

# Impact of Social Media on Tourism and Hospitality

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## Abstract

*The importance of social media is growing in the realm of the tourism industry. More and more researchers are undertaking studies in the areas of the impact of social media on the tourism industry. The aim of this study is to understand this growing importance of social media in the tourism industry and to understand the impact of social media in the tourism industry. The purpose is to understand the future role of social media in the years to come on the tourism industry so that it benefits the tourism industry and the tourists globally. The leveraging of social media to the tourism products has proved to be a good strategy in improving not only the quality of the business but also the revenues of the tourism industry at large. A study has been undertaken of the research that has been done in the use of social media and the impact of social media in the tourism industry. The purpose is to encourage the use of social media in the businesses related to and in the tourism industry.*

**Key words:** Social Media, Tourism, Business, Services.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media sites in the internet today are used more frequently than the physical participation of individuals in a communication. Some of the popular social media sites are the Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube [2]. It is important to note that the communications in the virtual world are very rapid and news spreads faster than in any other form of communication over the internet. It is no longer necessary for the individuals to wait to interact physically to be able to understand the actual situation of a destination that they wish to travel to for the purposes of tourism. It is now possible through the social media sites to be able to get a word of mouth reference. It is also possible to have access to the visual impact of the destination on the social media sites and the internet sites. This makes taking a decision easier and it also supports the decision making process as to which is the best offer for the travel to that particular destination [5]. 74% of the tourists that have traveled to destinations write reviews about the destination and their experiences in the destination during their travels. 98% find that the Trip Advisor reviews on the social media sites are accurate and it does not leave the following travelers in a lurch as they know all the details before hand from the reviews. The study also found that the 53% of those who are potential travelers do not book hotels unless there is a review of the hotel available in the social media sites. 70% of the global tourism consumers claim that the second most trusted form of information on destinations is the destination reviews on the social media sites. 52% of the users of Facebook advertising one third the actual costs incurred before the age of the social media and in addition the advantage of the vast database expands the horizons of the marketability of the organization and the products an organization has to offer. The conventional methods of advertising are no longer practical [10].

claims that they have either been encouraged to travel to a place or have changed their plans to travel to a place because of the pictures and photos posted by their friends in Facebook [1].

- **Social Communities:** these are the communities of like-minded people who form a social group and socializing over the internet to keep in touch because of the physical distance of the people in the group.
- **Virtual Communication:** the impact of social media was found to be greatest because of the rapid speed of the communication via the internet and the latest web 2.0.
- The ability to be able to check the sites immediately after discussing it in the social media makes the decision to travel to a destination more concrete.

The reach for the tourism industry is global and it covers the entire expanse of the globe for people of different countries to be able to visually see the destinations online on the social media and the rooms of the hotels including the rates of the rooms in hotels making it easier to take a decision of affordability. Earlier this was not possible because a tourist had to travel to be able to see the place and understand what they had paid for sometimes returning with bad experiences [7]. Advertising in the social media is one of the primary sources of advertising in today's market. Most of the organizations have websites with online portals that can be accessed by consumers and potential customers which makes the costs of

## 2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study first analyzed the variable that affected the impact of social media on tourism and then it analyzed the contribution of social media to the tourism industry while studying the negative impact of social media on the tourism industry as well.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the full extent of the role of social media in the tourism industry
- To understand the impact of the social media on the tourism industry
- To understand the increase in revenues of the tourism industry
- To understand the levels of services that can be offered because of the social media
- The analysis of the factors of the perceived value of customers through using the social networking process for destination travels [4]

### 4. SOCIAL MEDIA IN TRAVEL:

As vacation travel related products are experiential in nature, their purchase is considered complex and involve high risk. Hence, they involve extensive information search [12]. Consumers rely on other travelers experiences to plan vacations and decrease uncertainty. Online vacation feedback is perceived similar to recommendations by friends and families. 23% of US internet users are significantly influenced by social media for their travel/holiday related decisions [13]. Social media has become increasingly important in planning vacations. They are vital information sources, provide access to other travellers' experiences, and enable storytelling, a post travel activity, which provides a sense of belonging in virtual travel communities.

Gretzel, Yoo & Purifoy (2007)<sup>14</sup> found that online reviews and rating websites, increase travelers confidence during decision making. Travellers read reviews through various stages of travel planning-pre, during and post trip. Majority of existing studies attempt to describe the role of social media, focusing on either a specific social media or the impact of social media on a particular stage of the travel.

There is no adequate academic research on the impact of social media on the whole travel process. This study pursues the following research questions and the resulting hypothesis [16]

RQ1: To what extent and to what reasons are social media used during the holiday travel planning process?

H1: Social media are predominantly used before the trip for information search purposes

RQ2: Do social media influence holiday plans?

H2: The higher the perceived level of social media influence, or holiday destination choice or accommodation choice, the more likely is that changes would be made to holiday plans

RQ3: Are social media more trustworthy than traditional sources of holiday related information?

H3: Holiday travel related information provided in social media is more trustworthy than mass media advertising, travel agents and official tourism websites.

The results of the study were inferred from the following questionnaire:

1. Do you use social media to search for where to go for holidays?
2. Do you use social media to narrow your choice of destinations?
3. Do you use social media to seek advice on accommodation?

4. Do you use social media to explore activities in a given holiday destination?
5. Do you use social media to provide comments and reviews about your holiday experience?
6. Do you use social media to share experiences and photos with other travelers?
7. Do you use social media to provide evaluation and reviews about your accommodation?
8. Do you regularly visit social media sites to have ideas to inspire your next holidays?

### 5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

A single method was inconsistent with the objectives of the study so a review of literature was done, and the sample size that was selected was 500 individuals. The questionnaires was designed which was sent by email to the samples, some of the hotels were contacted and personal interviews were taken, there was no control sample set used in the study and every participant was informed prior to the study the purpose of the study and was given the option to withdraw from participation. No sample withdrew and all the samples participated. The sample selection was random and based India, the number of hotels that were contacted were 75 out of which 40 hotels were city centre hotels and the rest were in the tourist spots of the country.

A quantitative analysis was done and the psychometric measures were monitored of the samples in order to understand any specific behavior patterns that could be connected to the impact of social media. The majority of the samples were strongly impacted by the social media.

### 6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

- World's online population in North America is 88.90%, in Latin America it is 38.74% in Europe it is 64.50% in Asian it is 25% and in Africa it is 13% [17].
- World Internet Audience is 27.2% is the average time that the individuals spend online. The average time spent online by females is 17.1%, the average time spent online by males is 27.9%.
- Influence of Social Media in travel Planning - 69% of the worldwide population uses the social media for tourism needs, 56% of the world depend on travel operators.
- To choose restaurants - 24% depend on the social media when in a destination spot, 34% depend on the social media for visiting destination attractions, 35% depend on the social media for vacations [3]
- 44% book hotels after checking the destination reviews on the internet and the social media [9].

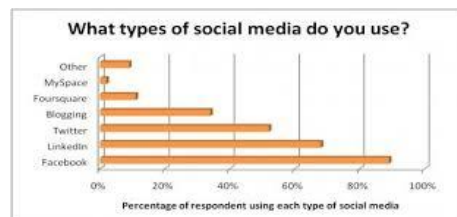


Fig 1: The types of social media used



Fig. 2: The types of social media used for travel and tourism purposes

The above Figure 1 and 2 shows how the processes of the social media take place to make it an advantage for the tourism industry what will be the role of social media in the future [11].

## 7. CONCLUSION:

It is evident that the generations are becoming more and more attuned to surfing for the needs rather than to physically look for them. The pace of life has become so fast paced, that very few have the leisure time to interact socially physically and it has become more convenient as the communication is immediate and rapid which saves time, money and the wait period. As a result it is evident that the costs have been reduced for the tourism industry, the business flow has increased even though because of the current inflation the volumes are low. The profit margins and the expenditure on marketing and advertising campaigns have reduced substantially, this has made it possible for some of the hotels to pass on the benefit to the customer and increase their business share in an industry that is highly competitive because of the power of the social media and the internet possibilities. The study has shown that the risks and threats with the social media is the online frauds and scams that are taking place on large scale where it is estimated that here is one victim of internet fraud every 10 seconds in the world. Duplicitous and identity theft are the two areas of concern with the social media in the tourism industry but by increasing the security solutions this threat can be minimized as has been done in many hotels and motels as well for customer convenience.

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