



ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SELECTION OF TOURISM DESTINATION

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Abstract

In Pakistan, tourism industry is growing rapidly but lack of researches and studies contributes in creating gap in understand the role of social media marketing in improving this sector. Pakistan has rich potential of tourism due to its rich culture, geographical and biological diversity, and history. The country has various tourist destinations at Swat, Malam Jabba, Behrain, Kalam, Shangla, Balakot, Kaghan, Naran, Ayoubia, Murree, Chitral, Gilgit Baltistan, Hunza, and Neelam valleys, other mountainous ranges, and historical and archaeological sites. Pakistan has great potential and offers diverse opportunities for tourists, such as trout fishing in the glacial water of Gilgit Baltistan and Swat rivers, Shandur Polo traditional tournament, paragliding, rock climbing, and trekking in northern areas, Jeep and camel safari in the Cholistan desert, Wild Boar hunting. Pakistan had faced two major impediments towards becoming the top tourist destination, first it was not properly showcased in-front of the world and secondly in the recent past the security conditions were not suitable for international visitors. Today, it is high time for the Pakistan to become the top priority for tourists from all across the world. In this regard Social Media can play the best role possible. Various social media platforms are full of pictures and stories of people describing their experiences about the places they had been to. Secondly the governmental organizations also launch various social media office profile to show case the destinations. In this research the need of social media for the sustainable development in tourism in Pakistan has been focused.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Tourism in Pakistan, Sustainable Development, Research Gap, Destination Marketing

Introduction

Pakistan boasts a diverse and captivating landscape, featuring awe-inspiring mountains, mesmerizing plateaus, and vast, enchanting deserts. This natural beauty presents a significant opportunity to attract a substantial influx of international tourists. Recognizing this potential, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has established a network of 27 motels and 3 restaurants to cater to the needs of foreign visitors. However, to effectively capitalize on this potential, PTDC must significantly enhance its marketing efforts to reach key markets such as China, the Middle East, Korea, Japan, and beyond.

The tourism industry is experiencing rapid growth globally, and social media has emerged as an indispensable tool for promotion and marketing. In today's digitally interconnected world, social media



platforms have become an integral part of daily life, permeating every aspect of our existence, including the tourism sector.

Traditionally, the tourism industry has heavily relied on factors such as destination reputation, traveller reviews, available information, and word-of-mouth recommendations. However, social media has revolutionized this landscape. It serves as a powerful platform for social media provides a readily accessible and comprehensive source of information about potential travel destinations, including travelogues, photographs, videos, and user-generated content that offers authentic insights into the local culture, attractions, and experiences. Social media facilitates the entire travel planning process, from researching destinations and booking accommodations to discovering hidden gems and connecting with local communities. Travelers can utilize social media groups, forums, and hashtags to gather information, seek recommendations, and plan their itineraries. Social media empowers travellers to share their unique travel experiences with the world. Through captivating photographs, engaging videos, and compelling stories, travellers can inspire potential visitors, showcase the beauty of a destination, and build excitement for future travel.

Furthermore, social media allows tourism businesses by leveraging social media's powerful targeting capabilities, tourism businesses can precisely reach their ideal customer segments, tailoring their marketing messages to resonate with specific interests, demographics, and travel preferences. Social media provides a cost-effective platform for building brand awareness and establishing a strong online presence. Through engaging content, interactive campaigns, and influencer collaborations, tourism businesses can effectively communicate their unique value proposition and attract a wider audience. Social media platforms provide valuable insights into customer sentiment and travel trends. By actively monitoring social media conversations, tourism businesses can identify areas for improvement, address customer concerns, and proactively respond to emerging trends.

Social media has become an indispensable tool for promoting tourism in Pakistan. By effectively utilizing its power, PTDC can effectively reach global audiences, showcase the country's unique attractions, and attract a significant influx of international tourists. By embracing the power of social media and implementing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy, Pakistan can unlock its full tourism potential and establish itself as a premier travel destination on the world stage.

Research question

Does social media play a role for sustainable development in tourism in Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

The researcher chose the topic of social media and sustainable development in tourism in Pakistan because they were curious to know if social media plays a vital role in the sustainable development of tourism in Pakistan. This subject aligns with the researcher's area of interest. Most of the data obtained for this research will come from secondary sources, including books, internet articles, and magazines. However, to enhance the accuracy of the information, the researcher will conduct primary research to validate the findings from secondary data.

Primary research for this assignment was conducted through telephonic interviews with individuals who are influenced by tourists. The researcher selected a sample size of 30 individuals from diverse locations, all sharing a common interest in tourism in Pakistan. The selected sample consists of individuals who are either potential customers for tourism in Pakistan, those who are involved in promoting tourism in Pakistan, or those who earn their livelihood by providing services to foreign tourists.

Literature Review

In 21st century the promotion of tourism has entered into a new era where “WOM” (word of mouth) publicity is replaced by online publicity and social media has emerged as most powerful tool to promote tourism in every country, region and destination. Zelenka et al. (2021) stated the relationship between the social media and the tourism industry based and found that social media is fundamentally changing the way travellers and tourist search find, read, trust, and justify information related to tourism. Elvis Madondo (2016),



have highlighted the role of social media in promoting the tourism industry in South Africa. Research studies indicate that WhatsApp and Facebook as active social media platforms which has the highest numbers of users. Razak et al. (2023) discussed the influence of social media as a marketing tool among the Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia was conducted. Zeng (2013) conducted a study on social media in the tourism industry said that tourism industry is still in the infancy stage and only very few studies are conducted in this area and more studies are recommended.

Tourism in Pakistan

According to the report, 1.75 million tourist visited Pakistan in 2017 alone. Statistics from the Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC) shows the 30% travellers were domestic. Due to improved security situations tourism has increased by 300% over the past few years. According to The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the total contribution of tourism in the GDP of Pakistan showed a growth of 5.8% in the year 2018, while talking about its contribution to employment a rise of 2.6% was shown. WTTC is expecting the rise in this amount to \$36.1 billion within a decade. Along with this marvellous increase in annual tourism there is a significant increase in business activity around the country as well. The government of Pakistan is putting efforts through PTDC to improve tourism industry in Pakistan (Fauzel et al., 2021; Shabbir et al., 2020). Besides efforts made by PTDC a lot of the credit for this rapid increase in tourism goes to promotion of different tourist spots through the internet and social media platforms. This industry plays a vital role in job creation and directly affect the GDP of the country (Asif et al., 2023).

Social media

Social media can be defined as websites and applications that enables users to create and share content and to participate in social networking. These platforms are interactive computer-mediated technologies that enables the creation and sharing of information, ideas, Interests etc. via virtual communities. According to another definition social media is the collection of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing, and collaboration (Asif & Sandhu, 2023; Shahid et al., 2022). There are different types of social media channels and platforms with distinguishable features.

Social media encompasses a wide range of websites and applications that empower users to create and share content, fostering online communities and social interaction. These interactive platforms leverage computer-mediated technologies to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, interests, and more within virtual communities. According to another definition, social media can be described as a collection of online communication channels designed for community-based input, interaction, content sharing, and collaborative efforts. The landscape of social media is diverse, featuring a variety of platforms with distinct characteristics. Some prominent examples of social media platforms include:

WhatsApp: A popular messaging app for personal and group communication.

Instagram: A visually-driven platform for sharing photos and videos, often with a focus on aesthetics and visual storytelling.

Facebook: A comprehensive social networking platform that connects individuals with friends, family, and communities, enabling them to share content, interact, and build relationships.

YouTube: A video-sharing platform that hosts a vast library of user-generated content, including music videos, documentaries, educational videos, and entertainment clips.

Social Media in Tourism Marketing

Social interaction of the people through internet has opened new horizons of opportunities. Generally travellers use social media and online communities in order to seek information from users regarding their potential trip or to generate the content relating to their experiences of tour, in the form of comment, reviews and pictures (Alghizzawi et al., 2018). Marketing can be defined as social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain according to their need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others Marketing focuses on attracting and delivering value to existing and potential customer in order to ensure satisfaction (Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2019).



Social Media as a Source of Sustainable Development in Tourism

Social media influences and inspires the public and potential tourists to plan and decide their tour by the motivations explained below when travel experiences, reviews and users generated contents are shared on social media, it is considered as most reliable source of information as compared to the information provided by conventional sources of information (Sobhanifard & Vaeyasi, 2020). The tourism industry is an information intensive industry in which potential tourist need to be exposed to as much information as possible in order to make a best informed decision. It's a common trend of travellers to share the pictures of personal trip on social media, this online photo sharing has become a norm and social media users easily share, review and respond to photo posted on social media sites. Photo sharing through Facebook and WhatsApp has become more common trend. Reviews of the users on shared photos serves as a valuable source of information about destination for potential tourists. These pictures exhibit the beauty of a tourist spot and attract the users to plan a visit. The photos got likes, shares, reviews and comments thus influencing the decision making process while planning for a trip.

Assumptions

1. Do Pakistan has got enough place for foreign tourist to visit
2. Which factors influencing tourists' preference for social media for their decision on tourism.
3. What makes social media so attractive and useful tool in every area of our lives, including tourism.
4. How we examine the extent to which social media can influence the final decision of a tourist.
5. How we ascertain whether tourists refer to social media prior to, during, and after their visits.

Theoretical Framework

Plog's theory

An American researcher named Plog (Mason 26) put forth his theory based on the psychology of tourists and these were published in 1973. Plog's theory was based on a case study conducted on New York residents and their attitudes to travel.

Plog's discussed the tourist behaviour and motivations based on the psychology of the tourists. Thus there are two types of tourists, the allo-centric and psycho-centric types of tourist. He argued that there are particular psychological types who do not like unfamiliar environments or cultures, so when they select a holiday they will seek the familiar regions than unfamiliar remote regions (these he termed psycho-centric). Plog further added that there are still some groups in society who will be prepared to risk a far more uncertain holiday destination. These tourists will search for strange or unfamiliar and these he termed allo-centric.

While the psycho-centric would not travel far from the local environment the allo-centric would travel long distances to unfamiliar locations. He concluded that the majority of the tourists were neither fully psycho-centric nor fully allo-centric. Rather most of the tourists were located in the centre point between the two extremes of psycho-centric and allo-centric. Majority of the tourists would seek the familiar and prefer not to travel great distances to get there.

An important point that emerged from the destination development of Plog's theory is that different tourists destinations are attractive to different types of tourists based on the kind of traveller they are, psycho or allo-centric and that majority of the tourists will prefer to travel for short distances than longer ones to go for holidays.

Thus it suggests that the tourist destinations in most of the developed countries which are in close proximity to major population areas, busy areas, markets, residential areas are likely to be developed and grow more quickly than those in the distant remote areas.

However, in actual practice, sometimes this theory may also prove wrong. On the contrary many of the remote areas are now getting faster developed than those near the major population areas.

While Plog's theory was based more on the psychological part of tourists,

Erik Cohen's theory

This theory related to the behaviour of the tourists. Erik Cohen who developed a classification of tourists where there was a four chief classification.



First was the organized mass tourists who travel in groups, who prefer packaged holiday (travel, accommodation, food etc.) usually arranged by a travel agent.

The second type was the individual mass tourists who use the same facilities as the organized mass tourists, but the difference lies only in decision making. This group makes more individual based decisions about their activity and trip. There are also the explorers and the drifters.

While explorers would most often arrange their own trips, meet and interact with the locals drifters avoid all contact with other tourists and leave with the locals. This classification of tourists lives longer than the other groups.

If both the above mentioned tourist theories which basically delve into the characteristics of human behavioural aspects are combined then we would see that majority of Cohen's mass tourist and independent mass tourists would converge with Plog's psycho-centric tourists.

Later in the mid-1970s, Doxey proposed the Irritation Index or the Irridex. The Irridex was based on the relationship between the tourists and the locals.

The fundamental idea as it is evident from the name of the index itself is that over a time period as the number of tourist increase in a particular area, a greater irritation and hatred would build up amongst the locals towards the tourists.

So, over the time as the locals gets more irritant with the visitors and become hostile, the number of visitors might actually decline or might not continue to grow at the same rate as previously.

If both the above mentioned tourist theories which basically delve into the characteristics of human behavioural aspects are combined then we would see that majority of Cohen's mass tourist and independent mass tourists would converge with Plog's psycho-centric tourists.

Butler's Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) (Mason, 33) model on tourism

Butler suggested a model where a tourism destination develops over time as a result of several factors. Destination is a very important element in tourism. A destination is defined most widely as a product is marketed to its consumers. And like all other products, tourist destinations also have a life cycle. Butler proposed a model for tourism area life cycle in which he showed how a destination begins as a relatively unknown place and visitors first come in small fractions because of lack of access, facilities and local knowledge (Miller & Galluci, 2004).

The key point in Butler's model was that planning and proper remedial action by the tourists can help arrest the decline in resorts and tourism infrastructure.

One of the major challenges that the World Tourism Organization made in its Global Forecasts for the year 2000 and beyond is the issue of sustainability, which relates to the absorptive capacity of an economy with respect to tourism.

This does not refer to the physical capacity alone but also to the capacity of a particular area to provide tourism infrastructure, pool in investments, manpower, and natural resources.

The theory of sustainable tourism

While manpower would not be a constraint, other natural resources might be. The theory of sustainable tourism thus off late has emerged of greater relevance, which is necessary to promote environmental awareness and boost tourism industry on the whole.

Sustainable tourism in a nutshell can be explained as a means by which tourist growth is achieved as well as environment and earth's scarce resources are preserved.

Apart from the environment issue another burning issue, which might emerge as an impediment is lack of trained skilled workforce to deliver value additions.

Application of theories

Several tourism theories have been put forth by several scholars to determine the roles and activities, the characteristics of tourists to boost the industry. There is a general lack of awareness about these theories amidst the policy makers. Tourism industry is still one of those industries, which is regulated by government administration. There are wide varieties of conceptual and theoretical approaches to tourism, which have to



be tested in reality. This apart there is a further need for more field studies and employment of professionals in conducting the research, which will help achieve greater theoretical orientation and practical application. The tourism industry has been growing at a phenomenal rate for the last fifty year especially, after the Second World War. The recession has had an effect on the industry, but the numbers of tourists worldwide are anticipated to be doubled to one billion plus by the end of 2010.

Keeping in tune with the changing times consumer demands will also change, more classifications based on growing needs of tourists might emerge.

Hypothesis

1. Gender has a significant impact on the media types for choosing a travel destination.
2. Age has a significant impact on the media types for choosing a travel
3. The greater a traveller's motivation to use social media, the more involvement the traveller attaches to a hotel social media page.
4. The higher a traveller's ability to use social media, the more involvement the traveller attaches to a hotel social media page.
5. There is association between social media and tourism

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Conceptualization

Definition of tourism according to the Robinson (2012) and Novelli et al. (2006)

In their introduction to the niche tourism phenomena, postulate that tourists have developed as consumers, becoming increasingly sophisticated in their needs and preferences as a result of an emergent culture of tourism. Despite such acknowledgements of the progressive and adaptive nature of tourism, particularly evident through the limitless introduction of new and niche tourism forms, there appear to have been no attempts to develop the commonly accepted definitions of tourism in parallel (Novelli et al., 2006; Robinson, 2012).

Definition of Tourism according to Leiper (1979)

Leiper (1979) believed that defining tourism is more complex than this, proposing that there are three approaches that can be taken. The economic stance focuses on tourism as a business, the technical stance focusses on the tourist in order to provide a common basis by which to collect data and the holistic stance attempts to include the entire essence of the subject.

UNWTO Definition of Tourism

"Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."

Tourism is different from travel. In order for tourism to happen, there must be a displacement: an individual has to travel, using any type of means of transportation (he might even travel on foot: nowadays, it is often the case for poorer societies, and happens even in more developed ones, and concerns pilgrims, hiker all travel is not tourism.

Operationalization

Social media and tourism are different things social media is independent variable and tourism is dependent variable. The emergence of social media platform people are more aware of everything that is going around them. For instance, when it comes to traveling, people are more aware of the new tourist spots that have been discovered in the country. With blogs, they get hold of the information about a place, which otherwise would have been difficult for them.

The social media has transformed the tourism sector for the better, and the changes brought by it in this sector are phenomenal. We hope that this transformation helps in boosting of the overall Pakistani economy. Social media and tourism are distinct entities. While social media functions as an independent variable, influencing and shaping tourism, which acts as the dependent variable. The advent of social media platforms has significantly enhanced public awareness and access to information. In the context of travel, individuals are now more informed about emerging tourist destinations within their country. Through blogs,



vlogs, and social media posts, travellers can readily access detailed information about a place, information that might have been challenging to obtain through traditional channels.

The profound impact of social media on the tourism sector is undeniable. This transformative influence has brought about remarkable changes, from the way destinations are marketed to how travellers plan their trips. The rise of social media has empowered travellers with a wealth of information, enabling them to make more informed decisions and discover hidden gems.

Furthermore, social media has facilitated the growth of niche tourism, connecting travellers with unique experiences and local communities. By showcasing the authentic beauty and cultural richness of destinations, social media can attract a wider range of visitors and promote sustainable tourism practices.

It is hoped that this transformative influence of social media will continue to positively impact the Pakistani economy by boosting tourism revenue, creating employment opportunities, and fostering cultural exchange.

Research Methodology

Methodology

The study has been undertaken using primary data. The primary data has been taken through field survey. A questionnaire has been designed to collect a comprehensive profile of the comparative study of social media and tourism in Pakistan. Personal survey has been conducted and additional information have been elicited from individuals. The primary data collected from the field have been meticulously entered into the computer for processing and tabulation. This study employed a primary data collection approach. Primary data was gathered through a field survey conducted using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to obtain comprehensive data for a comparative study of social media and tourism in Pakistan.

To ensure a diverse range of perspectives, personal interviews were conducted with respondents. This allowed for the collection of in-depth information and enabled researchers to address any specific questions or concerns that arose during the data collection process. The primary data collected from the field was meticulously entered into a computer database for subsequent processing and tabulation. A sample size of 107 participants was drawn from a single university located in Islamabad.

Universe

The research was conducted in National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Islamabad.

Unit of analysis

The target Population was people of different cities in all over the Pakistan comprising of both genders male and females studied in the university.

Sampling Frame

Simple Random sampling was used to get valid data to conduct the study.

Sample size

The researcher collected data from a chosen sample of 107 respondents. A sample size of 107 is enough to get required information.

Tools for data collection

The researcher used a structured close ended questionnaire and collected data on the basis of that question.

Techniques for data collection

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data.

Tools for Data Analysis

After the completion of data collection, the whole data was analysed through a proper Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) System and also SPSS and MS excel is used here. After the compilation of data, data have been tested in SPSS.

Reliability and Validity



The study might provide an opportunity to further determine the root causes of the issue. Non serious attitude of the respondent might be limitation and limited understanding of the topic could prove a hindrance in the collection valid data.

The research was conducted at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad, targeting a population of individuals from various cities across Pakistan, including both males and females studying at the university. A simple random sampling method was employed to gather valid data, with a sample size of 107 respondents deemed sufficient for the study. Data collection was carried out using structured, close-ended questionnaires, and the collected data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and MS Excel. While the study offers insights into the issue, potential limitations include respondents' non-serious attitudes and limited understanding of the topic, which could hinder the collection of valid data. Nonetheless, the research provides a foundation for further exploration into the root causes of the issue.

Results and Findings

The study revealed several key behavioural patterns among travellers. Respondents demonstrated a strong preference for visually-driven platforms and a high level of engagement with user-generated content. Furthermore, the analysis highlighted the significant impact of social media reviews on destination selection and the growing importance of social media as a tool for sharing travel experiences and connecting with other travellers.

Table 1

Demographics Analysis

| Demographics | Characteristic | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 68 | 63.55 |
| | Female | 39 | 36.45 |
| Age (years) | 18-25 | 27 | 25.23 |
| | 26-30 | 46 | 42.99 |
| | 31-35 | 15 | 14.02 |
| | Above 35 | 19 | 17.76 |
| Education | High School or Below | 32 | 29.91 |
| | Bachelors | 54 | 50.47 |
| | Masters or above | 21 | 19.63 |
| Frequent User | WhatsApp | 76 | 71.03 |
| | Facebook / Instagram | 82 | 76.64 |
| | You-tube | 19 | 17.76 |

This table presents the demographic characteristics of a sample population. The sample is slightly male-dominated, with 63.55% males and 36.45% females. The majority of the respondents fall within the 26-30 age group (42.99%), followed by the 18-25 age group (25.23%). A relatively smaller proportion belongs to the 31-35 (14.02%) and above 35 (17.76%) age groups. The highest proportion of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (50.47%), followed by those with a High School education or below (29.91%). 19.63% of the respondents have a Master's degree or higher.

Facebook/Instagram is the most frequently used platform, with 76.64% of respondents indicating it as their primary platform. WhatsApp is used frequently by 71.03% of the respondents. YouTube is the least frequently used platform among the options provided, with only 17.76% of respondents indicating it as their primary platform. The table provides a snapshot of the demographic characteristics of the sample population, including their gender, age, education level, and preferred social media platforms. This information can be valuable for understanding the target audience and tailoring research or marketing strategies accordingly.



Table 2
Responses Item-wise

Table with 10 rows and 9 columns: Sr. No., Items, SDA, DA, N, A, SA, Mean, Std. Dev. The table lists survey items related to social media use in travel planning and their corresponding response counts and statistics.

This table 2 presents the responses to 10 survey items related to the use of social media in travel planning. The response options appear to be on a Likert scale, likely ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (SDA) to "Strongly Agree" (SA), with "Disagree" (DA), "Neutral" (N), and "Agree" (A) as intermediate options.

Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, which directly address the influence of social media on travel planning and decision-making, show a significant level of agreement among respondents.

The mean scores for these items range from 3.33 to 3.81, indicating a generally positive perception of social media's role in travel. Item 6, specifically focusing on the importance of social media reviews in destination prioritization, has a high mean score (3.64), suggesting that respondents heavily consider reviews when planning their trips.

Items 8 and 10, which explore the posting of travel experiences and recommending social media platforms to friends, also exhibit high mean scores (3.95 and 3.87, respectively). This suggests that respondents actively use social media to share their travel experiences and seek recommendations from others. Item 3, regarding the role of tourism companies in attracting tourists, has a high mean score (3.81), indicating a positive perception of their efforts. However, Item 4, which assesses the likelihood of using travel companies, has a lower mean score (2.91), suggesting that respondents may prefer independent travel planning.

Table 2 summarizes responses to 10 survey items on social media's role in travel planning, using a Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, focusing on social media's influence on travel decisions, show strong agreement, with mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 3.81. Item 6, highlighting the importance of social media reviews, has a high mean score (3.64), indicating their



significant impact on destination choices. Items 8 and 10, related to sharing travel experiences and recommending platforms, also have high mean scores (3.95 and 3.87), reflecting active social media engagement. However, Item 4, regarding the use of travel companies, has a lower mean score (2.91), suggesting a preference for independent planning. Overall, the data highlights social media's strong influence on travel planning and decision-making.

Table 3
Correlation Analysis

Table with 11 columns (Item 1 to Item 10) and 11 rows showing correlation coefficients between items.

The table 3 presents a correlation matrix, showing the correlation coefficients between different survey items (Item 1 to Item 10) as defined in Table 2. Several items exhibit strong positive correlations with each other. Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 show moderate to strong positive correlations, suggesting that respondents who agree with one of these items are also likely to agree with the others.

Items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 show moderate negative correlations with Item 4 ("Do you ever think to travel through any of these companies?"). This suggests that respondents who perceive social media as highly influential in travel planning may be less likely to use traditional travel companies.

The strongest correlations are observed between Item 3 ("Do you think that tourism companies serve a lot to attract potential tourists towards a particular destination?") and Item 6 ("Social Media reviews are the most important factor that helps you to prioritize your destination?") with a correlation coefficient of 0.74. Item 5 ("Do you think the information you used last time when you went to a destination to spend your holidays was useful?") and Item 6 ("Social Media reviews are the most important factor that helps you to prioritize your destination?") with a correlation coefficient of 0.71. Item 6 ("Social Media reviews are the most important factor that helps you to prioritize your destination?") and Item 7 ("What inspires you most on social media to finalize your destination?") with a correlation coefficient of 0.73.

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between different aspects of social media use in travel planning. These findings suggest that respondents who perceive social media as a valuable resource for travel planning are more likely to rely on social media reviews, share their travel experiences, and recommend social media platforms to others.

The correlation analysis conducted in this study revealed significant and interconnected relationships between various aspects of social media use within the context of travel planning. Notably, the findings



suggest a strong positive association between individuals who perceive social media as a valuable resource for travel planning and their propensity. These individuals are more likely to prioritize and consider social media reviews when selecting destinations, accommodations, and travel experiences.

They are more inclined to share their travel stories, photos, and videos on social media platforms, contributing to the growing body of user-generated travel content. They are more likely to suggest specific social media platforms to friends and acquaintances who are planning their own travel itineraries, highlighting the influential role of social media within their social networks.

Table 4

Regression Analysis

Table with 5 columns: Predictors, Coefficient, Standard Error, t-value, p-value. Rows include Item 1 through Item 10 with their respective statistical values.

Table 5

Summary Statistics

Table with 4 columns: R-squared, Adjusted R-squared, F-statistic, p-value. Values are 0.68, 0.64, 15.21, and <0.001 respectively.

The table 4 and summary statistics presents the results of a regression analysis, where the dependent variable (not explicitly stated in the table) is likely predicted by a set of independent variables (Item 1 to Item 10, as defined in previous tables). All predictors (Item 1 to Item 10) show statistically significant relationships with the dependent variable at the 0.05 level or better. This is indicated by the p-values, which are all less than 0.05. The coefficients represent the estimated change in the dependent variable for a one-unit increase in the respective predictor, holding all other predictors constant. For example, a one-unit increase in "Item 1" is associated with an estimated increase of 0.18 units in the dependent variable. The sign of the coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship. Positive coefficients indicate a positive relationship, while negative coefficients indicate a negative relationship. In this case, all predictors except "Item 4" have positive coefficients, suggesting that higher values on these items are associated with higher values of the dependent variable.

The R-squared value of 0.68 indicates that the model explains approximately 68% of the variance in the dependent variable. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.64 accounts for the number of predictors in the model and provides a more conservative estimate of the model's fit. The F-statistic and its associated p-value (<0.001) indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means that the model is statistically better at predicting the dependent variable than a model with no predictors.

The regression analysis suggests that all ten independent variables (Items 1 to 10) have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable. This supports the findings from the correlation analysis, which indicated strong relationships between these variables. The model explains a substantial portion of the variance in the dependent variable, indicating its predictive power.



Conclusion

The results indicate that traditional advertising was the least popular among participants, while information obtained through social media was ranked significantly higher. Social media has emerged as the most effective communication platform for potential tourists to interact with travel companies and existing travellers, enabling them to plan future trips with greater confidence. Most respondents expressed a high level of trust in these platforms, whether it was for selecting reputable companies, finding economical travel packages, or assessing the cost and availability of hotels and other tourist facilities. Social media not only provides direct information but also facilitates comparisons through traveller reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations, making it an indispensable tool for modern travel planning.

The findings of this study underscore the profound influence of social media on travel planning decisions. The analysis revealed strong positive correlations between various aspects of social media use, such as its perceived usefulness for travel planning, the impact of reviews, the sharing of travel experiences, and the recommendation of platforms to others. Regression analysis further confirmed the significant predictive power of these factors, with all independent variables demonstrating a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable. These results highlight the transformative role of social media in shaping travel choices and emphasize the need for tourism businesses and destinations to understand and harness its potential.

By effectively leveraging social media platforms, tourism stakeholders can enhance their marketing strategies, improve customer engagement, and attract a larger share of the travel market. Social media enables businesses to build trust, showcase their offerings, and engage directly with potential customers, creating a more personalized and interactive experience. Additionally, the ability to access real-time reviews and recommendations empowers travellers to make informed decisions, fostering greater satisfaction and loyalty. As the travel industry continues to evolve, the integration of social media into marketing and communication strategies will be essential for staying competitive and meeting the changing needs of modern travellers. This study highlights the critical importance of social media in the tourism sector and provides valuable insights for businesses aiming to capitalize on its growing influence.

Recommendations

Pakistan is declared as one of the most potential tourist destinations by different international organizations of the world. The government of Pakistan is expecting a speedy growth of tourism industry of Pakistan within next few years. Beautiful tourist places, historical buildings, ruins of ancient civilizations and remains of ancient religious enters in Pakistan are attracting and motivating not only the domestic tourists but international tourists as well. The present study was confined only to the domestic tourism, so there is a vast scope of carrying out the study from international perspective by analysing the role of social media in promoting international tourism in Pakistan.

Social media has revolutionized the way we connect and share information, and its impact extends far beyond personal interactions. It has emerged as a powerful force in the travel industry, influencing how people plan their trips and experience new destinations. Social media platforms provide a wealth of information for travellers. From stunning photos and captivating videos to detailed travelogues and insightful reviews, these platforms offer a window into potential destinations. Travelers can explore hidden gems, discover local insights, and connect with other travellers who have first-hand experience.

Moreover, social media facilitates the entire travel planning process. It's a platform for researching destinations, comparing prices, booking accommodations, and even finding travel companions. Travelers can utilize social media groups and forums to seek recommendations, ask questions, and plan their itineraries with the help of fellow travellers and travel enthusiasts. Sharing travel experiences has become an integral part of the social media landscape. Travelers actively share their adventures through photos, videos, and engaging stories, inspiring others and fostering a sense of wanderlust. These shared experiences provide valuable insights into destinations, offer a glimpse into local culture, and encourage others to explore the world. Social media has undeniably transformed the travel landscape. It empowers travellers with information, facilitates



the planning process, and fosters a global community of travel enthusiasts. By embracing the power of social media, both travellers and the tourism industry can unlock new possibilities and create unforgettable travel experiences.

By effectively utilizing social media, both tourism businesses and travellers can enhance their travel experiences, promote sustainable tourism practices, and foster a deeper connection with the world around them.

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