A Study on the Influence of Social Media on Tourist Psychology

Ms. Sneha. N – Assistant Professor, Department of Travel & Tourism
Mount Carmel College Autonomous
Affiliated to Bangalore University
#58 Palace Road, Bengaluru-560052, e-mail: sneha.n@mccblr.edu.in

Abstract

Travelling and visiting new destinations has been part of many people's lives for centuries. But travelling to a destination after being influenced by Social media is now growing to be a millennial phenomenon. Tourism continues to grow despite economic conditions. In fact, in the digital age tourism growth has grown over the years with better access to different forms of online platforms such as Social Media. Social media has well-established as a networking platform which is now being leveraged by tourism businesses to engage with potential customers and tourists by understanding the stimulating factors for a traveller's usage of social media.

The purpose of this study is to identify whether social media influences the psychology of potential tourist's decision to make travel choices in Bengaluru. The main aim of the paper is to analyse social media marketing techniques as an influence factor upon tourist's decision-making process. The research methods adopted quantitative research techniques along with a comprehensive literature review on user and service provider generated content on various social media sites related to tourism. The analysis of the study showed that social media constitutes a substantial part in influencing a customer/tourist for travel information search and making purchase decisions.Implications for tourism marketers in terms of digital marketing are discussed.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Influence, Tourist Psychology, Travel information search, Consumer decision making

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a growing phenomenon in the millennial age. Users are actively investing a considerable amount of their time and energy on Social Media. The likes, comments and posts that the users share on social media can often seem inconsequential, but they matter to a great extent. They tap into some of the very elements that make one a human, the addictions, desires, anxieties and joys. It is important for tourism service providers and marketers to understand the tourist psychology through the power of social media and use that knowledge to bring customers closer, give them more of what they want, and create better relationships.

The pull of social media addiction can be leveraged in real terms to see the level of influence it has on customers or potential tourists to make travel information choices and in purchase decisions. It is quite real, thanks to two chemicals which the brains produce: Dopamine and

Oxytocin. Dopamine causes humans to seek, desire, and search. Studies reveal that in 10 minutes of social media time, oxytocin levels can rise as much as 13%.

It is not new that humans like to talk about themselves and also learn about other people's life connected to their circle. Studies suggest that people devote about 30–40% of all speech to talking about themselves whereas the same thing in online that number jumps to about 80% of social media posts. Psychologists call this as Self presentation because people online have time to construct and position themselves in a refine manner and it can be implied that the same when service providers harness this potential to their best advantage.

It is also interesting to note that for marketers that Social media can be the most prominent medium to influence the customer or tourist's understanding and choices pertaining to tourism products. A positive or negative comment about a tourism service provider on social media is enough to change the perception of customers regarding a service provider, destination or any related tourism products.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The article, **Around the World through the Eyes of Social Media**, (Bengaluru: 2018), talks about the influence of word of mouth across the globe in all purchasing decisions ranging between 20 to 50%. In the ever-changing world of social networking, this extends well beyond recommendations from friends and family into the realm of online influencers. These important connections have grown significantly with the advent of social networking. Despite the closeness social networking can provide, there are still some fascinating behavioral quirks that exist online across the globe. The author draws importance of a business embarking on a social strategy is to understand how various regions view and use, social media. The author opines that businesses looking to push their social media presence globally should invest in cultural intelligence resources to understand the cultural differences at play on and offline. Online influencers are the latest global trends on Social Media.

The authors Pavlović and Belullo in their study, **Internet – An Agent of Tourism Destination Image Formation: Content and Correspondence Analysis of Istria Travel Related Websites,** (Pula: 2007), talk about the various information sources from which destination images are derived, including Internet. Increased number and variety of online information about the tourism destinations introduced new challenges to achieving effective destination marketing. The author argues the significance of Internet as tourists' source of information. Accordingly, emphasized is the role of Internet as an agent in tourism destination image formation. His research

paper focuses on Istria travel related websites in Croatia. Results of this research promote better understanding of the multiplicity of destination image representations on the web and the challenges of managing the destination image online.

The authors Mihail and Otilia in their work, **Aspects regarding the Romanian Social network user's profile and its implications in marketing destination pages,** (Amsterdam:2012), talks about the recent development of social networking applications and the expansion of their number of users turned them quickly into one of the best channels of communication between companies and consumers. An increasing number of companies started to combine their traditional promotional activities with the online presence on social networks. The opportunity of establishing permanent two-way contact and creating a varied communication with the consumers using social networks proved to be appropriate in tourism marketing and destination marketing as well. The author feels that social networking campaign must be creative and perfectly adapted to the environment, and it should use the right message and establish a transparent relationship with the consumer.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the psychology of tourists through social media usage for travel information search in Bengaluru.
- To study the extent of social media influence on consumer decision making for tourism products.
- To offer suggestions to marketers for social media marketing using tourist psychology in the business of tourism in Bengaluru.

4. NEED FOR STUDY

It is important to acknowledge that social media marketing is essentially about participation, sharing and collaboration rather than straightforward advertising and selling. Since a billion plus users occupy the social media space, it is all the more compelling to research on a topic which is not only a current trend but also the future of tourism industry thereby creating the need to understand the influence levels of social media on consumer decision making process in tourism.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First-hand information is collected through responses through a questionnaire for consumers. Secondary data was collected through like books, journals, social media sites and newspaper articles. The sample of the study consists of 250 Users who are the residents of Bengaluru from various demographic groups who use social media. In this research study, convenience sampling

was used in the survey and 250 users (Travelers from Bengaluru) from various demographics in Bengaluru who use social media.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research attempts to understand the influence of social media marketing on tourist psychology in Bengaluru. This study will critically examine the level of social media influence on consumer behavior. There is a huge untapped opportunity area for promoting business tourism on through influencer strategy.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Statistical tool like SPSS was used to analyse the data with the help of Mean and percentage analysis was used for the study.

Table 7.1: Distribution of sample of Users across Demographics				
Sl.No.	Demographics	Categories	Count	Percentage
1	Gender	Female	150	60.0%
		Male	100	40.0%
2	Age	Below 20 years	48	19.2%
		21 to 30 years	98	39.2%
		31 to 40 years	57	22.8%
		above 40 years	47	18.8%
3	Marital Status	Married	110	44.0%
		Single	140	56.0%
4	Occupation	Private employee	129	51.6%
		Government employee	9	3.6%
		Self-employed/Business	25	10.0%
		Student	74	29.6%
		Others	13	5.2%
5	Education	Higher secondary (+2) and below	48	19.2%
		Graduate	138	55.2%
		Postgraduate and above	64	25.6%

Source: Primary data

Detail of the sampling distribution of Users is given in Table 4.1 the distribution of the sample is across all the demographic variables of the study. It may be noted that in the Gender category Females outnumber male with 60 percentage to 40. In the case of Age, the age group of 21 to 30 is strong with 39.2 % (98) of respondents. The Marital status indicates that single 56 percentage (140) respondents out beat married respondents (110) by 44 %. In the case of Occupation, majority of the (129) respondents are Private employees with 51.6%. It can be noticed that in the Education category, Graduates dominate the (138) respondents by 55.2%.

Table 7.2 Activeness on Social Media Accounts

Activeness on Social Media Accounts	Frequency	Percent
Yes very active in all	80	32.0
Active primarily on one	80	32.0
Not very active	38	15.2
Active in need only	25	10.0
Active in few only	20	8.0
Others	7	2.8

Source: Primary data

From the above table, 32% agree that there is activeness in all social media accounts and active in primarily one account. Only 8% agree that they are active in few only.

Table 7.3 Preferred Device for Social Media Usage

Preferred Device for Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percent
Desktop Computer	3	1.2
Laptop	23	9.2
Smart Phone	219	87.6
Tablet	5	2.0

Source: Primary data

88% of the users use their Smart phone for access to social media, while 9% of them use their laptops, 2% use tablets and a negligible 1% use desktop computer for social media.

Table 7.4 Frequency of Social Media Usage

Usage Frequency of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
0-5 times	62	24.8
6-10 times	40	16.0
Always connected	79	31.6
Connect when it is required	69	27.6

Source: Primary data

There are 32% of users who are always connected to social media, 28% who connect to social media when required, 25% connect to social media 0-5 times as day and 16% connect to social media 6-10times a day.

Table 7.5 Preferred Type of Social Media for Tourism

Preferred Type of Social Media for Tourism	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	173	69.2
YouTube	12	4.8
Instagram	44	17.6
Twitter	7	2.8
Pinterest	3	1.2
Word Press	8	3.2
Four Square	3	1.2

Source: Primary data

Facebook (69%) is preferred by most of the users for tourism, followed by Instagram (18%), then YouTube (5%). Word Press (3%), Twitter (3%) are also used. The least popular social media are Foursquare and Pinterest.

Table 7.6 Social Media Impact on Online Travel Booking

Social Media Impact on Online Travel Booking	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	.4
Disagree	75	30.0
Neutral	18	7.2
Agree	49	19.6
Strongly Agree	107	42.8

Source: Primary data

43% of the respondents strongly agree that social media impacts online travel booking, 30% disagree, while 20% agrees that social media impacts online travel booking and 7% are not sure neutral in their perception of the impact of social media on online travel bookings.

Table 7.7 Accessibility & Clarity in Service Provider Selection through Social media

Accessibility & Clarity in Service Provider Selection	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	18	7.2
Disagree	60	24.0
Neutral	65	26.0
Agree	29	11.6
Strongly Agree	78	31.2

Source: Primary data

Around 31.2 % of the respondents agree that there is Accessibility and Clarity in Service Provider Selection, 11.6% agrees that there is Accessibility and Clarity in Service Provider Selection, while 26% are neutral on Accessibility and Clarity in Service Provider Selection.

Table 7.8 Mean analysis of Social Media Quotients

Social Media Quotients	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Excitement Quotient for using Social Media for Tourism	250	1	4	2.50	.837
Influence of Social Media in Buying Behaviour	250	0	4	2.24	1.043
Reliability for travel information	250	0	4	2.11	1.123
Electronic Word of Mouth Publicity in Social Media	250	0	4	2.05	1.190
User Attention in Social Media in Tourism	250	0	4	2.05	1.129
Change in Perception of travel choices	250	0	4	2.04	1.152
Inter-activeness in Social Media for Tourism	250	0	4	1.93	1.119

Source: Primary data

The above table indicates the rating of the users when asked for their opinion on Social media information. The users rated the various quotients of social media on a five point scale. It is noted that Excitement Quotient for using Social Media for Tourism (2.50) is the most important quotient followed by Buying Behaviour (2.24), Reliability (2.11), Electronic Word of Mouth Publicity (2.05), User Attention in Social Media (2.05), Change in Perception of travel choices after using Social Media (2.04) and Inter-activeness in Social Media (1.93) is the least important from social media.

8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Bengaluru is perceived as a tourism hub since the IT sector has transformed Bengaluru's digital landscape and has made most Bengalureans tech savvy.

- High disposable incomes with Bengalureans increase the reasons to travel during weekend thereby increasing Bengaluru's potential for tourism.

- Since travel information is readily available on websites and social media, there is better access for Bengalureans to plan and book their holiday after making comparison of reviews.

- Bengalureans are significantly active on social media either in all or particularly on one type of social media which suggests that there is heavy potential of promoting tourism on social media.

- Smartphones are the most preferred device for social media usage. People usually do not carry laptops everywhere. Smart phone is the hot favourite due to the usage of mobile Apps technology which makes smart phone a popular device to use social media.

- Facebook is the most preferred type of Social Media for Tourism. Social media is all about connecting to people. Survey reports reveal that fb has largest number of users worldwide. Similarly, Bengaluru is the result of the same phenomenon. Instagram is the upcoming social media App with highest number of new users per day.

- The respondents strongly agree that social media impacts online travel booking and change in perception in travel choices after using social media.

- Users are comfortable in making online tour booking through social media since they are mostly connected online and receive instant updates about bookings.

- Social media is the most important medium to harness tourism potential. Traditional media has taken a backseat and modern forms like social media has become the most preferred marketing medium for harnessing Bengaluru's tourism.

- Excitement Quotient for using Social Media for Tourism is the most important quotient for respondents to engage in social media followed by buying behaviour. Excitement quotient in social media is the most preferred because users are able to browse interesting audio visual interactive content which appeals to various senses, emotions, needs and desires of users to present their holidays experiences online and connect to other users at the same time.

- Users are strongly influenced by social media for making travel choices and purchase decisions. Users opine that any sort of valuable information shared by their friends or service providers helps them to choose travel destinations wisely and also received some good offers/deals through updates regarding the same.

9. SUGGESTIONS

- It is suggested that posting correct recommendations on official social media for people and showing proper ratings of every destination will give a better perspective and credibility of information for Bengaluru tourism.

- Appealing to the basic psychological needs of human curiosity though social media marketing of unexplored destinations in Bengaluru can be fruitful. It has a potential of improving local culture and cuisine trail more by promoting unexplored places in Bengaluru from a spot to a local cuisine mostly by posting videos and pictures to generate tourism and also to preserve and promote the regional uniqueness through social media.

- Service providers having a social media page for product information can also have testimonials verified to increase business. This has dual benefits for driving sales promotion and company goodwill by brand positioning in the minds of the consumer.

- Integrate the official company website and their respective social media pages.

- The impact of social media can be both positive and negative since social media is a public platform. The social media team can monitor and can highlight positive testimonials.

- Simplicity and diversity in social media is the key to reach different types of users. Creating awareness through different social media tools as per customer needs and wants.

- Ensuring that the marketing teams constantly update their social media pages and post authentic offers, contest, fam-tours and reward programs for users.

- There is a huge untapped opportunity area for promoting business tourism on social media through influencer strategy to capture millennial market.

- Target most used social media for more hits, likes and shares since it is the quickest and easiest reach to thrive on the sub-conscious psychological space in users with limited period.

- Authenticity has to be maintained and a moment of truth to be created. As a marketer, service providers must understand each moment of truth in order to provide social media engagement that build and maintain relationships with prospects and customers.

- User experiences are more interesting, users should be given some perks to share their experiences on social media.

10. CONCLUSION

Social Media, a landmark development of internet based technologies, has opened up the marketing venture into new avenues in general and for tourism industry. The overall conclusions of the study are based on review of literature and analysis of data. It can be said that it is important

for the service providers to evolve by using tourist psychology and using approiate marketing techniques through social media in a way that creates exclusive customized products and services so that the entire process of serving and experiencing tourism products is delightful and for the service provider and customer respectively which will be the key for delighting the millenial market.

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