

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The impact of social media on tourists' decision-making process: An empirical study based on Bangladesh

Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee^{1*}, Tanvir Ahmed¹

¹Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Noakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh

Corresponding author: Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee: acharjee.thm@nstu.edu.bd

Received: 01 November, 2023, Accepted: 23 November, 2023, Published: 29 November, 2023

Abstract

This study examines the impact of social media on the behavior and decision-making processes of travelers while choosing places. Social media platforms serve as channels for travelers to gain inspiration and plan their journeys, while also providing opportunities for tourism enterprises to promote services, engage with consumers, and evaluate visitor sentiments. A comprehensive survey, including of primary and secondary data, was distributed to 388 participants, mostly consisting of students, educators, teachers, private business owners, and government people. The data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS 25, which included the use of descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The survey results indicate that social media has a notable beneficial effect on tourists' decision-making processes when choosing a destination. Nine out of ten variables are identified as having a significant impact on social media usage in tourism decision-making through multiple regression analysis. This empirical study highlights the significance of marketers understanding visitor behavior and decision-making processes, recognizing their potential influence on brand loyalty, customer happiness, and situational dynamics. Hence, it is imperative for tourism stakeholders to integrate social media factors into the strategic development of tourism offerings. Social media has become an essential tool for both travelers and travel firms in modern culture. The research clearly demonstrates that social media has a substantial impact on visitor behavior. The overriding result suggests a significant influence of social media on the travel patterns of visitors from Bangladesh. It is recommended that policymakers and tourist marketers utilise social media channels to strengthen the development of tourism in Bangladesh. This study provides significant information for professionals and policymakers who are looking to handle the ever-changing impact of social media on travel behavior and decision-making.

Keywords: Social-Media; User generated content; Hospitality Management; Booking intention; Consumer Behavior; Bangladesh

Introduction

Social media platforms are utilized by travelers and tourist companies as an instrument of communication, information sharing, and promotion of various holiday destinations and activities (Deb, Nafi, & Valeri, 2022). The tourism business has undergone a significant transformation due to the advent of social media platforms. These platforms have revolutionized the way visitors gather information, receive recommendations, and engage in the planning and sharing of their travel experiences (Lin & Rasoolimanesh, 2023). While review systems such as

TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google offer valuable insights on travel-related businesses, social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest are commonly employed for seeking travel inspiration. Tourism enterprises employ social media platforms as a means to facilitate marketing endeavors, advertising campaigns, customer service provisions, influencer collaborations, tourist engagement, and the expansion of their target demographic. The utilization of social media platforms has become of paramount importance for both travelers and firms that provide support to the tourism sector (Deb et al., 2022; Garner & Kim, 2022; HIPOLITO, 2022). Furthermore, social media significantly impacts our daily lives now a days. Social media has taken the place of traditional news outlets and has become the primary source of news. Thus has the ability to change the perception of a destinations image (Ilyas et al., 2023). In addition, Social media is essential for analyzing tourist attitudes that increase purchases and recommendations to others, especially for emerging markets like Bangladesh where the inter access for mass travellers were almost non-existent a few years back (S. M. Nafi & Ahmed, 2019) .Furthermore, average citizens seeks novel means of continuously express their thoughts and opinions via social media platforms resulting a continuous increase of active users on social networking platforms. Thus several studies have found, social media as a highly effective tool for businesses to expand their client base and engage in promotional and marketing activities.(Gebreel & Shuayb, 2022).

Besides, a destination management authority may share detailed information about their overall services and facilities for tourists through social media platforms. By promoting advertising on social media networks, companies can comprehend, and the satiate client wants and demands for information. It also plays a role in ensuring customer service. However, the diversity of organizations often poses particular complications in analyzing campaigns (Raudeliūnienė, Davidavičienė, Tvaronavičienė, & Jonuška, 2018). Employee upskilling also benefits from social media. Since every tourist's needs, want, and behavior varies from person to person, area to area, and society to society, segmenting them is also essential for the service providers. At every step of the decision-making process, tourists use social media as the primary information source. One of the main components of this process is the planning, usage, and evaluation of tourism-related information and goods. Not only at the data gathering stage can the importance of information be demonstrated in the decision-making process for travel. Information is accurate and crucial at every process level (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). The number of global internet users amounted to 5.2 billion individuals, while the count of social media users reached 4.2 billion (Alismaiel, Cifuentes-Faura, & Al-Rahmi, 2022) . Furthermore, there were 3.790 billion unique mobile users and 1.968 billion active social media users globally. According to Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2023), there was an annual increase of 10% in internet usage, social media usage, and unique mobile users. Additionally, mobile usage experienced a growth rate of 4%, while unique mobile users witnessed a significant growth rate of 17%. The impact of user-generated content on social media platforms on a business's financial performance is significant. According to Corral de Zubielqui and Jones (2023), In January 2023, the number of active social media users in Bangladesh amounted to 52.70 million, accounting for 66.8% of the total population, engaged with at least one social networking site, irrespective of age. During that particular period, the proportion of female social media users in Bangladesh was recorded at 32.6%, whereas male users accounted for 67.4% (Nabi, Zohora, & Misbauddin, 2023).

The comprehension of visitor purchasing, and expenditure patterns poses a significant problem for marketers in the field. Tourist behavior exhibits a direct correlation with tourist behavior, particularly in terms of buying decisions and prior exposure to items and services (Dogra, Adil, Sadiq, Rafiq, & Paul, 2023). Pleasure is directly related to tourism; to ensure it, you need to know about the customers. Psychology is a disciplinary factor that uniquely encompasses the complex interplay among biological, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social structural determinants of human functioning (Bandura, 2001). the decision-making process of tourists has become increasingly intricate. The purchasing choice is subject to variation based on factors such as gender, lifestyle,

culture, personal preferences, and motivations. The establishment of brand loyalty is of utmost importance for an organization, as it serves as a deterrent to tourists who may otherwise be inclined to move to other brands. The focus point for several tourists has consistently been the brand's image. According to the study conducted by Cheng, Gan, Imrie, and Mansori (2018), it was found that, the proliferation of technological advancements in the acquisition and dissemination of information has fostered the adoption of innovative approaches to shopping. Consequently, individuals could engage in remote purchasing, so obviating the necessity of physically visiting brick-and-mortar establishments and fostering a rise in off-site consumer transactions (Sharma & Sheth, 2004). New technologies are essential for better guest services and creating competition. In the hospitality sector, a brand highly affects a tourist's decision (Aras, Persada, & Nabella, 2023). Customer satisfaction is directly related to the image of the brand. To satisfy your customer, you need to know them better than they do themselves. Social media can be a platform to know about your customer. Several different things, including psychological, social, cultural, and even natural elements, impact how tourists behave, which later affects the purchase decision of a tourist (Pop, Săplăcan, Dabija, & Alt, 2022). These factors can be classified into three categories: personal, social, and situational. Currently, social media exerts a significant influence on all of these aforementioned aspects. Norms, contentment, and trust play vital roles in the establishment and enhancement of consumer relationships. Social media serves as a widely accessible platform for ordinary tourists to discuss both positive and negative word of mouth publicly, thus influencing the perception of a location. The economy of Bangladesh is significantly influenced by the tourism sector, which is undergoing a transformative shift in the way people book and experience their journeys due to the increasing global adoption of social media (Shohel M Nafi & Ahmed, 2017). Examining how social media influences Bangladeshi visitors' travel behavior is the purpose of this research, particularly with regard to destination choice, trip preparation, and travel activities. It also identifies and analyses the precise social media actions influencing tourists' decision-making, such as likes, reactions, posts, comments, and views. Moreover, the research wants to determine how much Bangladeshi tourists' social media usage influences their destination decision-making. This research's findings will light on how social media influences travel behavior in Bangladesh, explicitly concerning destination selection, trip itinerary planning, and travel activities. To properly utilize social media to promote Bangladeshi tourism, this study aims to offer helpful advice for tourism marketers and policymakers. It will also provide tourism marketers and officials with practical guidance on utilizing social media to promote travel in Bangladesh (Halim, Mawa, Deb, & Nafi, 2022). By assessing how many Bangladeshi visitors usage of social media influences their decision-making, the research will also contribute to the body of knowledge on the use of social media in tourism decision-making.

Literature Review

A social media ecosystem that improves commercial capacities is created when social media platforms are combined. Businesses are connecting with potential clients via social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram for self-promotion and advertising. How tourists look for, choose, and book hotels are significantly impacted by social media, which alters how they make decisions (S. Nafi & Ahmed, 2018). Even if the return on investment for social media marketing in the travel and hospitality industries cannot be determined, it may benefit a brand's relationships and reputation (Aljumah, Nuseir, & El Refae, 2022). The perceived advantages of social contact on social media networks vary depending on one's capacity to obtain social capital from their network (S. M. Nafi & Ahmed, 2019). In tourism, studies relevant to social media's impact on tourist decision-making are up to the minute (Lin & Rasoolimanesh, 2022). Social corporate networking significantly impacts the relationship between customers and providers (Leung, Law, Van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Twitter is a simple service, but it is able to deal with complex relationships, and Facebook is a complex service. However, it handles superficial relationships with tourists, and human resources-related capabilities are related. This channel can implement

strategic management and new product introduction (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media influences how tourists seek, decide, and book hotels, transforming their hotel choice path (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). Because of the multitude and diversity of those platforms that are assisting in satisfying the requirements and aspirations of visitors in recent years, it has become increasingly clear how social media usage affects decisions made about travel (Dogra et al., 2023). Indeed, social media has helped travelers make decisions before, during, and after their trips by directing information, ideas, opinions, and experiences shared over these platforms that travelers are gathering and using to support their tourist activities, then sharing and evaluating their own travel experiences with all the benefits and drawbacks associated with the goods and services involved (Azeez, 2021). Social media assists the tourist as the side of demand also assists the supply side in times of crisis (Liu, Pennington-Gray, & Klemmer, 2015). Anyone can create content on social media to share their knowledge and experience about any tourist destination-related info (Aljumah et al., 2022). Today, Facebook is the combination of the best medium for forums and online groups to distribute pictures and much more about a tourism destination or a tourist's behavior or service information (Lin & Rasoolimanesh, 2022). Besides social media can be used to help moderate potentially the adverse crisis effects on tourists' perceptions and their arrivals at the affected destination (Kay, Mulcahy, & Parkinson, 2020). The managers of tourism fan pages should maintain their efforts to boost fan interaction since it has a beneficial impact on tourists' behavioral buying intentions and how they view the value of the brand (Veloso, Ieva, & Gómez-Suárez, 2023).

Because of the growth of information technology, different changes in business and industry have been introduced. Adapting new technology has positive and negative impacts on business, but the business greatly benefits from it (Leung et al., 2013). By using technology, businesses can also understand the various complex needs of the customers (Harris & Goode, 2010). Modern tourists specially millennials and Gen-Z demands a wider range of services from the service providers, and they want all this information available online. So, that they can take their decisions and book them in pre-travel stage (El-Said, 2020). Anyone can get all information about a destination setting at home online in a second (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Whenever an idea comes into Someone's mind they start to look on the internet, where others leave their experiences about some location and destination (Skard, Knudsen, Sjøstad, & Thorbjørnsen, 2021). Without changing the demand and supply, new selective types of tourism service or product with unique value proposition cannot be created (Holbrook, 1999). Travelers now have more control over how their needs are met thanks to technological advancements in information and communication. Social media is where travelers get their first-hand information (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). It entails preparation, use, and a review of the tourism offering. Even though social media is a young platform, it offers opportunities for the tourism industry's markets to execute marketing strategies that are more customer-focused (Dogra et al., 2023).

Tourist behavior includes the customers' choices, actions, concepts, and experiences. Tourist behavior has been directly affected by the state of mind (Cheng et al., 2018). The economic factors are highly influenced by environmental change. In spending money, tourists have become very careful (Gallarza, Gil-Saura, & Holbrook, 2011). Low incomes, rising prices, and job insecurity are the factors that cause individuals to hesitate before making large purchases (Gretzel et al., 2020). Compared to last year, they need to prepare to pay as much money as possible and want to ensure that they receive the most significant advantages and services (Gallarza et al., 2011). When a tourist goes to make a final decision about their next trip, they express a willingness to learn and know more about the current information about travel (Dogra et al., 2023). When a tourist decides to engage in tourism activities, he/she moves and does not stop visiting the sites or buying local tourism products and services. When tourists buy something, they buy it from different suppliers, which can strongly avoid monopoly (Deb et al., 2022).

Tourism developers need a wide range of information about the tourists' such as statistical profiles of tourists and statistical records of the tourists' behavior (Aznar, Sayeras Maspera, Segarra, & Claveria, 2018). Tourists' purchase decision is one of the most complex processes by the specific theory of tourist behavior. It is clear that the process differs from tourist to tourist, also the motivational factors differs from one another that shape the final decision (Bae & Han, 2020). Understanding the tourists' is vital for organizations to succeed as today's market is dominated by customers. Tourism market segmentation authors know the growing number of travelers who use contemporary digital media. Modern technology offers fresh, personalized tourism that aligns with their assessed needs (Adiwijaya, Kaihatu, Nugroho, & Kartika, 2017). Since the development of sophisticated Web 2.0 technology significantly influenced and changed how people make travel decisions, travelers nowadays are more active than ever (Aljumah et al., 2022). Several promotional initiatives are taking place in the global tourism business. National tourist boards and travel companies worldwide engage in this conflict as communicators to shape the tourist's perspective and associated image in the way they would want (Chen & Tsai, 2007). They aim to brand tourism items for exceptional market recognition (Ilyas et al., 2023).

According to the given literature evaluation, no empirical studies undertaken in Bangladesh assess the impact of social media on tourists' decisions. In addition, there is a dearth of research on the specific social media acts that may impact tourists' decisions, including likes, reactions, posts, comments, and views. The study intends to address these gaps by performing an empirical study in Bangladesh and examining the impact of various social media actions on tourists' decision-making.

Methodology

The research employs a quantitative method that involves incorporating both descriptive and exploratory approaches. The primary focus of this research is the examination of the impact of social media on traveler behavior. The researcher utilized an experimental methodology to ascertain the impact of social media on those working in the tourism sector. Subsequently, the descriptive study approach was employed to ascertain the impact of social media on the decision-making process of tourists. The study incorporated a combination of primary and secondary data sources. The major method employed for data collection involves conducting interviews with students, professors, and residents, utilizing open-ended questionnaires. They examined prior publications that allowed for the collection of secondary data. The research employed nonprobability sampling techniques for statistical analysis. A questionnaire was created and disseminated to gather information from the chosen respondents. Since they are beneficial when evaluating a survey for a wide range of information (Mathers et al., 1998). The study used a 388-person sample size. The survey's two major components, the first of which focused on the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and the second of which focused on their activities with social media, were separated into the questionnaire. The data was collected through online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews conducted at multiple tourist destinations throughout different regions of Bangladesh. The participants' characteristics were evaluated using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (indicating severe disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). The acquired data from primary and secondary sources has been subjected to categorization and analysis through the utilization of computer applications such as SPSS 26 and Microsoft Excel. Following this, a comprehensive and systematic examination was undertaken utilizing the available data. However, the utilization of Cronbach's Alpha analysis has been employed to assess the authenticity and reliability of the data. The objectives of this study were subsequently accomplished by the utilization of multiple regression, descriptive analysis, and frequency analysis techniques.

Data Analysis and Result

Sociodemographic Information

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the sociodemographic attributes pertaining to the sample size of 388 individuals. The initial column presents a breakdown of gender distribution, revealing that 232 individuals (59.8%) self-identify as male, whilst 156 individuals (40.2%) self-identify as female. Transitioning to the subsequent column, the data presents the marital status of the participants, wherein 96 persons (24.7%) are identified as married, while the remaining 292 individuals (79.3%) are categorized as unmarried.

The age distribution within the sample is presented in the third column. It is observed that 52 individuals (13.4%) are in the age group up to 20, 285 individuals (73.5%) fall into the age range of 21-30, 40 individuals (10.3%) are aged 31-40, 10 individuals (2.6%) are aged 41-50, and one individual (.3%) is aged beyond 50. The fourth column presents an overview of the varied professional experiences of the participants. Of the total respondents, 303 persons (78.1%) identified themselves as students, 21 individuals (5.4%) as teachers, 45 individuals (11.6%) as private service employees, and 19 individuals (4.9%) as government employees.

The educational backgrounds of the participants are presented in the fifth column, indicating that 36 persons (9.3%) have successfully passed the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), 279 individuals (71.9%) have obtained undergraduate degrees, 45 individuals (11.6%) possess graduate degrees, and 28 individuals (7.2%) have achieved post-graduate degrees. The sixth column of the data table presents the distribution of monthly average income. It reveals that 259 participants, accounting for 66.8% of the sample, earn less than 10,000 BDT. Additionally, 70 participants, representing 18% of the sample, earn between 11,000-25,000 BDT. Furthermore, 35 individuals, comprising 9% of the sample, earn between 26,000-40,000 BDT. Lastly, 24 individuals, making up 6.2% of the sample, earn more than 40,000 BDT.

In brief, the sample primarily consists of persons who are young, single, and possess a high level of education, with a dominating representation of students and individuals with lower income levels. The distribution of gender in the sample displays a minor bias towards males, and the sample includes individuals from diverse professional backgrounds.

The results of the reliability test are displayed in Table 2, where Cronbach's alpha is utilized as a statistical metric to assess the reliability of the data. Cronbach's alpha is a statistical metric used to evaluate the internal consistency of a test or scale, gauging the extent to which the items collectively capture a particular concept or dimension (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variables was determined to be 0.854, as evidenced by the reliability data.

An internal consistency reliability value of 0.854, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, is widely regarded as outstanding. The observed high value indicates that the test items consistently measure the same underlying idea or dimension. It is important to mention that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 or above is typically considered satisfactory for most research purposes (Sijtsma, 2009). In the present study, the acquired Cronbach's alpha value surpasses this threshold, providing additional evidence for the reliability of the collected data.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics
Source: Survey data

Reliability of the study

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Male	232	59.8%	Married	96	24.7%
Female	156	40.2%	Unmarried	292	79.3%
Total	388	100%	Total	388	100%
Age Structure			Profession		
Up to 20	52	13.4%	Student	303	78.1%
21-30	285	73.5%	Teacher	21	5.4%
31-40	40	10.3%	Private Service	45	11.6%
41-50	10	2.6%	Government Employees	19	4.9%
50+	1	.3			
Total	388	100%	Total	388	100%
Education Level			Monthly Average Income (BDT)		
HSC	36	9.3%	Less than 10,000	259	66.8%
Undergraduate	279	71.9%	11,000-25,000	70	18%
Graduate	45	11.6%	26,000-40,000	35	9%
Post-graduate	28	7.2%	40,000+	24	6.2%
Total	388	100%	Total	388	100%

Table 2. Reliability test
Source: Survey data

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.854	10

Descriptive Statistics

The ratings provided by the survey respondents for each variable, as depicted in Table 3, represent their evaluations of the influence of social media on travel decision-making. In the present context, the symbol "V" is

used to denote variables. The findings of this study indicate that among the ten variables examined, nine (V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, and V10) demonstrate a mean score that falls within the range of 3.5 to 4 ($3.50 < M < 4.00$), suggesting a beneficial impact (Kremelberg, 2011). Among the variables under consideration, solely one denoted as V1, exhibits a value lower than 3.5. Notably, V1 possesses a mean score of 4.1959, so above the threshold of 4 (Williams, Grajales, & Kurkiewicz, 2013).

Based on the scoring technique utilized for the questionnaire, a mean score lower than 2.75 is regarded as indicating a low level, while scores ranging from 2.75 to 3.25 are considered average (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). Mean scores falling between 3.25 and 4.00 are defined as indicating a good level, and mean scores surpassing 4.00 are designated as exceptional (Bryman & Cramer, 2004). Based on the established criteria, it is observed that nine of the ten variables (V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, and V10) exhibited satisfactory performance. The researchers were able to attain mean ratings that indicated a favorable influence on the process of making travel decisions (Bors, 2018).

Significantly, variable V1 demonstrated exceptional performance, as seen by a mean score surpassing 4.00, so demonstrating a widespread belief among respondents regarding the substantial impact of social media on tourism ($M=4.1959$). The aforementioned shared understanding highlights the significant influence that social media has on the decision-making processes linked to travel.

Table 3. The Perception Score Given to the Factors by the Respondents

Source: Survey data

Descriptive Statistics					
No.		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
V1	Social media can influence a tourist to visit a place.	388	4.195	.9949	.990
V2	You often post on social media.		3.976	.9189	.844
V3	You review short videos before visiting a destination.		3.894	1.0301	1.061
V4	You review posts before visiting the destination		3.951	1.0268	1.054
V5	You like to share positive and negative feedback about a destination on social media.		3.935	.9555	.913
V6	When visiting a destination, you consider reactions, views, and comments on social media.		3.871	.9692	.939
V7	You prefer social media over search engines to get the latest updates on a place		3.994	.9724	.946
V8	You would recommend the destination to others based on the influencer's content.		3.889	.9648	.931
V9	You like to follow the influencer's recommendations for other tourist destinations in the future based on their content on a destination.		3.886	.9107	.826
V10	There is no difference between the influencer's content and the experience of visiting the destination		3.458	1.216	1.479

Regression Analysis

The primary aim of this research endeavor was to investigate and establish the presence of a causal relationship between distinct factors that serve as indicators of the extent of social media's impact on the decision-making process of travelers when selecting their destinations. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the model summary and analysis of variances, respectively, utilizing multilinear regression analysis for its superior interpretive capabilities with the included nine variables reported as standardized factor scores (beta coefficients) (Uyanık & Güler, 2013). The findings derived from the regression analysis have successfully identified a range of influential factors that impact individuals' behavior on social media. These factors have been prioritized based on their respective beta coefficients, which serve as indicators of their relative importance in explaining the observed variations in behavior (Nathans, Oswald, & Nimon, 2012). The variable of interest, evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, was utilized to gauge the influence of social factors on the decision-making process of visitors (Barua, 2013). The results, as presented in Table 4, have revealed a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.510a, suggesting a moderately positive correlation between the dependent variable and the predictor factors (Willits, Theodori, & Luloff, 2016). The observed correlation between the variables indicates a modestly significant association, implying that the respondents expressed favorable viewpoints regarding the impact of social media on the tourism industry. The coefficient of determination (R²) indicates that the predictor variables account for approximately 26% of the variability observed in the dependent variable. The statistical significance of the obtained results is substantiated by a p-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant outcome. Additionally, the F ratio of 14.740 further supports the significance of the findings. The obtained p-value of .000b, which is below the predetermined significance level of .05, provides compelling evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The observed findings suggest a strong and statistically significant relationship between the variables under investigation, providing evidence to support the notion that social media has a favorable influence on the decision-making processes of tourists.

Table 4.1 Model Summary

Source: Survey data

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.510 ^a	.260	.242	.86616

Table 4.2 Analysis of Variances

Source: Survey data

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	99.525	9	11.058	14.740	.000 ^b
Residual	283.588	378	.750		
Total	383.113	387			

The beta coefficients obtained from the regression analysis presented in Table 5 provide insights into the relative significance of the nine independent variables in explaining variations in the influence of social media on tourists' decision-making processes. The results of the multiple regression analysis highlight that social media has a significant and positive impact on a tourist's decision to visit a destination. This effect remains consistent even when we control for other independent variables. The claim made is supported by the fact that there is a constant

term in the statistical analysis that is statistically significant (Gomila, 2021). The coefficient of this term is 1.480, and the p-value associated with it is less than 0.001. This indicates that social media has a noticeable influence on people's decisions regarding travel (Aljandali, 2017).

In our analysis, we examined several independent variables and found that three of them had a significant impact on the dependent variable. The level of significance, denoted as $p < .01$, indicates that the probability of obtaining these results by chance alone is less than 1%. The frequency of social media posting, watching short videos related to a destination, and considering reactions, views, and comments on social media when contemplating a visit to a destination are all factors that have been examined in a research study (Su, 2019). The study found that the beta coefficient for the frequency of social media posting was .148, indicating a positive relationship between this variable and the likelihood of considering a visit to a destination (Aluri, Slevitch, & Larzelere, 2015). Similarly, the beta coefficient for watching short videos related to a destination was .173, suggesting that this activity also has a positive influence on the likelihood of considering a visit. This result has a similar to the results found in study conducted by Shohel Md and Tanvir (2019). Lastly, the beta coefficient for considering reactions, views, and comments on social media when contemplating a visit to a destination was .181, indicating that this factor also plays a role in influencing the decision-making process (Wang & Yu, 2017).

Table 5. Coefficients of Variables

Source: Survey data

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.480	.265		5.585	.000
You often post on social media.	.161	.057	.148	2.807	.005
You review short videos before visiting a destination.	.167	.060	.173	2.804	.005
You review posts before visiting destination.	.046	.056	.048	.821	.412
You like to share positive and negative feedback about a destination on social media.	.006	.059	.006	.100	.920
You consider reactions, views, and comments on social media when thinking of visiting a destination.	.186	.058	.181	3.229	.001
You prefer social media over search engines to get the latest updates on a place.	.93	.060	.091	1.541	.124
You would recommend the destination to others based on the influencer's content.	.076	.063	.074	1.210	.227
You like to follow the influencer's recommendations for other tourist destinations in the future based on their content on a destination.	.002	.066	.002	.032	.974
You would recommend the destination to others based on the influencer's content.	-0.051	.044	-0.062	1.146	.253

Dependent Variable: Social media has the capability to influence a tourist to visit a place.

The results of this study suggest that people who engage in these specific behaviors are more likely to be influenced by social media when making travel decisions. In contrast, the other independent variables that were

considered in the study, such as the practice of reviewing posts before visiting a destination, sharing feedback on social media, favoring social media for updates instead of search engines, recommending a destination based on influencer content, and following an influencer's recommendations for future travel, did not show a noteworthy impact on the dependent variable at the predetermined level of significance (Tran & Strutton, 2016). As a result, it is possible that these factors may have a diminished or insignificant effect on a tourist's choice to visit a particular destination due to the influence of social media.

The beta coefficients provide valuable information regarding both the direction and magnitude of the relationships. The findings of this study highlight the significance of a slight increase in the frequency of social media posting. Specifically, a one-unit increase in posting frequency is associated with a moderate impact on the dependent variable, resulting in a 0.148 increase. The ratio of F, which is 14.740, along with the associated p-value of 0.000, indicates that the model is statistically significant. In addition, the R-square value of 0.260 suggests that around 26% of the variation in tourists' decision-making can be accounted for by the model. This indicates that the model has a significant ability to explain the factors influencing tourists' decision-making.

Policy Recommendations

It is important for tourism stakeholders to acknowledge the significant impact that social media has on their ability to connect with potential tourists and successfully market their destinations (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013). The cultivation of favorable reviews and feedback on social media platforms is of utmost importance, as it has a substantial impact on the reputation and attractiveness of a destination to potential visitors (Fu & Timothy, 2021). The act of promptly monitoring and addressing negative feedback can have a positive impact on the reputation of a destination and help prevent any potential harm (Aljumah et al., 2022). Collaborating with influential figures on social media, such as content creators, has been found to be an effective strategy for promoting destinations and attracting potential tourists (Garner & Kim, 2022).

In addition, the utilization of social media analytics tools provides tourism stakeholders with the ability to better understand and analyze the preferences, trends, and changing interests of tourists (Zhang, Ma, Zhang, Ding, & Yang, 2019). In addition, it is crucial to establish social media training programs specifically designed for professionals working in the tourism industry. The objective of adeptly managing and strategically utilizing social media platforms for destination promotion is to foster meaningful engagement with potential tourists (Aluri et al., 2015). This approach aims to optimize the effectiveness of social media in promoting destinations and attracting tourists. By adopting these strategies, individuals and organizations involved in the tourism industry can effectively utilize social media platforms to maximize the exposure and attractiveness of their destinations (Velooso et al., 2023).

Limitation and Future Study

There are several limits to the study on social media and how it affects the travel and hospitality industries. As tourism is not made up of just one business, it is essential to consider other industries such as those linked to food, transportation, communications, and other different service sectors (Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003). The study solely focuses on social media usage in the tourist and hospitality sectors. As there are so many other elements that influence a consumer's choice, such as their state of mind, the study is also restricted to the viewpoint of companies and marketers and does not explore the effect of social media on tourists' behavior in depth. Moreover, since the sample size is so tiny (only 388), the study may not accurately represent the industry's most recent practices and trends (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

There are a number of directions that future research could investigate age, demographic, and cultural variations in social media usage in the context of making travel decisions. In addition, investigating the role of social media influencers in shaping travel decisions, including the efficacy of influencer marketing efforts and the effect of influencer authenticity on traveler behavior, can be a fruitful line of analysis. The study might also investigate the impact of social media on travel behavior beyond the decision-making stage, including the impact on the vacation experience and post-travel behavior. Future research might also investigate the influence of developing social media platforms (e.g., TikTok) on travel behavior. The differences in usage and impact between these and more established platforms could provide tourism stakeholders with significant information.

Conclusion

The dataset of this study reveals empirical evidence that strongly supports the significant influence of social media on the complex decision-making processes of travelers, specifically when it comes to identifying and choosing places. The profound influence of social media on the tourism paradigm is evident, as it offers an unparalleled platform for efficient communication, widespread dissemination of information, and smart promotion of various vacation destinations and activities. In the present era characterized by advanced technology, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become crucial pillars, serving as essential repositories for extensive information, genuine reviews, and insightful recommendations encompassing a wide range of destinations, accommodations, and recreational activities. The increasing number of users on social media platforms highlights their exceptional capacity as channels for tourism firms aiming to expand their consumer reach and enhance their marketing and promotional efforts. These platforms go beyond being simple stores of information, as they provide detailed recommendations and testimonies that have a significant impact on the cognitive processes that shape a traveler's views and final decision-making.

The overall conclusions align with a uniform agreement among participants, affirming the significant influence that social media plays in molding their travel-related choices. The observable patterns, such as the inclination to carefully examine posts and concise videos before commencing a trip, the thorough evaluation of social media responses, views, and comments, and the notable preference for social media over traditional search engines to obtain up-to-date information on destinations, collectively emphasize the significant influence of social media on the modern traveler's process of organizing their travel plans. It is worth mentioning that respondents show a clear tendency to actively participate in and contribute to the social media discussions related to locations. The inclination of individuals to express both favorable and unfavorable feedback on these online platforms, endorse travel destinations based on influencer-generated content, and enthusiastically adhere to influencers' recommendations for potential tourist destinations demonstrate a complex relationship between social media and the decision-making processes related to travel. Given the profound insights presented, it becomes evident that tourism stakeholders must carefully integrate social media considerations into their strategic planning. The acknowledgment and utilization of the untapped potential of social media not only enhances stakeholders' comprehension of the changing tastes of visitors but also enables them to strategically customize their offers to align with the expectations of the discriminating modern traveler.

Declaration

We, Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee and Tanvir Ahmed, hereby declare that the work presented in this article, titled 'The impact of social media on tourists' decision-making process: An empirical study based on Bangladesh' is entirely our own. We affirm that we have not used any unauthorized sources, and all information derived from other works has been properly cited and referenced in accordance with the guidelines provided.

We further declare that this article has not been submitted for publication elsewhere and is not currently under consideration by any other publication. All co-authors have been acknowledged appropriately, and their contributions have been duly recognized.

We understand the ethical responsibilities associated with academic and scholarly work and affirm that this article adheres to the principles of honesty, integrity, and academic rigor. Any conflicts of interest that may have influenced this work have been disclosed in the manuscript. We acknowledge that the contents of this article are original and have not been plagiarized or misrepresented. Any opinions expressed herein are solely my own and do not reflect the views of any institution or organization with which I am affiliated.

We are aware of and comply with the submission guidelines and policies of the 'Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies' and agree to address any queries or requests for additional information promptly.

Acknowledgment: N/A

Funding: The research did not receive any funding from any organization.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no competing interests

Authors contribution: Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee: Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools, or data; Wrote the paper. Tanvir Ahmed: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

Data availability: On request, we can make the data available

Reference

- Adiwijaya, M., Kaihatu, T., Nugroho, A., & Kartika, E. W. (2017). The Issues of Risk, Trust, and Customer Intention: A Search for the Relationship. *Risk Governance & Control: Financial Markets & Institutions, Vol 7, Iss 1, Pp 82-90 (2017)(1)*, 82.
- Alismaiel, O. A., Cifuentes-Faura, J., & Al-Rahmi, W. M. (2022). Online learning, mobile learning, and social media technologies: An empirical study on constructivism theory during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability, 14(18)*, 11134.
- Aljandali, A. (2017). *Multivariate Methods and Forecasting with IBM SPSS Statistics*: Springer International Publishing.
- Aljumah, A. I., Nuseir, M. T., & El Refae, G. A. (2022). *Exploring the Effect of Social Media Marketing and Destination image on Destination Loyalty in Covid-19 Times: Sequential Mediating Role of Brand Love and Brand Loyalty*. Paper presented at the 2022 International Arab Conference on Information Technology (ACIT).
- Aluri, A., Slevitch, L., & Larzelere, R. (2015). The effectiveness of embedded social media on hotel websites and the importance of social interactions and return on engagement. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 27(4)*, 670-689. doi:10.1108/IJCHM-09-2013-0415
- Aras, M., Persada, I. N., & Nabella, S. D. (2023). The influence of service quality, Trust, and facilities on the decision to choose SP Hotel Batam. *International Journal of Accounting, Management, Economics and Social Sciences (IJAMESC), 1(4)*, 417-431.

- Atilgan, E., Akinci, S., & Aksoy, S. (2003). Mapping service quality in the tourism industry. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 13(5), 412-422.
- Aznar, P., Sayeras Maspera, J. M., Segarra, G., & Claveria, J. (2018). Airbnb competition and hotels' response: the importance of online reputation.
- Bae, S. Y., & Han, J. H. (2020). Considering Cultural Consonance in Trustworthiness of Online Hotel Reviews among Generation Y for Sustainable Tourism: An Extended TAM Model. *Sustainability*, 12(7), 2942.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 1-26.
- Barua, A. (2013). Methods for decision-making in survey questionnaires based on Likert scale. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, 3(1), 35-38.
- Bors, D. (2018). *Data Analysis for the Social Sciences: Integrating Theory and Practice*: Sage.
- Bryman, A., & Cramer, D. (2004). *Quantitative data analysis with SPSS 12 and 13: A guide for social scientists*: Routledge.
- Chen, C.-F., & Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28(4), 1115-1122.
- Cheng, B. L., Gan, C. C., Imrie, B. C., & Mansori, S. (2018). Service recovery, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: evidence from Malaysia's hotel industry. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 11(2), 187-203.
- Corral de Zubielqui, G., & Jones, J. (2023). How and when does internal and external social media use for marketing impact B2B SME performance? *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 38(8), 1607-1622.
- Deb, S. K., Nafi, S. M., & Valeri, M. (2022). Promoting tourism business through digital marketing in the new normal era: a sustainable approach. *European Journal of Innovation Management*.
- Dogra, N., Adil, M., Sadiq, M., Rafiq, F., & Paul, J. (2023). Demystifying tourists' intention to purchase travel online: the moderating role of technical anxiety and attitude. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26(13), 2164-2183.
- Dwityas, N. A., & Briandana, R. (2017). Social media in travel decision making process. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(7), 193-201.
- El-Said, O. A. (2020). Impact of online reviews on hotel booking intention: The moderating role of brand image, star category, and price. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33, 100604.
- Fu, Y., & Timothy, D. J. (2021). Social media constraints and destination images: The potential of barrier-free internet access for foreign tourists in an internet-restricted destination. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, 100771.
- Gallarza, M. G., Gil-Saura, I., & Holbrook, M. B. (2011). The value of value: Further excursions on the meaning and role of customer value. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10(4), 179-191.
- Garner, B., & Kim, D. (2022). Analyzing user-generated content to improve customer satisfaction at local wine tourism destinations: an analysis of Yelp and TripAdvisor reviews. *Consumer Behavior in Tourism and Hospitality*, 17(4), 413-435.
- Gebreel, O. S. S., & Shuayb, A. (2022). Contribution of social media platforms in tourism promotion. *International Journal of Social Science, Education, Communication and Economics (SINOMICS JOURNAL)*, 1(2), 189-198.
- Gomila, R. (2021). Logistic or linear? Estimating causal effects of experimental treatments on binary outcomes using regression analysis. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 150(4), 700.
- Gretzel, U., Fuchs, M., Baggio, R., Hoepken, W., Law, R., Neidhardt, J., . . . Xiang, Z. (2020). e-Tourism beyond COVID-19: a call for transformative research. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 22(2), 187-203.

- Halim, M. A., Mawa, J., Deb, S. K., & Nafi, S. M. (2022). Local community perception about tourism impact and community support for future tourism development: A study on Sylhet, Bangladesh. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 44(4), 1260-1270.
- Harris, L. C., & Goode, M. M. (2010). Online servicescapes, trust, and purchase intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 24(3), 230-243.
- Hays, S., Page, S. J., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media as a destination marketing tool: its use by national tourism organisations. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 16(3), 211-239.
- HIPOLITO, Y. E. (2022). Social Environments+ Social Studies: An article review on the factors contributing the Learning of Geography as a Social Studies Discipline". *Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 1(2), 29-33.
- Holbrook, M. B. (1999). *Consumer value. A Framework for Analysis and Research*; Routledge: London, UK.
- Ilyas, G. B., Widiawati, K., SUHAIMI, S., RISMAWATI, R., BUDIYANTI, S., & AZIZURROHMAN, M. (2023). Exploring a New Destination Image: A Case Study of Suranadi Village. *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism*, 14(6), 2659-2672.
- Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of marketing management*, 36(3-4), 248-278.
- Kremelberg, D. (2011). *Practical Statistics: A Quick and Easy Guide to IBM SPSS Statistics, STATA, and Other Statistical Software*: SAGE.
- Leech, N. L., Barrett, K. C., & Morgan, G. A. (2008). *SPSS For Intermediate Statistics: Use and Interpretation* (3 ed.): Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Leung, D., Law, R., Van Hoof, H., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review. *Journal of travel & tourism marketing*, 30(1-2), 3-22.
- Lin, Z., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2022). Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A systematic review. *Anatolia*, 1-15.
- Lin, Z., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2023). Influencing factors on the intention of sharing heritage tourism experience in social media. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 14(4), 675-700.
- Liu, B., Pennington-Gray, L., & Klemmer, L. (2015). Using social media in hotel crisis management: the case of bed bugs. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 6(2), 102-112.
- Miguéns, J., Baggio, R., & Costa, C. (2008). Social media and tourism destinations: TripAdvisor case study. *Advances in tourism research*, 26(28), 1-6.
- Nabi, M. N. U., Zohora, F. T., & Misbauddin, S. (2023). Social media links with social capital to trust in healthcare facilities: empirical evidence from Bangladesh. *Library Hi Tech*, 41(1), 210-228.
- Nafi, S., & Ahmed, T. (2018). Travel and leisure activities, motivation and behaviour of young Bangladeshi tourists. *European Scientific Journal*, 14(5), 341-358.
- Nafi, S. M., & Ahmed, T. (2019). The Ethical Standpoint of Social Influencers on Hotel EServicescape: A Theoretical Perspective on the Existing Literature. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(1), a17.
- Nathans, L. L., Oswald, F. L., & Nimon, K. (2012). Interpreting multiple linear regression: a guidebook of variable importance. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 17(9), n9.
- Ortiz-Ospina, E., & Roser, M. (2023). The rise of social media. *Our world in data*.
- Pop, R.-A., Săplăcan, Z., Dabija, D.-C., & Alt, M.-A. (2022). The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: The role of trust in consumer decision journey. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(5), 823-843.
- Raudeliūnienė, J., Davidavičienė, V., Tvaronavičienė, M., & Jonuška, L. (2018). Evaluation of advertising campaigns on social media networks. *Sustainability*, 10(4), 973.

- Sharma, A., & Sheth, J. N. (2004). Web-based marketing: The coming revolution in marketing thought and strategy. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(7), 696-702.
- Shohel Md, N., & Tanvir, A. (2019). The Ethical Standpoint of Social Influencers on Hotel EServicescape: A Theoretical Perspective on the Existing Literature. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsdoj&AN=edsdoj.07809a193a3b49e697f38030b34b78a1&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Sijtsma, K. (2009). On the use, the misuse, and the very limited usefulness of Cronbach's alpha. *Psychometrika*, 74, 107-120.
- Skard, S., Knudsen, E. S., Sjøstad, H., & Thorbjørnsen, H. (2021). How virtual reality influences travel intentions: The role of mental imagery and happiness forecasting. *Tourism Management*, 87, 104360.
- Su, X. (2019). An Empirical Study on the Influencing Factors of E-Commerce Live Streaming. In (pp. 492-496): IEEE.
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International journal of medical education*, 2, 53.
- Theofanidis, D., & Fountouki, A. (2018). Limitations and delimitations in the research process. *Perioperative Nursing-Quarterly scientific, online official journal of GORNA*, 7(3 September-December 2018), 155-163.
- Tran, G. A., & Strutton, D. (2016). Investigating E-Servicescape, Trust, E-WOM, and Customer Loyalty. *Celebrating America's Pastimes: Baseball, Hot Dogs, Apple Pie & Marketing?*, 77.
- Uyanik, G. K., & Güler, N. (2013). A study on multiple linear regression analysis. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 106, 234-240.
- Veloso, M., Ieva, M., & Gómez-Suárez, M. (2023). Social media content strategy in hospitality: the impact of experiential posts and response congruence on engagement, hotel image, and booking intention. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 1-21.
- Wang, Y., & Yu, C. (2017). Social interaction-based consumer decision-making model in social commerce: The role of word of mouth and observational learning. *International Journal of Information Management*, 37(3), 179-189. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.11.005>
- Williams, M. N., Grajales, C. A. G., & Kurkiewicz, D. (2013). Assumptions of multiple regression: Correcting two misconceptions. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 18(1), 11.
- Willits, F. K., Theodori, G. L., & Luloff, A. (2016). Another look at Likert scales. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 31(3), 6.
- Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014). What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 10, 27-36.
- Zhang, G., Ma, L., Zhang, X., Ding, X., & Yang, Y. (2019). Understanding Social Media Users' Unfollow Intentions: Take WeChat Subscriptions as An Example. *Online Information Review*, 43(7), 1081-1097.