

Social Media as a Tool to Promote Jyväskylä as A Tourism Destination

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Abstract: Jyväskylä is the largest city in the Central Finland and Finnish Lakeland region. In digital era places and destinations compete against each other in an increasingly globalized market. To successfully compete, destinations need to work on developing a strong brand identity through effective positioning. The main goal of this work is to understand how social media platforms has been used to create / promote the Jyvaskyla brand. An exploratory qualitative study was developed to accomplish our goals. Data were collected and analysed until October 2024. We analyse all the hashtags in the social media Instagram, Facebook, Tik ToK and YouTube defined by the municipality of Jyvaskyla, namely, #jyväskylä #liikuntapääkaupunki, #capitalofsport, #tapahtumakaupunki, #opiskelijakaupunki, #visitjyväskyläregion, #visitjyvaskylaregion, #valonkaupunki, #cityoflight. Based on these hashtags, the posts created by users of these platforms were analysed, namely the content of the posts they associate with the city, the author of the publication and their geographical region, and the date of publication of the posts. The data was collected using the platform Apify, and all the posts were analysed with content analysis to understand the main keywords associated with the brand Jyvaskyla. Moreover, posts were analysed using the sentiment analysis tool Benty.ai, which uses artificial intelligence to analyse the tone with which the text was written. Our preliminary results show the importance of the definition of a brand for the city as a marketing strategy. When we regard the hashtags defined by municipality, they have the name of the city or associated the term “city” to the brand they want to promote, namely: sports, events, light or study. The current study provides valuable information on the current state of social media communication from stand points of branding and destination marketing. Also gives the opportunity to access and compare the effectiveness of these four platforms. Decision-makers needs to understand how to enhance the use of this technology to promote tourism destinations.

Keywords: Tourism destination, Digital brand, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Jyvaskyla

1. Introduction

Nowadays, social networks are part of our daily lives and are decisive communication and information tools for both personal and professional decision-making, thus playing a decisive role in publicising and promoting tourist destinations as “the tourism industry is known to be an information-intensive industry” (Sheldon, 1997; Werthner & Klein, 1999), make them decisive tools in destination promotion by allowing direct interaction between tourists/visitors and the destination.

In fact, although word-of-mouth plays an important role in the field of destination promotion, user-generated content via social networks is increasingly important in consumer choices.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, as an important source for consumers to search for all kinds of information and about potential travel destinations.

By presenting an analysis of the hashtags defined by the municipality of Jyvaskyla, this study provides valuable information about the current state of social media communication from the point of view of branding and marketing this destination, thus providing local decision-makers with valuable information about the potential of these digital tools in promoting Jyvaskyla as a tourist destination.

The paper is organized in five main sections. The two next sections present a literature review about social media tools, its usage for tourism promotion and destinations branding. The third section is about the methodology used to carry out the study. The last section presents the conclusions and limitations of the study and addresses some future research directions.

2. Social Media and Tourism in Jyvaskyla

Tourism has seen an increase in the use of social media, both by consumers (tourists) and tourism agents, in an exchange of content generated by both. This content is even more important today because social networks offer low-cost communication and wide demographic penetration compared to traditional media (Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010), which attracts local territory managers to use them as a tool for promoting destinations (Hays et al., 2013).

At the same time, travellers also use social media before, during and after their trips (Leung & Jiang, 2018), contributing to the dissemination and promotion of destinations. As many authors have pointed out, by making it possible to visualise destinations (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008) in the pre-travel phase (Amaro et al., 2016), social networks allow travellers to avoid risks (Narangajavana et al., 2017) and make purchasing decisions (Zhang & Chen, 2017).

Regarding the relationship between tourist agents (public and private) and visitors/tourists, the fact that they have a presence in the digital world allows them to achieve global visibility and enables the establishment of relationships with customers in real time, satisfying specific needs and overcoming language barriers or from different cultures.

2.1 Facebook

The last statistics pointed that social networking website Facebook in the first days of 2025 had 3.07 billion monthly active users (MAU) and 2.11 billion daily active users (DAU). This figure accounts for 59.38% of all social media users worldwide and remain the most popular social media platform (Meltwater, 2025).

The platform enables its users to create an online profile and invite friends who can post, write comments on walls, and watch each other's activities (Ellison et al., 2007; Kumar, 2018).

Still based on the 2024 Facebook statistics, Facebook pages typically share around 1.75 posts each day. Photo posts dominate, accounting for 34.3% of all page posts followed by Video posts, representing 19.3% of the total. Link posts are also quite popular, representing 42.9% of all posts (Meltwater, 2024).

In fact, 63.2% of users indicated that they utilize Facebook to share photos and videos. Additionally, more than half of the users mentioned that they prefer using Facebook to follow and research the brands and products they like, which allows us to affirm that Facebook should be part of any brand's social media marketing strategy.

This is especially important since recent data also shows that ad clicking is one of the top uses of Facebook. The average Facebook user clicks on 12 Facebook ads every month.

In this sense, it is also a tool for destination promotion, and it has become the first choice to create a destination's brand and interact with customers/visitors, influencing their travel decisions.

Facebook enable tourism marketers to develop innovative ways to promote a destination image and increase travel in an increasingly complex and competitive global marketplace.

2.2 YouTube

YouTube started as a social media tool but is now evolving into a marketing communication tool. Recent tourism studies have attempted to investigate the impact of YouTube videos on the tourism industry (Motahar et al, 2024) in producing and representing tourist destinations, to reach new customers. The persuasiveness of visual messages on YouTube and their influence on potential travellers is increasingly important. By shaping the image of a destination, these audiovisual documents create positive perceptions in the tourist's imagination.

According to the Digital 2024 Global Overview Report (Meltwater, 2024) YouTube's potential ad reach totalled 2.49 billion users with over 122 million people accessing YouTube daily to watch over a billion hours of video and generate billions of views.

According to the same source, YouTube is the most used social platform for research purposes among B2B decision-makers with 50.9% of users (Meltwater, 2024).

In fact, today YouTube is the second most popular social media platform, after Facebook.

2.3 Instagram

Instagram, a photo-sharing social networking service, enables users to take pictures edit them and to post and share their images online and directly with their followers on the social network.

With 2 billion monthly active users (MAU) as of 2025 and over 500 million daily active users (DAU), according to Statista, the global data and business intelligence platform, Instagram is the third most popular social media platform worldwide (Meltwater, 2025).

This data materialized, as per Data Portal's Global Overview Report (Meltwater, 2024), in the fact that Instagram users spend an average of 31 minutes and 40 seconds daily on the platform which translates to 15 hours and 50 minutes every month.

Additionally, if we consider that these 2 billion active users, represents about 37% of the world's internet users, we cannot remain indifferent to the decisive role that Instagram has in decision-making (Meltwater, 2024).

2.4 TikTok

The development of information technology and the 4G network, and more recently 5G, has allowed the change in the way people communicate and interact, moving from text and images to short videos, powered by social networks. Launched in 2016, Tik Tok exploded onto the social media scene by giving users the ability to create short videos that can be up to three minutes long, making it a hub for entertainment content. This sharing of funny moments not only has the advantages of large user base marketing and wide range of outreach that traditional social media platforms have, but as Xiaoyu (2018) points out, it can also use short videos as a carrier to present tourism products to potential tourists in a creative novel and topical way,

In fact, ranked as the most downloaded app of 2021, TikTok beat out long-time social media favourites Instagram, Facebook in terms of downloads. In addition, TikTok statistics show the app reached in 2021 one billion active users, allowing it to provide entertainment to its community all around the globe.

Statista data shows Statista predicted that TikTok is expected to reach 1.8 billion monthly active users (MAU) by the end of 2024 and more than 30 million daily active users (DAU), via IOS.

In fact, with 272 videos posted every second, 16,000 videos posted every minute, 981 thousand videos posted every hour, 34 million videos posted each day and 707 million videos posted each month, TikTok is the fifth most popular Social Media Platform Worldwide behind Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp (Meltwater, 2024).

Data shows the average user opens the TikTok App 20 times per day (Meltwater, 2024). These numbers quickly attracted the attention of tourism destination marketing organizations, making TikTok a great tourism marketing tool.

3. Social Media and Destinations Branding

The data previously presented prove that more and more people are actively engaging in social media, which has empowered them in such a way that social media become strategic marketing platforms.

As literature review shows, to successfully compete against each other, destinations need to develop a strong brand identity that allows them to distinguish themselves from others and thus expand their audience. In this process social media become crucial digital marketing tools to touristic destinations promoting the territory and its characteristics.

In fact, Social media platforms help customers (users) generate and share content (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020), ultimately making that content a reliable form of communication which leads us to the importance of a clear identification of the destination's brand image in a way that the image perceived by consumers corresponds to the one we intend to associate with the territory and its specificities.

Since 2012 platforms have chosen to intervene through hashtag moderation. Or hashtags (#) direct social media algorithms to show a post in the feeds of interested audience, becoming, as Schmidt (2014), states "the most visible form of communication on social networks, connecting content between users "who have no pre-existing follower/follower relationship" what make them convenient tools for limit relevant content between users. When we analyse Social Media Marketing (SMM) effectiveness we need to focus on two crucial aspects: content quality and involvement. Blanchard (2011) suggests that Content quality is an important aspect but not quantity because millions of followers/fans could act as "ghost followers", which means these followers/fans have never been actively involved in the online conversation. At the same time Dumenco (2011) advises that the number of brand mentions are not the real indicator of the SMM effectiveness, especially when the word is so generic, which can be misinterpreted by the social media monitoring tool (Dumenco, 2011).

Thus, the visibility of hashtags is directly related with topics. As Chakrabarti et al. (2023) highlight "users search for posts of their interest using hashtags and as a result, posts annotated with those hashtags are rendered by the social Therefore, if a post does not contain the relevant hashtags, then it may not appear as a search result

leading to a loss of potential audience and lesser social popularity” and the opposite is also true , the use of appropriate hashtags can increase the accessibility of a publication, making it visible to a wider audience.

These facts allow us to state that the use of appropriate hashtags leads to greater user engagement and, consequently, greater the popularity of destinations.

So, as Burgess and Bruns (2015) state “There is a strong need to put hashtag uses into better perspective by comparing the patterns of engagement around topical hashtags.” It will be necessary to question their relationship with the destination to promote visitor engagement with more effective posts and inviting them to build contents in their social media accounts and work together in the destination brand.

4. Research Methodology

This exploratory study uses a qualitative methodology to answer the research question How are social media (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube) platforms used to promote a tourism destination? With this question, our main objective is to understand how social media platforms have been used to create/promote the Jyvaskyla brand.

To develop this study, we analyze all the publications on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube between 2013 and October 2024. We consider this timeline because it was the beginning of the profiles and, in 2024, the moment data were collected from the platforms for analysis.

For the data collection, we consider all the hashtags defined by the municipality of Jyväskylä: #jyväskylä, #liikuntapääkaupunki, #capitalofsport, #tapahtumakaupunki, #opiskelijakaupunki, #visitjyväskyläregion, #visitjyvaskylaregion, #valonkaupunki, #cityoflight.

The data was collected using the platform Apify. All the content was transferred to an Excel file. We analyzed information related to the date of publication, author’s profile (individual or organizational), geographic localization, and content of the publication. It is important to notice that in TikTok wasn’t analysed the type of user neither their geographic location because this data in not available in the public profile.

For the content of publication, the text was analyzed according to context analysis procedures (Bardin, 2011) considering the following categories: Student life, Events and Festivals, Tourism and Travel, Art and Culture, Sports and Recreation, Nature, Shopping, and Gastronomy.

Additionally, the platform Benty.ai was used to analyze posts’ content. This platform uses artificial intelligence to analyze text according to the tone used, creating a sentiment category: Positive, Neutral or Negative. Moreover, it gives some recommendations about what thematic is more relevant in the posts. Only posts written in English was consider in this analysis.

To understand the possible variation in the use of these platforms, the annual and total growth rate per platform was calculated.

Our sample is composed of 1142 results. We collected 344 publications from Instagram, 279 publications from Facebook, 370 from TikTok, and 149 from YouTube. Table 1 summarises the number of publications per platform and hashtag. Notice that the hashtags #capitalofsport and #cityoflight are too generic and for that reason the posts retrieved without any hashtag related with Jyvaskyla were not considered.

Table 1: Number of publications used on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube according to the hashtags used

Hashtag	Instagram	Facebook	TikTok	YouTube
#jyväskylä	189	47	165	24
#jyvaskyla	25	0	16	0
#liikuntapääkaupunki	61	50	7	2
#capitalofsport	6	0	0	0
#tapahtumakaupunki	50	18	6	0
#opiskelijakaupunki	50	13	9	0
#visitjyväskyläregion	52	50	8	0
#visitjyvaskylaregion	66	49	109	27

Hashtag	Instagram	Facebook	TikTok	YouTube
#valonkaupunki	52	51	52	7
#cityoflight	8	1	35	0

5. Results

The results show that in all the social media networks the most active profiles are organizational entities, being an exception of YouTube, where there are more individuals making videos than organizations, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of posts per Type of Entity.

Type of Entity	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube
Organizational	286	250	61
Individual	58	29	88

Considering the expressive number of organizational posts, it was analysed the type of business or organizations that make these posts. All of them are from the services sector, being the municipalities the most active promoting the activities, events, facilities and the overall region, nevertheless, noticing some prevalence in other services like organizations related with arts and sports, hospitality and restaurants, digital content creators and photographers. In these results the Instagram is the most used network. Table 3 presents the business and organizations with more than 10 posts in some of the network analysed.

Table 3: Number of posts per Type of Organization

Organization	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube
Municipality	42	37	26
Sport Team	43	38	15
Art Centre/Gallery	25	13	-
Museum	16	2	-
Hospitality	10	16	-
Restaurant	5	14	-
Digital Content Creator	14	22	-
Photographer	17	-	-
Students Association	28	7	-
Store	14	13	3

About the geographic location of the users, mainly they are from Finland in all the platforms, justified by being mostly organizations promoting the region, while promotes their services, as shown in Table 4. Moreover, there are an increasing interest in using videos in YouTube, mainly by individuals, and from countries like Russia and India.

Table 4: Number of posts per Country

Country	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube
Finland	341	275	123
USA	1	2	-
Germany	-	1	1
Denmark	1	-	-
Norway	-	-	1
Russia	-	-	9
India	-	-	13
Italy	-	-	1
Luxembourg	-	-	1

About the TikTok social media network, as already mentioned, this platform doesn't have public information the profile of the users, and it is a platform of very short videos with a growing interest especially among young. The results show that the usage of hashtags is indiscriminate and exaggerated, since on average each post has around 30 hashtags, and there are posts with 42 hashtags. Analysing these hashtags, most of them are not concerning the region or their activities, but single words or banter. Nevertheless, there hashtags related with the region and its activities, namely tourism, nature, sports, being a city of light and for students: #keskisuomi is used 57 times, #keskisuomenmuseo is used 17, #kotimaanmatkailu is used 47, #aalto2 is used 18 times, #finland is used 20, #helsinki is used 6, #cityoflight is used 35, #cityoflight2024 is used 19, #autumn is used 11, #syksy is used 13, #christmascountdown is used 10, #avaruudenpääkaupunki is used 10, #lightart is used 22, #lightfestival is used 20, #liikunta is used 13, #matkailu is used 47, #matkailuvinkit is used 32, #nature is used 10, #opiskelija is used 10, #opiskelijaelämää is used 25, #opiskelu is used 16, #sauna is used 11, #travelinspo is used 31, #traveltiktok is used 30, #traveltok is used 39, #valonkaupunki is used 52, #valonkaupunki2023 is used 14, #valonkaupunki20232024 is used 26, #valotapahtuma is used 20, #suomi is used 15, #suomitiktok is used 37, #tiktoksuomi is used 59, #ttsuomi is used 14, #visitfinland is used 26, #visitjyvaskyla is used 10, #visitjyvaskylä is used 44, and #visitjyvaskylaregion is used 109.

There are others with some usage but without any significance to the region, like #foryou is used 38 times, #fouryoupage is used 13, #sinulle is used 18, #sinullesivu is used 12, and #fyp is used 102 times.

Moreover, it was analysed the activity in TikTok by Author Name, noticing that most of the hashtags related with the region and its activities should come from the municipality services, since the most active accounts are: *aalto2museum* with 12 posts, *jyvaskylankaupunki* with 12 posts, *valonkaupunki* with 24 posts, and *visitjyvaskylaregion* with 70 posts.

The results show that when comparing the usage of all the platforms, it is evident that Instagram is the preferred, with a total 344 posts, but also that from the 279 posts on Facebook, 124 are from Instagram users.

Figure 1 show that all the platforms had a significant growth in 2024, especially the Instagram, and that most users continues to maintain activity on Facebook, even though the connection is facilitated by the platforms. It worth to notice the growing of TikTok usage since 2021, showing that this is a social media network that promise to become a promising way to promoting tourist destinations.

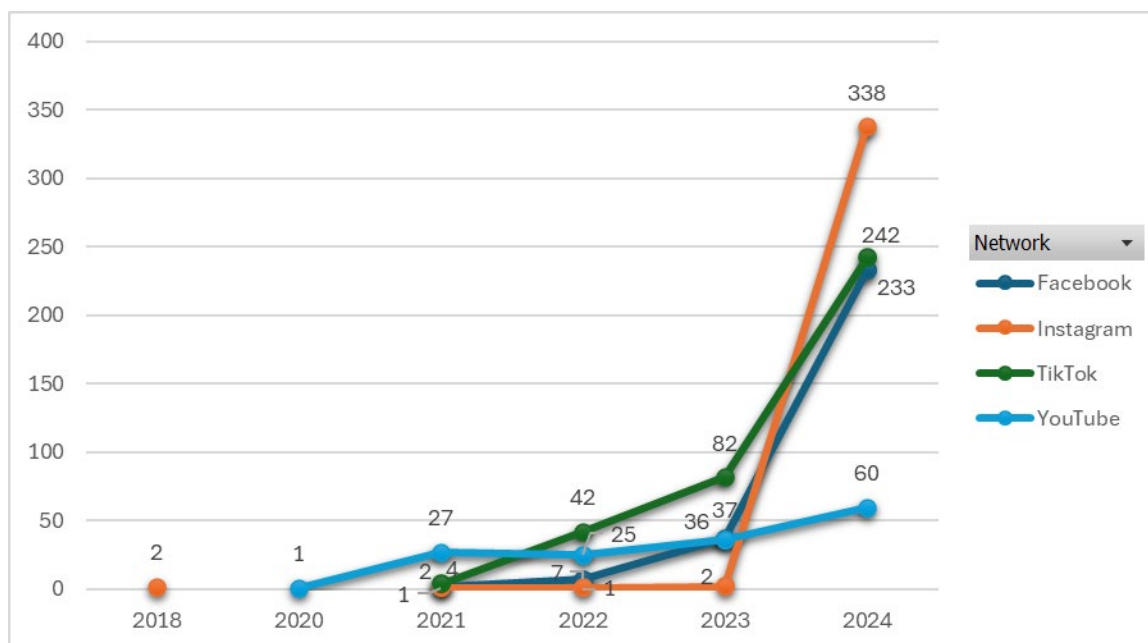


Figure 1: Evolution of the platform usage since 2018

Considering the analyses of the text written in the posts, it only was analysed the text written in English, being 94 on Instagram, 70 on YouTube, 31 on Facebook and 101 on TikTok. From that analysis had emerged 8 categories: Student life, Events and Festivals, Tourism and Travel, Art and Culture, Sports and Recreation, Nature, Shopping and Gastronomy.

Student life, the education is highly valued in the city, with a very well-known university. Jyväskylä is a popular city for students due to its convenient size and short distances, where they can easily get around the city on foot, by bike or by bus.

Events and Festivals, Jyväskylä hosts several events through the year and has a vibrant cultural scene.

Tourism and Travel, the city has a rich cultural scene, with many museums, galleries and performance venues. The tourism industry is growing with many visitors attracted to its natural beauty and outdoor activities. The city has a lot of offers in terms of culture and events.

Art and Culture, Jyväskylä has several art centres and galleries, as well as museums, being known for its rich cultural scene.

Sports and Recreation, Jyväskylä sport events and art performance are well-attended and popular among locals and tourists. Moreover, the sport events are highly competitive and attract top-level athletes. This city has a strong sports culture.

Nature, the city is surrounded by a beautiful natural scenery, and it has a strong focus in outdoor activities. The city has many parks and nature reserves.

Shopping, Jyväskylä is a popular city destination in Finland and has a variety of shopping options.

Gastronomy, the city known for its traditional cuisine and has a variety of food options.

Additionally, it was used the platform Benty.ai to make a sentiment analysis to the text written in the posts. This platform uses artificial intelligence algorithms to analyse the sentiment that users have when they write the posts, classified in terms of type of feedback, Positive, Neutral or Negative, presenting some recommendations. In Instagram platform the result was 100% positive feedback, recommending the events, festivals and sport activities in Jyväskylä, the city natural landscapes and cultural attractions, and studying in Jyväskylä. The YouTube platform presented 92,8% positive feedback, 3,6% neutral feedback and 3,6% negative feedback. The suggestions are related with improving the tourism infrastructures and the variety of shopping options. Furthermore, to develop more outdoor activities and nature-based tourism, and improve the city' food area by adding more restaurants and cafes. About the Facebook platform, the result was 96,7% positive feedback and 3,3% neutral feedback, recommending improving the public transportation to make the city more convenient for students and tourist, as well as to enhance the overall experience in the city by providing more amenities and services to students, students, and locals alike. Moreover, to increase the number of events and festivals to attract more visitors, develop more art and cultural programs to showcase its rich heritage, and finally to invest in outdoor infrastructure to make the city more appealing to outdoor enthusiasts. The TikTok platform presented 95,5% positive feedback and 4,5% neutral feedback, just highlighting that the city has a strong sense of community, with many events and activities that bring people together, like sport teams and clubs, museums, festivals and concerts, making the city a rich cultural scene.

6. Conclusions

The main conclusion of this study is that although hashtags (#), as Schmidt (2014), states are "the most visible form of communication on social networks, connecting content between users", most of the hashtags used about Jyväskylä as tourism destination are not concerning the region or their activities, but single words or banter.

It is important to highlight that all the social networks listed will have a very high post growth rate in 2024 and, despite Facebook is the most used platform overall, when we look at the use of social networks that promote Jyväskylä, Instagram is the favourite.

Furthermore, in TikTok, most of the hashtags related with the region and its activities are from the municipality services and the posts on the different platforms are also mostly from public entities, and in particular from the municipality.

This study contributes to an analysis of the impact of the main social media on the interaction between users (mostly of Finnish origin) and the Jyväskylä destination, allowing tourism agents to make decisions about future action in order to enhance them and consolidate the brand, in particular in defining the hashtags that most motivate users in this interaction.

It is now irrefutable that social media are decisive tools in the promotion of the territory.

Future research should analyse in particular the interaction of individual users and measure the return of this interaction on destination's brand and their influence on travel decisions. Moreover, it will be done a research study into what information or contents a post or a video should include, would help marketing planners take advantage of this new technology to connect new users and influence their travel decision. The use of hashtags is widespread and accepted by everyone, but how to define them and who defines them?

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Centre of Studies in Geography and Spatial Planning (CEGOT), funded by national funds through the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) under the reference UIDB/04084/2025.

Ethics Declaration: Ethical clearance was not required for this research.

AI Declaration: AI tools were not used for the creation of this paper.

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