measurement scales (all > 0.9), ensuring that the research constructs were measured reliably.
- **EFA** was instrumental in reducing the 30 survey items into six coherent, statistically valid factors. The high KMO value (0.860) and the significant Bartlett's Test results validated the dataset's suitability for factor analysis.
- **Multiple regression analysis** quantified the impacts of each factor on tourism development, producing a strong adjusted R^2 of 0.824. This demonstrates that the model explains a substantial portion of tourists' behavioral variation.
- **Descriptive statistics** provided context regarding demographic profiles, platform usage, and content preferences, helping interpret behavioral trends within the broader framework of social media consumption.

By triangulating these tools, the study ensured comprehensive data validation and a clear linkage between statistical evidence and the research objectives.

4.3.3. Interpretation of Findings in Context

The results indicate that social media has become the *primary driver* in shaping travel behavior among the younger population. Information quality and e-WOM emerged as the most influential factors, reflecting a broader trend in which tourists rely heavily on accurate content and community validation when selecting destinations. This phenomenon aligns with the increasing importance of "social proof" in digital tourism

contexts. The strong effects of advertising, usefulness, and social interaction highlight that tourists expect not only reliable content but also meaningful engagement and practical value. Meanwhile, credibility, though the least influential, still plays an essential role in mitigating perceived risk—especially in an environment where misinformation is prevalent.

The preference for visual formats (short videos, images, experiential clips) underscores the shift toward multimedia-based decision-making. Such formats offer immediacy, emotional appeal, and authenticity, making them ideal tools for destination marketing organizations.

4.3.4. Overall Implications

The discussion clearly demonstrates that social media communication is not merely a supplementary tool but a *central determinant* of tourism development in Can Tho. The combination of statistical tools and empirical findings strongly supports the conclusion that digital content, peer influence, and online interaction collectively shape tourists' perceptions, trust, and travel decisions. These insights offer a solid foundation for designing future communication strategies tailored to the behavioral patterns of modern digital travelers.

5. Conclusion

The study indicates that social media plays a pivotal role in tourism development in Can Tho City. The six factors—information quality, information usefulness, online advertising, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), reliability, and social interaction—were all found to have positive impacts, with information quality and e-WOM being the most influential. This confirms that the application of social media goes beyond mere promotion, becoming a key determinant in shaping destination image, influencing tourist behavior, and enhancing the attractiveness of Can Tho as a travel destination.

To fully leverage the potential of social media, the tourism sector in Can Tho should focus on the following strategic directions:

1) **Develop a distinctive digital content ecosystem for Can Tho:** Create short videos, 360-degree images, and authentic experience clips highlighting floating markets, orchards, local cuisine, and cultural festivals. Invest in thematic video series (culinary, cultural, ecological, historical) to build an online repository with strong brand recognition.
2) **Strengthen electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) strategies:** Encourage tourists to leave reviews, share photos, and use official hashtags (#CanThoTourism, #DiscoverCanTho). Establish strategic collaborations with travel bloggers, KOLs, and online tourism communities on Facebook and TikTok to maximize content reach. Organize online competitions (e.g., photo contests, travel vlogs) to engage the community in content creation.

3) **Apply digital technology and big data in promotion:** Utilize location-based advertising to target domestic travelers and international tourists currently in Vietnam. Leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze tourism search behavior, optimizing content and posting schedules. Integrate QR codes at tourist sites to connect visitors directly to official communication channels, providing quick access to essential information.
4) **Enhance information usefulness and reliability:** Develop digital guidebooks in multiple languages, including maps, suggested itineraries, and estimated costs. Maintain official information portals (websites/mobile apps) integrated with fan pages and TikTok channels to ensure transparent content and reduce misinformation. Publish verified service directories (homestays, tours, restaurants) to strengthen tourist trust.
5) **Increase interaction and build online communities:** Maintain active engagement on fan pages and Can Tho tourism community groups to respond promptly to tourist inquiries. Host livestreams during major events and festivals to create a shared online experience. Develop intelligent chatbots on Facebook and Zalo to assist with itinerary planning, ticket booking, culinary exploration, and local experiences.
6) **Develop promotion strategies linked to unique tourism products:** Position "**Can Tho –** an ecological and waterway cultural destination" as the main brand identity. Align social media campaigns with signature events (e.g., Southern Folk Cake Festival, Waterway Tourism Day, Ninh Kieu Lantern Night). Integrate promotions with local cuisine (e.g., linh fish, water fern flowers, fermented fish hotpot) to create a distinctive identity compared to other destinations.
7) **Ensure sustainability and long-term development:** Combine digital promotion with high-quality on-site services to avoid the gap between online messaging and actual experiences. Train young professionals in digital marketing and tourism communication to maintain continuity. Encourage small businesses (homestays, restaurants, community services) to participate in social media promotion to foster a comprehensive and authentic image of Can Tho tourism.

In summary, the application of social media in Can Tho's tourism development is not just a trend but should be part of a comprehensive strategy. It must balance high-quality content, e-WOM, technology application, community interaction, and sustainability. This approach will provide a solid foundation for establishing Can Tho as a modern, friendly, and distinctive tourism brand, enhancing competitiveness and promoting sustainable growth in the digital era.

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this research would not have been possible without the invaluable support of many individuals and institutions. The authors would first like to extend their sincere gratitude to the teaching staff of Department of History–Geography–Tourism (DoHGT), School of Political Science, Social Sciences and Humanities (SSSH),

Can Tho University (CTU), as well as Faculty of Multimedia Communications, College of Information and Communication Technology, CTU, for their academic guidance and continuous support throughout the research process. The authors are also deeply grateful to the 200 respondents who participated in the study through both online questionnaires (via Google Forms) and face-to-face surveys conducted at major tourist sites in the city. Their cooperation and willingness to share valuable opinions greatly enriched the findings. Special appreciation is extended to Ms. Thai Phan Bao Han, English lecturer, for her meticulous proofreading and insightful suggestions, which significantly enhanced the clarity and overall quality of this article. The authors also wish to acknowledge *the European Journal of Social Sciences Studies* for providing the opportunity to publish this work. This publication aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of the determinants of social media application use in tourism development in Can Tho City, Vietnam.

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