

# The Role of Social Media in Tourism

Dr Carolyn Vanlalhriati<sup>1</sup>, Prof. E. Nixon Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty, Department of Management, Mizoram University

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Department of Management, Mizoram University

---

**Abstract:** Social media has been essential for tourism promotion providing a common platform for interactions with the carefully targeted consumers. Travelers can easily connect with millions of people around the world including friends and travelers they have not even met through social media. It provides a platform for reaching opinions and recommendations from social networking friends throughout the world. Keeping in view of how social media has inculcated into our daily routine, this paper aimed at studying how social media has develop into a significant source of information about tourism product among the students of Mizoram University. Data has been collected from 331 students from various schools under the university such as, School of Economics and Information Sciences, School of Life Sciences, School of Physical Sciences, School of Social Sciences, School of Engineering & Technology, School of Earth Sciences & Natural Resources Management, School of Fine Arts, Architecture & Fashion, School of Education & Humanities. The major findings of the study was that social media is increasingly significant in tourism promotion which was proven from the analysis of data that students are affected by positive comments about travel destination, hotels, restaurants, food and beverages which they have observed through social media.

**Keywords:** Social media, tourism, travel destination, hotels, restaurants, students.

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, social media has turned into a significant part of life particularly in cultural, educational and social feature of our life. The term 'social media' was first appeared in 2004 when LinkedIn introduced an online technology social networking application which allows users to communicate easily to share and discuss information. Social media has witness a tremendous growth over the past years. In 2019, it is estimated that the social media users will rise to 2.77 billion from 2.46 billion in 2017 (Statista, 2019). Facebook is considered to be the most popular social network, with a global usage penetration of 35 per cent and India claimed first rank with 300 million users of facebook. As per 2018 statistics, there were over 460 million social network users in India alone and Facebook and YouTube was the two most popular social networks with 30 percent penetration rate each followed by "Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Googleplus, Twitter, Skype, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Hike and Snapchat" (Statista, 2019) in descending orders.

The importance of social media particularly for tourism industry is progressively renowned and rising research topics. It is imperative for tourism industry to utilize social media to handle information search, tourism promotion, decision making and providing a common platform for interactions with the carefully targeted consumers. With the emergence of digital technology, the traditional word of mouth marketing including friends, family, and travel agencies and magazines have been extended with social media which connects the travelers with millions of people around the world including friends and travelers they have not even met. It provides a platform for reaching opinions and recommendations from social networking friends throughout the world. As mentioned by Tafveez (2017) "Consumers engage with social networking sites in order to make informed decisions about their travels and share their personal experiences which they had at a particular hotel, restaurant or airline".

Besides, the significance of social media for tourism and hospitality industry can be expressed in many ways. Firstly, Tourism industry which has expertise in using social media can have an effective social media intervention. Secondly, consumers advertise hotels, restaurants, agencies and destination on their behalf by posting and sharing their experiences through different social media. Thus, helping them build a reputation without incurring extra expends. Third, by sharing

videos, pictures and offers through social media, tourism industry can reduce the time consumer spends in choosing a destination as consumers can explore information within a single touch. Finally, employing various social media will enhance sharing of diverse information for the target customer thus, enabling an industry to generate different versions of information based on the type of media and users.

Furthermore, social media have turned into a critical instrument to advance tourism industry for some countries. For instance, Indian tourism Campaign 'Incredible India' conceptualized in 2002, integrating with social media have witness a remarkable results in increased rates of tourist traffic in India. Similarly, renowned social media campaigns such as "Snow at first Sight" presented by Colorado State, "Explore Canada like a local" launched by Canada Tourism Commission and "Sunshine Moments" maintained by Florida have witness a tremendous increased in followers and tourist traffic which was claimed to be generated through the power of social media by allowing them to conduct mass promotion.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is internet-based applications which consist of consumer- created content and facilitate a higher level of social interaction among travellers. Weber (2009) states it as the online site where people with a familiar interest can assemble to contribute opinions, thoughts and comments. From the marketer's point of view, it can be understood as an application that allows marketers and target audience to have an important online discussion for free or partially free (Levinson and Gibson, 2010). From the customer's viewpoint, "the values of using social media lies in its richness on personal experiences and trustworthiness as electronic word-of-mouth" (Kumar, 2014). However, the term 'social media' was first appeared in 2004 when LinkedIn introduced online technology social networking application which allows users to communicate easily to share and discuss information.

The extensive use of social media application has given new shape to tourism promotion. A study conducted by Fortis *et.al* (2012) has revealed that "social media are predominantly used after holidays, and there is a strong relationship between perceived level of influence from social media and changes made in holiday plans prior to final decision". Moreover, the user generated information is viewed as more reliable and dependable than tourism website, mass media advertising and travel agencies. Besides, Kim *et.al* (2013) found out that "social media such as has the potential to significantly affect tourists' emotion and improve the tourism experiences". Similarly, "the tourism decision of young generations gets highly affected by personal experiences and comments of other users on social media" (Sahin & Sengun, 2015). Moreover, the choice of honeymoon destination by the Mizo newly wedded couples was highly influenced by the advertisements from the internet i.e. Social media (Lalruatkimi, 2017).

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study comprised of the following objectives;

- i) To study the demographic profile of the respondents.
- ii) To find out the importance of social media marketing in tourism among the University Students.
- iii) To identify the most preferred social media by the University Student
- iv) To analyse the significant difference between various demographic variables in social media impacts on tourism.

## IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has been conducted among the students of Mizoram University during the month of January to March, 2019. The research have been carried out based on secondary data and primary data collected by employing structured questionnaire comprising of questions relating to the demographic profile of the respondents and 8 statement items on social media impacts on tourism measured on a five-point Likert scale from 5- Strongly Agree to 1-strongly disagree. Questionnaires have been distributed to all the schools operating under Mizoram University such as School of Life Sciences, School of Earth Sciences and Natural Resources, School of Economic, Management & Information Sciences, School of Education and Humanities, School of Engineering & technology, School of Physical Sciences, School of Fine Arts, Architecture & Fashion and School of Social Sciences. The population of the study comprised of all the students registered under undergraduate and post graduate courses of Mizoram University. The population is finite with a number of 2423 students for the academic year 2018-2019. Thus, the sample size 331 has been drawn out by applying Cochran's formula for calculating sample size in a finite population. Data analysis has been done in SPSS software and statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Mean, and Anova were employed.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS

### A. Demographic profile of the respondents

The table below describes the demographic profile of the respondents. A total sample of 331 respondents was considered for the study and out of which 58% were men and 41.9% were female. Majority of the respondents 74.01% fall under the age group of 21-25 years followed by 17.22% under the age group of 15-20 years, 7.55% and 1.2% under the age group of 26-30 years and 31-35 years respectively. The respondents were reading in different semesters where 39.87% were in IV Semester, 31% in II Semester, 21.75% in VI Semester, 4.83% in VIII Semester and 2.71% were in X Semester. They were made up of students from various Schools under Mizoram University where majority 14.14% were belonging to School of Economics, Management & Information Sciences.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Sl. no	Variables	Frequency	%	
1	<b>Gender</b>	Male	192	58
		Female	139	41.9
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100</b>
2	<b>Age</b>	15-20 years	57	17.22
		21-25 years	245	74.01
		26-30 Years	25	7.55
		31-35 years	4	1.20
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100</b>
3	<b>Semester</b>	II Semester	102	31
		IV Semester	132	39.87
		VI Semester	72	21.75
		VIII Semester	16	4.83
		X Semester	9	2.71
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100</b>
4	<b>School</b>	Earth Science & Natural Resources Management	44	13.29
		Economics, Management & Information Sciences	47	14.14
		Education & Humanities	44	13.29
		Physical Sciences	44	13.29
		Life Sciences	44	13.29
		Social Sciences	45	13.59
		Engineering & Technology	46	13.7
		Fine Arts, Architecture & Fashion	17	5.13
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: Field Survey)

### B. Importance of Social media marketing approach in Tourism

To understand the importance of social media marketing approach in tourism, eight different statements have been developed measured on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The reliability of the data was measured by using Cronbach's reliability test and the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.673 which was found to be satisfactory as Cronbach (1951) mentioned that the value of above 0.5 was acceptable for good internal consistency. The respondents agreed that they are influenced by positive comments about travel destination in social media (M = 4.053), they are influenced by positive comments about hotels and restaurants in social media (M = 4.095) and they are influenced by positive comments about food and beverages served by a particular restaurant in social media (M = 4.035). They also agreed that they came to know about various restaurants, hotels and travel destination through social media (M = 4.035) and they have seen tourism advertisements from social media (M = 4.125).

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Reliability**

Sl. No	Variables	Mean	Std Dev	Alpha
1	Influenced by Positive comments about travel destination in social media	<b>4.053</b>	.893	0.673
2	Sharing positive experience about travel destination in social media	3.562	.954	
3	Influenced by positive comments about hotels and restaurants in social media	<b>4.095</b>	.669	
4	I share my positive experience about the hotels and restaurants in social media	3.359	.976	
5	Influenced by positive comments about food and beverages served by a particular restaurants in social media	<b>4.035</b>	.798	
6	Sharing positive experience about the food and beverages served by a particular restaurant in social media	<b>3.640</b>	1.77	
7	I Came to know about various restaurants, hotels and travel destination through social media	<b>4.035</b>	.924	
8	I have seen the tourism advertisements from social media	<b>4.125</b>	.815	

(Source: Field Survey)

### C. Social Media Preferences by the Students

To find out the most preferred social media, Henry Garrett’s ranking technique is employed. This study requested the respondents to rate the social media from their perception to find out which media is rated as ‘Rank 1, Rank 2 up to Rank 12’ by the respondents. Percentage score has been calculated which later converted into the scale value acquired from Scale Conversion Table given by Henry Garrett. The percentage score is calculated as follows;

$$\text{Per cent Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,  $R_{ij}$  = Rank given for the  $i$ th variable by the  $j$ th respondents

$N_j$  = Number of variable ranked by the  $j$ th respondents.

**Table 3: Henry Garret ranking for Social media**

Social Media	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
Facebook	19297	58.299	<b>4</b>
Instagram	21525	65.030	<b>3</b>
You tube	23478	70.930	<b>2</b>
Google plus	15157	45.791	<b>6</b>
Snap chat	13379	40.419	<b>9</b>
Facebook Messenger	16474	49.770	<b>5</b>
Hike	12145	36.691	<b>12</b>
Twitter	15005	45.332	<b>7</b>
Pinterest	14277	43.132	<b>8</b>
Whatsapp	25076	75.758	<b>1</b>
LinkedIn	12413	37.501	<b>11</b>
Skype	12486	37.722	<b>10</b>

(Source: Field Survey)

Table 3 indicates that ‘Whatsapp’ was ranked first with total score of 25076 and average score of 75.75. The ‘YouTube’ occupied the second rank with a total score of 23478 and average score 70.93. ‘Instagram’ scored the third rank with a total score of 21525 and average score of 65.035. ‘Facebook’ scored the fourth rank with a total score of 19297 and average score of 58.29. ‘Facebook Messenger’ score fifth rank with a total score of 16474 and average score of 49.77 followed by Google plus, twitter, Pinterest, Snap chat, Skype, LinkedIn and Hike respectively.

**D. Demographic variables and social media impacts**

To analyse the significance difference between various demographic variables on social media impacts on tourism, analysis of variance ‘Anova’ test was employed. Demographic variables such as gender, age group, semester and schools were considered as independent factor but the test was significant for only one variable i.e. ‘age group’. The study revealed that there is a significant difference between different age groups on social media impacts statement no 2 “I share my positive experience about travel destination in social media” ( $f= 2.866$  &  $p = .038 < 0.05$ ) and statement 4 “I share my positive experience about the hotels and restaurants in social media” ( $f=4.55$  &  $p=.004 < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4: Anova test**

Sl. No		F Value	Sig
1	Influenced by Positive comments about travel destination in social media	.605	.613
2	Sharing positive experience about travel destination in social media	2.866	<b>.038</b>
3	Influenced by positive comments about hotels and restaurants in social media	1.287	.281
4	I share my positive experience about the hotels and restaurants in social media	4.559	<b>.004</b>
5	Influenced by positive comments about food and beverages served by a particular restaurants in social media	2.021	.113
6	Sharing positive experience about the food and beverages served by a particular restaurant in social media	.668	.573
7	I Came to know about various restaurants, hotels and travel destination through social media	.697	.555
8	I have seen the tourism advertisements from social media	.806	.492

(Source: Field Survey)

**VI. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The major findings of the study was that social media is increasingly vital in tourism promotion which was proven from the analysis of data that students are affected by positive comments about travel destination which they have observed through social media. “As tourism products are purchased in advanced prior to their utilization, the tourism industry must provide timely and accurate information relevant to visitor’s needs, crucial to visitor’s satisfaction and destination’s competitiveness”(Buhalis, 1998). Moreover, hotels, restaurants and the food and beverages served by such particular business shared and posted in social media have a positive influenced on the students. Therefore, it is advised that tourism industry must utilized the power of social media by enhancing quality services for their target consumers and engage opinion leaders such as models, singers, different celebrities as references as they can effectively advertise on their behalf by posting and sharing their experiences through different social media. Besides, the quality of rooms, the quality of food, the quality of services, the brand name, decoration, menus, etc. must be outstanding and unique to maintain differentiation and to easily grab the attention of target consumers.

The study also finds that respondents agreed to know about a restaurants, hotels and travel destination through social media. Therefore, it is important to set up a strong public relation team which will monitor social comments on a daily basis to handle customers’ issues which can neither build nor shatter the brand of a company or hotels, travel destinations, travel agencies, etc. It is also observed that majority of the respondents have seen tourism advertisements from social media. Thus, keeping in view of 2.77 billion social media users worldwide, the tourism industry must developed an advertisement for specific tourism products in the form of picture, poster, videos, offers, etc. which will be posted and shared through different social media capturing the large target customers.

Furthermore, the study observed that there is a significant difference between various age groups in sharing experience about holiday destinations, hotels and restaurants in social media. Thus, younger people who falls under the age group of 21-25 years (22.65%) likes to share about their positive experiences through pictures and videos on their social media sites. Whatsapp is considered to be the most preferred and most regularly used social media followed by YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Facebook Messenger and so on. Thus, tourism enterprises must employ these social media as a means of sharing advertisements in the form of videos, pictures, offers when they plan marketing activities of destinations.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Tourism industry has witnessed the importance of social media lately and many researches have been carried out in the concept of social media role in tourism industry. It was believed that “tourism industry is primed to take advantage of social media outlets, as the industry has long relied largely on destination reputation, consumer opinion, spread of information and positive word of mouth advertising” (Sahoo & Mukanda, 2017). The advantages of social media in tourism marketing are tremendous for the travellers as well as tourism promoters. Today, the social media technologies empower everyone providing a platform which connects with different parts of the world and enables exchange of information with one another. Thus, it is advised that tourism promoter should have a solid presence via social media to ensure a steady and enduring communication between itself and the target customer.

## REFERENCES

- [1] S. PraveenKumar, “Role of Media in the Promotion of Tourism Industry in India” *Global Review of Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Management*, vol. 1, pp. 187-192, 2014.
- [2] SS Sahoo and Mukunda BG, “roles of Social media in Promoting Tourism Business- A study on Tourism Promotion in Odisha,” *International Journal of Creative research Thoughts*, vol. 1, pp. 272-281, November, 2017
- [3] G.G Sahin & G. Sengun, “The effects of Social Media on Tourism marketing: A study among University Students,” *Management and Administrative Sciences Review.*, vol. 4, no5, pp. 772-786, September, 2015.
- [4] A.K. Singh, “Marketing of Tourism and Hospitality Products: Study of the impact of Celebrity Endorsed Advertisements on Hospitality Products and Services,” in *IBMRD’s Journal of Management and research*, vol. 2, no1, pp. 58-71, March 2013.
- [5] A. Kiralova & A. Pavlicecka “Development of Social Media Strategies in Tourism Destination,” presented at International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing, Madrid, Spain, and September 1-4, 2014.
- [6] A. Mukherjee & M. Nagabhushanam, “Role of Social Media in Tourism Marketing,” *International Journal of Science and Research*, Vol. 5, no 1 pp2026-2033, June 2016.
- [7] Benxiang Zen, “Social media in Tourism,” *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 2, No 1, pp. 1-2, 2013.
- [8] Mir Tafveez, “Role of Social Media in Tourism: A literature Review,” *International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology*, vol. 5, no 11, pp. 633-635, November 2017.
- [9] L. Webber, “Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Build Your Business”, Wiley Inc, 2009
- [10] J. Levinson and S. Gibson, “Guerrilla Social Media marketing” Entrepreneur press, 2010.
- [11] J. Fortis, D. Buhalis & N. Rossides, “Social Media use and impact during holiday travel planning process”, *Springer*, pp. 13-24, 2012.
- [12] JJ Kim, DR Fesenmaier & SI Johnson, “The effect of feedback within social media in tourism experiences”, *International conference of Design, User Experience and Usability*, *Springer*, pp.212-220, July 2013.
- [13] D. Buhalis, “Strategic use of information in the tourism Industry”, *Tourism Management*, Vol.19, No.5, pp. 409-421, 1998.
- [14] Lalruatkimi, “Role of Media in Branding Tourism: Issues & Challenges with special Reference to Mizoram, Branding north East India for Tourism, pp.43-50, 2017.
- [15] <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/>
- [16] <http://tourism.gov.in/tourism-policy>
- [17] <https://www.statista.com/topics/5113/social-media-usage-in-india/>
- [18] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>