

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER BUYING DECISIONS IN TOURISM: A CASE OF AMRITSAR CITY

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era, the place of information and communication technology (ICT) is wider in scope. Social media is an online platform where one can get access to every minute detail. Social media and tourism share a relationship in terms of traveling decisions as it influences the consumer preferences. It is a network to share ideas, information, thoughts and experiences through an online mode. Furthermore, it facilitates the consumer to interact with travel professionals and learn about the facts of this sector. There are many features of tourism products like perishability, inseparability, non- ownership, intangibility and dominant role of suppliers. Hence, it is quite clumsy for consumers to choose trustworthy components. In this picture, the only thing that could aid the tourist to get evidence is through social media channels. Social media act as a supporter, guide and consultant of this industry. Additionally, this platform is not only about sharing good memories, but many consumers share the bad experiences too. Moreover, there are countless tourism players who have been using this media to boost the sales and profits.

Keywords: Social Media, Tourism, Amritsar City, Consumer Buying Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Amritsar a city founded by Sri Guru Ramdass ji, the fourth guru of the Sikhs, is associated with strong religious beliefs and sentiments. It is one of the largest cities of Punjab and second most populated after Ludhiana. Amritsar is popularly known as the golden City due to the presence of the sacred shrine of Golden Temple. This region is famous among the tourist population for its religious places, lip-smacking cuisines, heritage wonders, traditional footwear and folk treasure. The tourism industry in this city has experienced a flood of guests coming from other states and countries. The graph of popularity has been increasing and the sector has been generating various socio-cultural, economic, environmental and political benefits in this area. There are many attractions that present the valorous history of this region. The doorway to Punjab is famous for cultural tourism, Agro-tourism, rural tourism,

culinary tourism, dark tourism and religious tourism. Additionally, if we talk about the local's preferences; they like to visit nearby places, and the people belonging to upper class visit for outbound travel. This growth in outbound tourism is tremendous and a major paradigm has been taking a shift.

In addition to it, now tourists have been becoming more aware and conscious about their choices. They desire directions and passages on the social platform and that is working as an advisor to them. As per the records, the top-ranked applications on this path are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram (Statista, 2022). These apps give the actionable tips and hints to the decision makers. Consequently, this media has been becoming first option while choosing the tourism products. It involves the nest of pictures and text shared by service providers to attract the market. There are many online travel influencers with millions of subscribers and viewers. Further, people's predilections and needs are that they like to have astonishing products as per their budget. The customers of this century are under the pressure of social media and to a large context forced to take decisions. Undoubtedly, this media has been spread in every corner of the market and the consumer with a limited budget could also access it. Social media has many pros and cons of its usage as sometimes it creates pressure on individuals to indulge in such activities which were never on their wish-list. Consequently, there are many apps that have been blamed for over-tourism.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main goals of this study are:

- Firstly, the idea is to show the role of social media to boost tourism profits.
- Additionally, it will give an abridgement of how robustly the locals of Amritsar city are influenced by this platform.
- This research work will surely through light on the interdependent of social media and consumer buying behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is a great tool to engage with the service providers. It offers an array of tools and is the cleverer way to get exciting deals. Consumer buying decisions are influenced by companies' marketing strategies. Social Media allow us to connect with the community and to publicize offers. It's not enough to have a product but it is essential that somebody should recommend it. However, the growth of digital marketing in tourism has remained an essential component. Social media has introduced digital promotion in the tourism industry and introduced numerous apps to connect. It is a way which offers various business opportunities and a tremendous growth (Gingles, N., 2021). Traditional media include the promotion through newspapers, magazines, radio and television, but social media provided an online platform to createdigital content. Social Media term is often confused with social networking. Though the former is a platform to send information and the latter is a method of communication (Froehlich, A., 2020). Social media has been constructing a means for tourists residing in different corners of the world to plan their tours. There are channels has been designed to assist individuals so that they can explore interesting facts. Nowadays, the idea of hash tags has made it easy for every consumer to search a treasure of information. Therefore, it is a way to engage people by presenting exciting content that they will be charmed. Additionally, it gives the opportunity to customers to find what matters the most? People are drawn to an amazing world of interesting posts and images. Further, to look forward for growth and success it is important to use feedback given by the tourists (Carey,

B., 2021). Consumer behavior is an analysis of what pressurizes people to obtain certain products and services in the market. There are countless psychological, demographic and social factors that affect the consumer buying behavior. Moreover, the taste and preferences changes in every few minutes and to deal with those it is vital to find an innovative marketing strategy for your brand (Peek, S., 2022).

Any social media recommendation and review could easily create a strong impression on user's minds. The online media has a new way for tourism marketing, and one could get an instant support for your firm. In fact, many travelers expect to get some sort of concessions or discounts for sharing a post. While planning at an initial stage people search for hash tags of city, state, activities, and countries. It is inevitably crucial to provide the guide or content as they could soon become your loyal consumers (Lang, V.R., 2022).

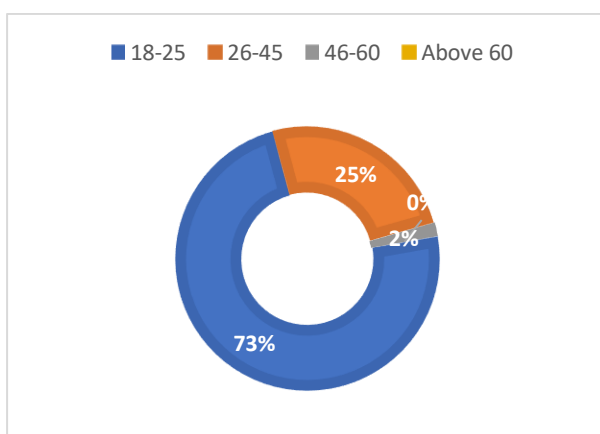
METHODOLOGY

The current study is based on the collection of data through a structured questionnaire. The goal behind this research work is to convey the facts of consumer behavior and how social media affect it. The questionnaire was assigned to respondents through an online mode and it was evaluated to enumerate the received data. This will also outline the social media usage and consumer reactions related to online posts. Further more, a type of psychometric response scale has been applied in which people tick the choices as per the level of agreement or disagreement. There are total of five points on this scale. They are Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. This study was to capture the viewer's responses associated with the social media and tourism sector. There were total 125 respondents from the Amritsar region. During this survey secondary sources were also utilized along with primary data methods. The findings and outcomes of this research have been presented here along with the demographic details of consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research gives various interesting facts related to social media and consumer choices. The demographic details of these respondents like age, gender and education have been analyzed and presented in given charts and tables.

Chart:1 AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS



The above chart 1 represents that majority of the respondents were from 18-25 age bracket and it is 92 in number. This also stated that 31 out of total population fall in the age between 26-45 and with very least percentage of old age group.

Moreover, the table of gender indicates that Male count was 69 which is 55.2% and total female participants were 56 with 44.8%. In this the majority of the respondents were males. Nevertheless, there was very small gap in both counts.

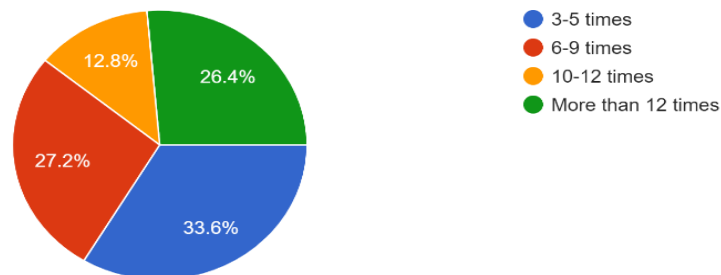
Table :1 Gender of the respondents

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	69	55.20
Female	56	44.80
Others	00	
Total	125	100

However, the data indicates that as per the education details 60.80% were graduated out of the total 125 respondents. Further, in terms of annual income that was around 63.20% of respondents who agreed that their income was less than 200000 per annum.

Chart :2

How often do you use the social media in a day?
125 responses

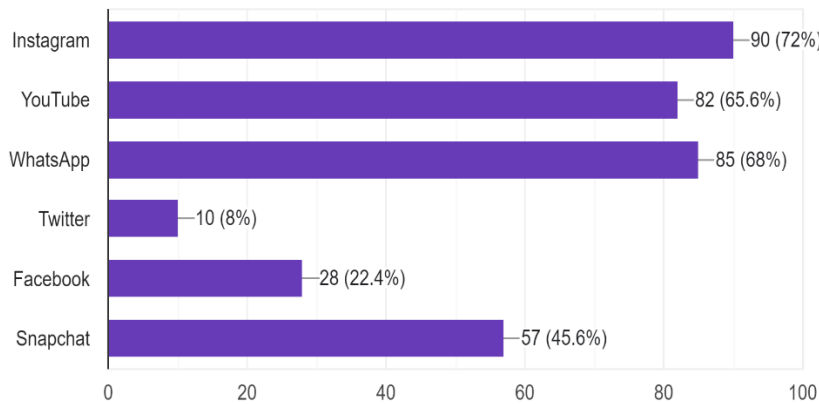


The study outcomes shows that population drains the energy on social media as per their fondness. It marks mixed responses of all 125 respondents. Besides, the reason of different usage slots could be the shortage of time availability or not a big fan of social media. In addition to it, some users grasp the hints and can directly scroll down to right path at one time usage. Hence, there are factors that affect the practice of social media and online channels.

Chart 3:

The channels you prefer on this platform

125 responses

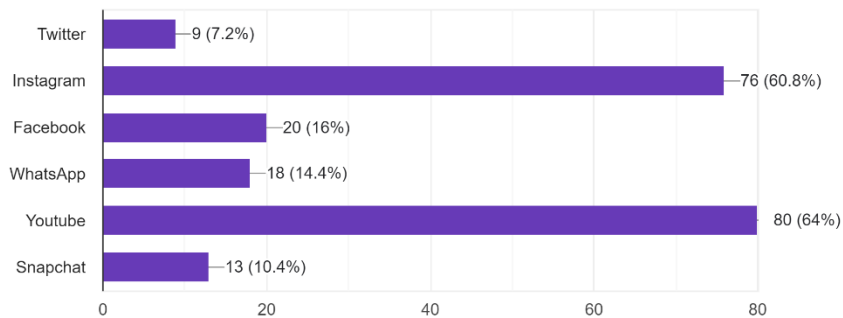


As we all are aware of online apps available to share content and exciting deals. The Chart 3 embodies that it was a multiple tick query and the local community residing in Amritsar selected Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp as their preferred apps with 90, 82 and 85 responses. The retorts to Snapchat were 57 in number, Facebook with 28 and least favorite was Twitter with 10 replies. The respondents from this area made a custom to utilize social platform for communication and interaction.

Chart 4:

Which social app you prioritize to check tourism details

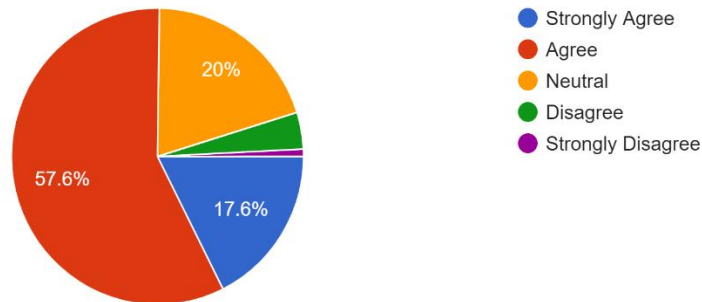
125 responses



However, the social apps that the locals of Amritsar prioritize for getting the detailed tourism content were YouTube and Instagram, with 80 and 76 responses. There are many travel influencers nowadays working to create travel content and this will surely fascinate the social media viewers. Other routes of Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Twitter have gained popularity, but as per the data evaluation, the travelers and visitors do not follow these to get travel assistance.

Chart 5:

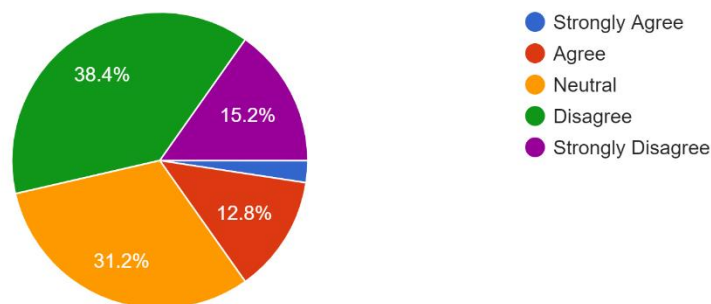
The destination promoted by travel blogger gives you assistance to choose package
125 responses



The Chart provides an overview of whether the respondents follow online bloggers with the intention to choose package or not. So, it specifies that 17.6% marked strongly agree, 57.6% agree, 20% neutral, 4% disagree and 0.80% strongly disagree to this question. Hence, the outcome offers the details that more than half of the participants in this survey reflects the destination promoted by travel blogger assist them to choose wisely. Consequently, consumer behavior is caused by these channels to a bigger extent and it supports the customers to purchase and spend smartly.

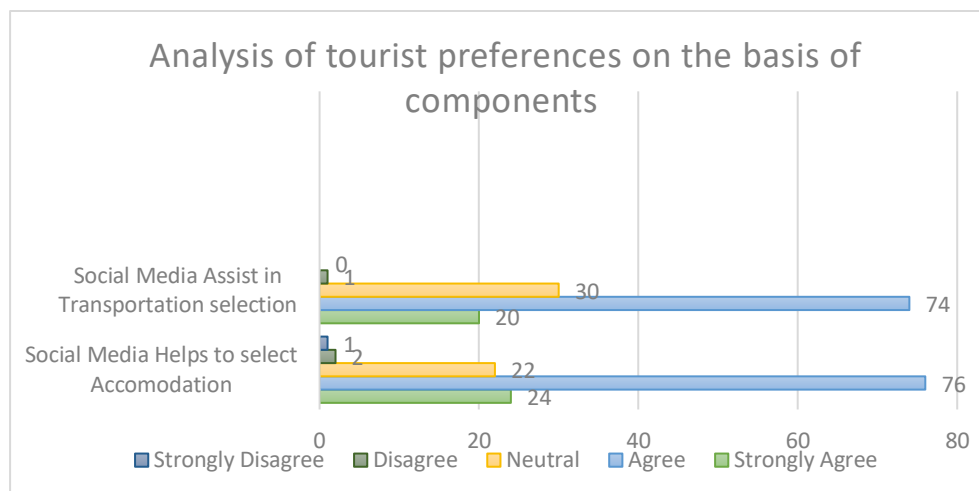
Chart 6:

Every post on social media is true and accurate
125 responses



Evidently, the use of social media has been increased drastically and will expand with technological advancement. However, the opinions of users are always different few believe that it is reliable and trustworthy enough and, others could never trust the online platform due to false and misleading content. In this research work, findings as per the responses were that out of total 125 people, only 3 agreed strongly, 16 agreed, 39 remained neutral, 48 disagreed and 19 strongly disagreed. Hence, the responses convey that it is not essential that every post on social media will be true and accurate. Additionally, a very few agreed that each post is true and without any false information.

Chart 7:



The other analysis has been shown in Chart 7 of tourist preferences on the basis of two main components: accommodation and transportation. However, the majority agrees that online channels support them to select a suitable mode of transportation and accommodation. Today, every hotel and car rental agency post online about the discounts or services they have been offering and mostly consumer's decisions are based on those pictures. In the query about whether online media assist the tourists to select transportation, 20 (16%) responses were strongly agreed, 74 (59.20%) agreed, 30 (24%) neutral, 1 (0.80%) disagreed and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed. Whereas, in the question of accommodation out of all the respondents 24 marked strongly agree, 76 agree, 22 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree.

CONCLUSION

The consequences of this study revealed that consumers prefer those brands which maintain transparency and accountability. Likewise, social media could aid the tourist to get a finest match as per their needs. There are numerous tourist destinations and services worldwide and online channels could give a little access to try the tourism product before an actual purchase. Besides, the data presented in this research work showcases that how the locals from Amritsar use social media to finalize the tourism services. This media helps the consumers to get incentives and discount cards which they can use in different ways. Moreover, social platform could only generate high profits if the company offers a genuine product. Sometimes there is a variation that exists between the services promised online and the executed ones. Therefore, the consumers do not trust them instantly and check the standards of services multiple times. In the case of tourism, digital marketing through online influencers could be effective if applied with truths.

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