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HOW TRAVEL EARNS US BRAGGING RIGHTS

Do you seek bragging rights in your travel? Do you want to visit Instagram-worthy places? But what constitutes travel bragging rights? And what makes a travel destination worth of bragging on social media or Instagrammable? **Dr Daisy Liu** explored these questions in her doctoral dissertation research, which was recently published in *Journal of Travel Research*. We share her findings in this digest to stimulate further conversation on this issue.



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A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY & CONCEPTUALISATION OF TRAVEL BRAGGING RIGHTS

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Travel bragging rights and Instagrammability have become important factors influencing travel decision making in the social media era, yet research on this topic remains scant in the tourism literature. This study attempted to answer the question “What constitutes travel bragging rights?” from tourists’ perspectives using in-depth interviews and means–end analysis. According to the interviews, travel bragging rights denote the perceived worthiness of sharing travel-related experiences or objects on social media, and the increasingly popular phrase “Instagrammability,” is a subset of travel bragging rights but focuses on the visual appeal of tourist attractions and accompanying photos.

We further identified seven dimensions of travel bragging rights, including difference, similarity, scarcity, functionality, hedonism, symbolism and consequentiality. These dimensions are located on a continuum between a focus on the self and a focus on the audience, and people strive to post travel experiences that contain a combination of self-serving and audience-serving features. Sharing such travel experiences serve several social psychological functions reflecting posters’ personal values, including impression management, gaining social acceptance and approval, self-expression, social bonding, and boosting or maintaining self-esteem.



FURTHER READING:

Liu, H., & Li, X. (2020). How Travel Earns Us Bragging Rights: A Qualitative Inquiry and Conceptualization of Travel Bragging Rights. *Journal of Travel Research*.

Link: bit.ly/2Oz4z7X

This study made a significant theoretical contribution to the tourism literature by providing a systematic conceptualization of travel bragging rights. Moreover, by gaining an understanding of the meaning of travel bragging rights on social media, this study updates travel motivation theory in the social media era. Changes in the meaning of seeking bragging rights as a travel motivation reflect a shift to the use of cultural capital in identity construction. Further, by uncovering which aspects of a destination help tourists earn bragging rights, this study sheds light on destination marketing strategies—specifically in determining what to emphasize and how to stimulate tourists’ destination visit intentions through travel bragging rights.