



Influence of Social Media among Tourists with a Special Reference to Wayanad, Kerala

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Abstract: *Social media is the new way of sharing information via the internet. It is very effective than conventional media among travelers because of its wide popularity. So social media is one of the leading media which influence travelers to choose a destination or choose things related to it. This study considers the influence of social media among tourists. In accordance to the dynamic panel data approach of this study, it infers potential ways in which social media is used as a tour planner and how it can be helpful to analyse the positive and negative factors included in it.*

Keywords: Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the travelling of a person from one place to another either for a leisure or business purpose⁽¹⁾. It could be international or domestic ; travel from one country to another or travel within the country. Nowadays people not only just go to a destination, but also make a thorough research before planning the tour. Though there is a vast amount of information (text, images, audio and video sequences) running fast across the online environment, this information is also easy to access⁽²⁾. More than ever before, the social media, characterizing nowadays online communication systems, empowers people to acquire and give information, to promote or to negatively influence other people' opinions regarding brands, products, services, places, environment, political, economical⁽³⁾ and social events.

Manipulating people' opinion⁽²⁾ through specific messages is very likely to occur in this form of media due to the high exposure to a complex and combined form for transmitting the information. There are also situations where the needed information might not reach its designed purpose due to the fact that the way it is presented does not fit the users proper profile for receiving.

Generally, in social media⁽⁴⁾ the communication is non-formal, therefore the messages transmitted need to be perceived as such, so that the user may feel that he/she is truly discussing with someone friendly, with someone on the same wavelength who experiences the same perspective, who truly listens to his/her points of view and wishes⁽⁵⁾.

Studies show that the people are more attached with social media because of its easier accessibility⁽⁴⁾⁽¹³⁾. The operation of social networks is very convenient and very useful to the people as they are living in a digital world⁽⁷⁾. There we can see the same connection in travelers and the social media⁽⁶⁾.

1.1 Objectives

- To find out how social media influences tourists to choose a destination.
- To find out how social media positively and negatively affects the tourism industry.

1.2 Place of Study

This study is mainly concentrated among tourists who may be a local or a tourist who visited the district of Wayanad, Kerala, India

**II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Tourism products are experiential⁽²⁰⁾: Intangible and composite in nature, inseparable therefore difficult, or even impossible to be physically evaluated before purchase. As a result, their purchases are considered risky, and information intensive in terms of their decision making process (McIntosh et al. 1995; Holloway 2004; Middleton et al. 2009; Huang et al. 2010). Especially in times of economic turndowns, such as the 2008-2013 global financial crisis, when consumers attempt to economize on holiday trips, information search is becoming even more intensive (Bronner and de Hoog 2013). To reduce the purchase associated risk and cope with the information intensive decision making, consumers search for information in a variety of sources (Crotts 1999; Gursoy and McCleary 2004; Chung and Buhalis 2008).

The Internet's interactivity, customization, and vast information resources provided tailored search and content to users, being able to cover almost any idiosyncratic preference (Newhagen and Rafaeli 1996). As a natural consequence, the Web soon became one of the most effective means for potential tourists to search for information (Werthner and Klein 1999). However, despite the existence of numerous online sources, information from other consumers who already have experienced the particular product, and are willing to provide information, is considered as the most preferred source and the most influential in the context of travel-related decision making (Crotts 1999). At the same time, there are concerns that the vast amount of information available on the Web causes an information overload, impacting negatively on users' ability to locate information that is relevant to their needs (Radosevich 1997; Pan and Fesenmaier 2006; Mintel 2014).

The Internet, and in particular Web 2.0⁽⁸⁾, provides to consumers a new communication platform similar to that of word of mouth that also empowers consumers (Pan et al. 2007). Social media⁽⁹⁾, apart from their popularity as generic tools enabling sharing of content and connection with others, are becoming increasingly important also in tourism, since: (a) Potential tourists rely on others' experiences for their decision making due to the experiential nature of tourism products (Litvin et al. 2008; Yoo et al. 2007), thus in an effort to decrease uncertainty and increase the exchange utility; and (b) Social media enable storytelling, a usual post-travel engagement in our travel culture, on a '24/7' basis⁽¹⁰⁾, not only to a larger audience, but also provide a sense of belonging into virtual travel communities (Gretzel et al. 2006).

Social media play a still increasing, important role in travel planning as information sources for potential travellers (Xiang and Gretzel 2010). Almost a fourth (23%) of US Internet users were "somewhat" or "significantly influenced" by social media for their travel related decisions⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾. When travelling to unfamiliar destinations, travel blogs were found to provide better advice than friends and relatives (Tan and Chen 2012; Lee and Gretzel 2014). Similarly, 31% of the Lonely Travel's Thorn Tree forum's threads seem to influence members' travel planning decisions (Arsal et al. 2010).

In parallel with the above advances in the area of social media, there are also major changes at the consumer level that impact consumer behaviour⁽¹³⁾. Changes in values and lifestyles, shorter leisure time, and search for value for money have led to a new breed of tourism consumers: More informed, more independent, and more individualistic⁽¹⁴⁾. At the same time, travel-related consumer behaviour has become increasingly contradictory (Marabella 2004). For example, consumers demonstrate contradicting holiday lifestyles within relatively short periods of time: they are willing to pay for luxury travel experiences⁽¹⁵⁾ but at the same time they search the web for the best hotel rate (Gretzel et al. 2006).

Accordingly to the WTO, "youth travel includes all independent trips for periods of less than one year by people aged 16-29 which are motivated, in part or in full, by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experience and/or benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities outside one's usual environment"⁽¹⁸⁾

Manipulating people's opinion⁽¹⁶⁾ through specific messages is very likely to occur in this form of media due to the high exposure to a complex and combined form for transmitting the information (Maioreescu M., 2013). There are also situations where the needed information might not reach its designed purpose due to the fact that the way it is presented does not fit the users proper profile for receiving it (Pamfilie et al., 2011).



2.1 Communication Strategies in Social Media

A careful research of users profile is therefore essential in order to be able to convey the desired message efficiently and to be able to strongly mark users' emotions. Sweeney and Craig consider that the four most important pillars in a successful communication strategy social media based are:

- Communicating with the consumer,
- Collaborating with the consumer,
- Educating the consumer,
- Entertaining the consumer.

Based on these frames, companies can build a successful strategy in order to better know their target clients, to determine more precisely their needs and expectations⁽¹⁷⁾. The purpose is, in the end, to be able to promote, efficiently and effectively, their products and services, but also, to be able to properly react when their products and services are affected by the bad publicity likely to arise from unhappy customers and expressed through social media. (Sweeney and Craig, 2011)

In order to be effective, a communication strategy has to be trustworthy and consistent with other information the users possess about those particular products and services, and not only mere advertising words (Vasiliiu, 2007).

The company needs also to take into consideration the fact that the targeted public⁽¹⁹⁾ may behave differently to the message and react in different ways. The following types of behavior may be encountered (Safco and Brake, 2009):

- Active
- Reviewer
- Viral
- Passive
- Indifferent

There are different types of communities acting in online environment, the communication strategy being influenced by these (Safco and Brake, 2009):

- Affinity based communities
- Inside social networks communities
- Inside company communities
- Vertical communities (people working in the same industries)
- Horizontal communities (people having the same expertise)

Studies of the self-congruity theory in consumer behavior show that "purchase decisions are affected by one's self-concept, with research into the theory generally indicating that consumers have more favorable attitudes towards⁽²⁰⁾ and are more likely to consummate purchase of products and brands (Malhotra, 1988; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987; Sirgy, 1982) perceived consistent with their actual self-image (how they see themselves to be) or ideal self-image (how they wish to be seen)." (Graeff as cited in Litvin et al, 2002, p. 81).

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is collecting data using Online questionnaires.

- **Primary Data:** For the conduct of this research Primary data was collected from the Online questionnaire method of Google form.
- **Sample Profile:** For the preparation of project report researcher had selected 50 samples at the time of collection of data. According to the topic a small size is only needed because survey is entirely concerned in a micro segmented level. For the collection of the required data researcher limited the sample size.

The questionnaire was constructed with 22 fateful and needed questions to explore maximum idea regarding the topic multiple choice questions are mainly used for preparing questionnaire with to answer it in easy way. The questions are constructed as a free method as open-ended researcher had also concentrated on putting questions into meaningful order and format.



- **Secondary Data:** Secondary data was collected from books and websites, journals and so on

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 01: Classification Of Respondents According To The Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	31	62%
Female	19	38%
Total	50	100%

From the above TABLE NO. 01 we can understand that the majority of respondents are male; 62% and the female respondents are just 38%. We know that men have more access to travel in the current situation of society so the study is more men oriented.

Table 02: Classification Of Respondents According To The Age Group

Age Group	Number Of Respondents	Percentage
20-25	43	86%
25-30	5	10%
30-35	2	4%
TOTAL	50	100%

From the above table we can figure out that most of the respondents (86%) are from the age group of 20-25. Only 10% of the respondents are from the age group of 25-30 and the remaining 4% are from the group of 30-35. This shows that youngsters are more addicted to social media and at the age of 20-25 and enjoy the domain of travel.

Table 03: Classification Of Respondents According To Their Occupation

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Student	18	36%
working	25	50%
Both	2	4%
None	5	10%
Total	50	100%

From the above table it shows that half of the respondents (50%) are working and 36% of them are students. Only 4% of the respondents are students as well as working. And 10% of them are neither students nor working. This shows that how economy is related to one's travel desires as one with a regular income is more capable of doing a tour of his own when compared to a student.

Table 04: Classification Of Respondents According To The Purpose Of Travel

Purpose	Number of respondents	Percentage
Leisure	17	34%
Business	2	4%
Meeting friends and relatives	28	56%
Others	3	6%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, we can understand that 34% of respondents travel for the purpose of Leisure, 4% of respondents travel for the purpose of Business, 56% of respondents travel for the purpose of Meeting friends and relatives and 6% of respondents for the other purpose. This shows that majority of people travel for the purpose of Meeting friends and relatives.

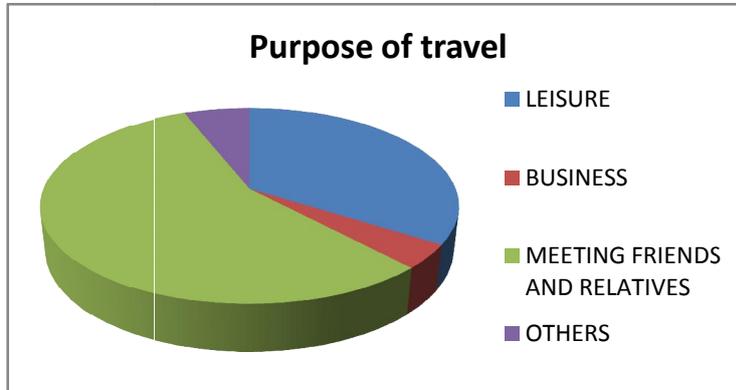


Table 05: Classification Of Tourist According To Their Purpose Of Choosing A Destination

Purpose of choosing a destination	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Adventure	15	30%
Night Life	0	0
Culture	0	0
Health	0	0
Nature	25	50%
Religion	10	20%
Rest	0	0
Sport	0	0
Total	50	100%

From the above table we can figure out that 30% of respondents choose a destination for Adventure, 50% of respondents choose a destination for exploring Nature and 20% of respondents choose a destination for Religion Purpose, None of them has chosen a destination for Night Life, Culture, Health, Rest and Sport. Thus we can see that majority of tourists choose a destination for exploring nature.

Table 06: Classification Of Tourists According To Their Type Of Tour

Type of Tour	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Independent Tour	48	96%
Guided Tour	2	4%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, we can understand that most of the respondents 96% of tourist choose their tour plan as Independent Tour and 4% of tourist prefer Guided tour. Thus most of the tourist prefer an Independent tour.

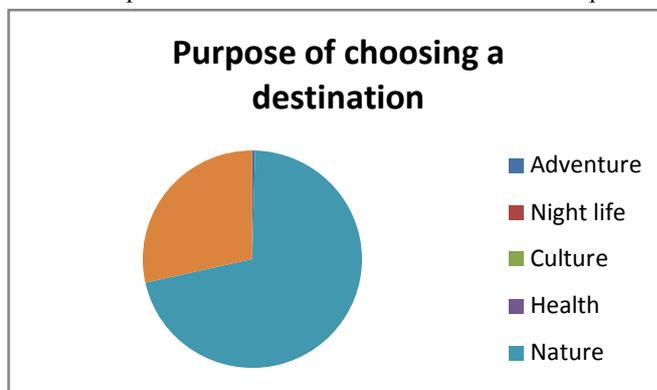




Table 07: Classification of respondents according to the reason that dissuade them from visiting a destination.

Reason to dissuade them from visiting a destination	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Crime	5	10%
Bad weather	30	60%
Language Barrier	2	4%
Others	13	26%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, we can understand that most of the respondents (60%) has dissuade from their travel due to Bad weather in particular destination,26% due to other reasons,10% due to crime and 4% due to Language barrier. Thus majority of people dissuade from their travel due to Bad weather.

Table 08: Classification of tourist who choose not to stay or eat because of the negative news about some hotels, restaurants and destinations in social media.

Preference of selection according to news in social media.	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	20	40%
No	30	60%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, it shows that 40% of Respondents choose particular stay or eating preference according to the negative news in social media, and 60% does not consider the negative news in social media. The majority of respondents says that they does not choose to stay or eat according to the negative impacts in social media.

Table 09: Classification Of Respondents In The Case Of Preference, Intension And Information Processing By The Impact Of Other Tourists Attitude In Social Media

Other Tourists Attitude	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	30%
Agree	20	40%
Neutral	10	20%
Disagree	3	6%
Strongly Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100%

From the above table we can figure out that most of the respondents 40% agree that preference, intension and information processing is by the impact of other people’s attitude in social media,30% Strongly agree to the situation, 20% is neutral to their opinion, 6% Disagree to the situation,4% Strongly Disagree to the situation.

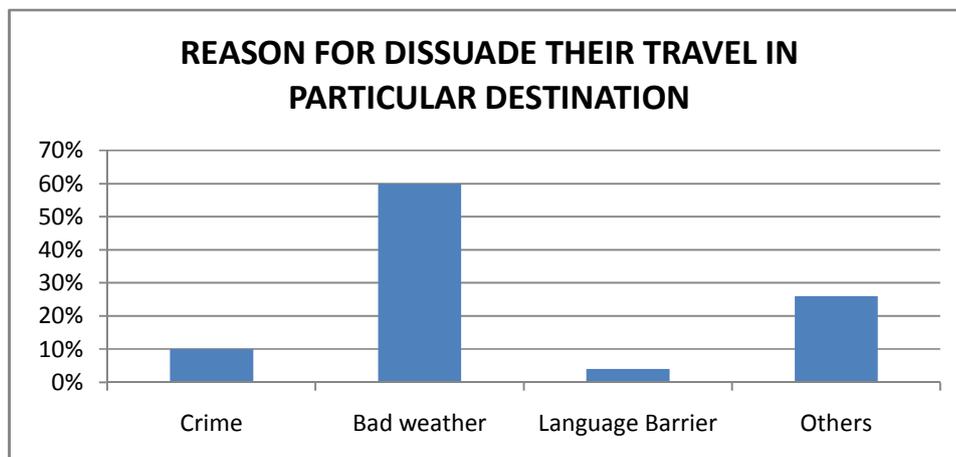




Table 10: Classification Of Respondents According To Other People’s Travel Experience And Recommendations Impact In Social Media

Impact	Number Of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	70%
No	15	30%
Total	50	100%

The above table shows that 70% of respondents is attracted and choose a destination by other people’s travel experience and recommendations,30% of respondents has no impact, so that we can clearly understand that majority of respondents has great impact on other people’s travel experience and recommendations.

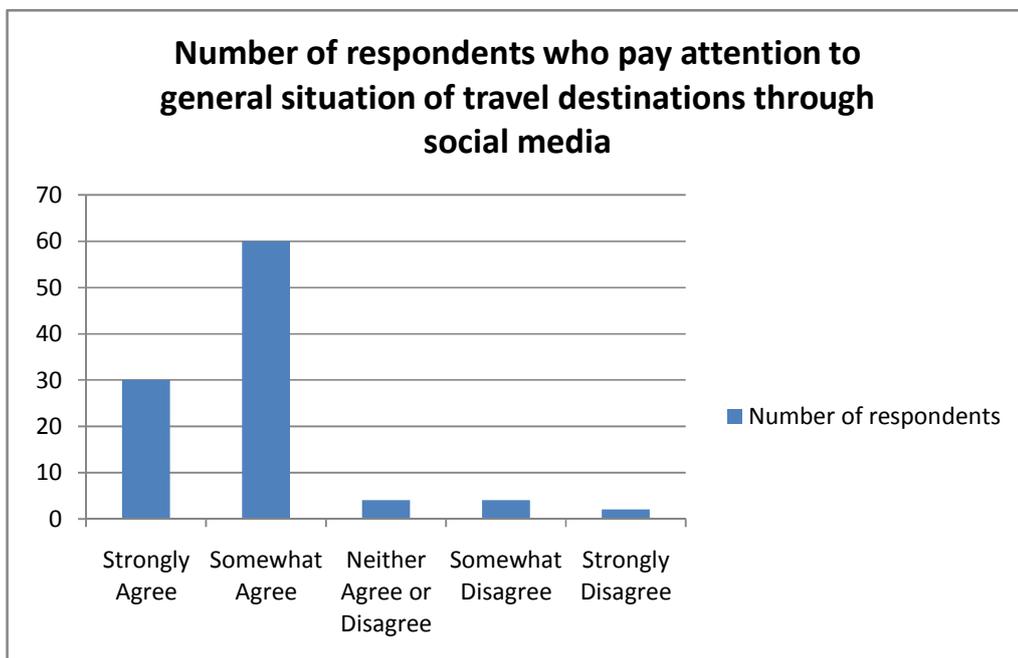


Table 11: Classification Of Respondents Who Pay Attention To The General Situation Of Travel Destinations, Accommodation, Conditions And Tourist Routes.

Attention of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	15	30%
Somewhat agree	30	60%
Neither Agree or Disagree	2	4%
Somewhat Disagree	2	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
Total	50	100%

From the above table we can understand that 60% of respondents somewhat pay attention to the general situation of travel destinations, accommodation, conditions and tourist routes through social media,30% strongly agree to the situation,4% neither agree or disagree to the situation,4% somewhat disagree to the situation and 2% of respondents Strongly Disagree to the statement. Thus majority of respondents pay attention to to the general situation of travel destinations, accommodation, conditions and tourist routes through social media.

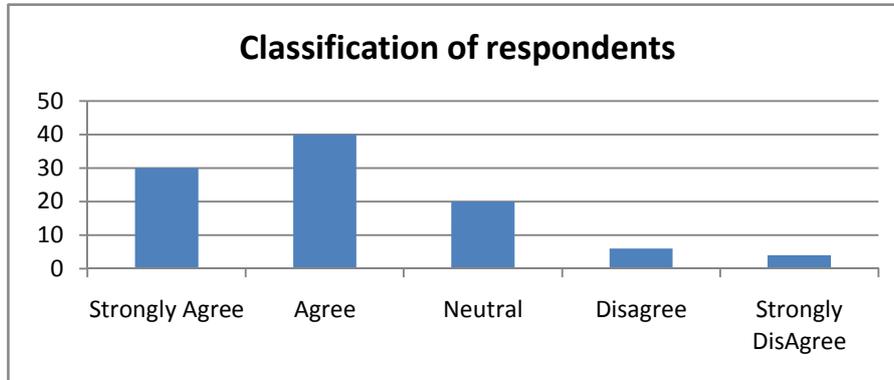


Table 12: Classification Of Respondents Who Upload Their Experience Of Travel In Social Media, Share And Interact With Social Media Users And Provide Guidance For Them

Uploading of Experience in Social Media	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	20	40%
No	30	60%

The above table shows that 40% of respondents upload their experience of travel in social media, share and interact with social media users and provide guidance for them,60% does not upload their experience. Thus majority of respondents does not upload their experience of travel in social media, share and interact with social media users and provide guidance for them.

Table 13: Classification Of Respondents Who Has Selected A Destination With The Help Of Social Media

Respondents who has Selected a Destination with the Help of Social Media	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	35	70%
No	15	30%
TOTAL	50	100%

The above table shows that 70% of respondents has selected their destinations with the help of social media.30% of respondents did not select their destination with the help of social media.Thus the most majority of respondents choose their destination with the help of social media.

Table 14: Classification Of Respondents Whose Travel And Stay Is Influenced By Social Media

Influences of Social Media in Travel and Stay	Number of Respondents	Average
Strongly Agree	1	2%
Somewhat Agree	4	8%
Neither Agree or Disagree	4	8%
Somewhat Disagree	32	64%
Strongly Disagree	9	18%
Total	50	100%

The above shows that 2% of respondents who travel and stay is influenced by social media,8% of respondents somewhat agree to the situation,8% of respondents neither agree or disagree to the statement,64% that is majority of respondents shows somewhat disagree that the travel and stay is not influenced by social media and 18% of respondents strongly disagree to the statement.



Table 15: Classification Of Respondents According To The Preference Of Choosing A Destination

Preference	Number of Respondents	Average
CUSTOMER REVIEWS	27	54%
ADVERTISEMENTS	23	46%
TOTAL	50	100%

From the above table, it shows that the number of people who are considering customer reviews (54%) is greater than people who considering advertisements (46%). Here we can understand that people give more importance to experiences rather than the company’s own advertisements for boosting the business

Table 16: Classification Of Respondents According To The Preferred Social Media As A Way To Collect Information About Travel.

Social Media as a Way to Collect Information	Number of Respondents	Average
Yes	35	70%
No	15	30%
Total	50	100%

The table shows that 70% of respondents agree that social media is a way to collect information about travel.30% of respondents do not agree to the situation. Thus, the majority of respondents say that social media is a way to collect information about travel.

Table 17: Classification Of Respondents Who Check Details About A Destination In Social Media

Check Details in Social Media	Number of Respondents	Average
Yes	33	66%
No	17	34%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, we can see that a majority number of respondents (66%) check details about a destination in social media sites and the rest of them (34%) do not check details about a destination in social media. This shows that social media sites are now widely used as a major media for collecting details about a destination.

Table18: Classification Of Respondents Who Have chosen A Destination By The Reference Of Social Media

Chosen a Destination	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	56%
No	22	44%
Total	50	100%

From the above table, we can understand that 56 % of respondents have a past experience of choosing a destination by the reference of social media and the rest (44%) do not have any past experience with it. This shows that social media can influence a tourist to visit an unknown destination.

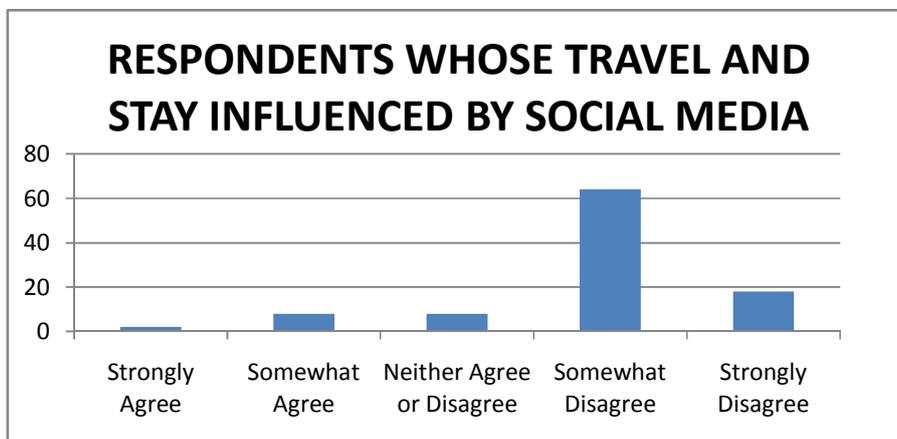




Table 19: Classification between respondents who has found out difference between the travel experience and the travel information provided by social media.

Difference Between Travel Experience and Travel Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	40%
Somewhat Agree	25	50%
Neither Agree or Disagree	1	2%
Somewhat Disagree	2	4%
Strongly Disagree	2	4%
Total	50	100

The above table illustrates that 40% of respondents strongly agree that there is a difference between the travel experience and the travel information provided by social media,50% somewhat agree that there is difference,2% neither or disagree to the situation,4% somewhat disagree to the statement and 4% strongly disagree that there is differences. Thus we get the conclusion that there is a difference between the travel experience and the travel information provided by social media.

Table 20: Classification Of Respondents According To Their Tour Plan

Respondents Plan	Number of Respondents	Percentage
With a Tour plan	37	74%
Without a Tour Plan	13	26%
Total	50	100

The above table shows that 74% of respondents travel according to a tour plan,26% of respondents say that they travel without a tour plan. Thus majority of respondents states that they travel with a tour plan.

Table 21: Classification of respondents who had got detailed information about food, accomodation, travel, shopping and entertainment in social media.

Availability of Detailed Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	30	60%
Somewhat Agree	16	32%
Neither Agree or Disagree	1	2%
Somewhat Disagree	2	4%
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
Total	50	100

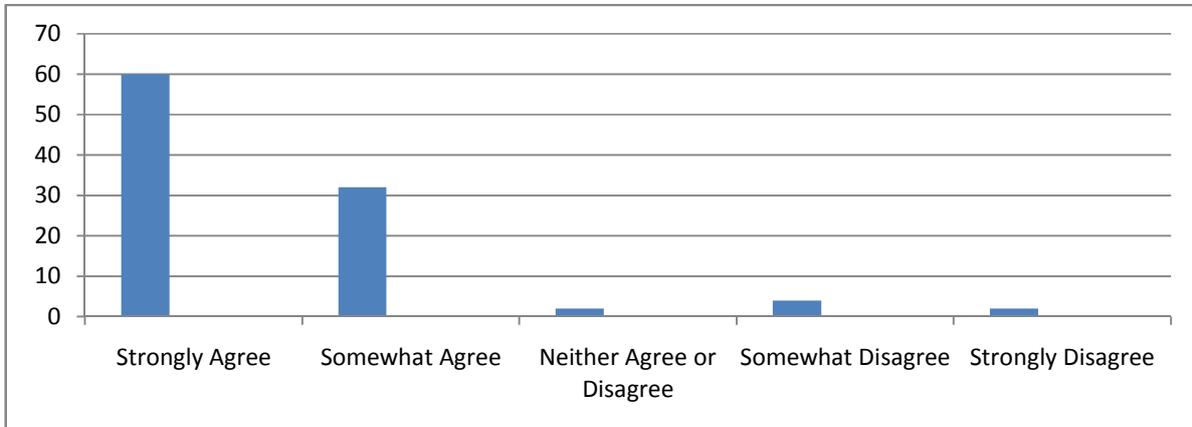
The above-mentioned table displays that 60% of respondents mention that they had got detailed information from social media,32% have got only somewhat details,2% has no opinion,4% says that they somewhat disagree to the statement and 2% has not got any detailed information in social media. The majority of respondents say that they had gotten detailed information from social media.

Table 22:Classification Of Tourist Who Has Impacted Travel Mode By Information In Social Media(Self Travel ,Group Travel, Self Driving Etc)

Impact	Number o Respondents	Percentage
Yes	26	32%
No	34	68%
Total	50	100

The above table illustrates that 32% of respondents says that they had impacted travel mode by information that is provided in the social media,68% says that they had not impacted. Thus the majority of respondents says that they had not impacted travel mode by the detailed information in social media.

Graphical representation of respondents who had got detailed information about food, accommodation, travel, shopping and entertainment in social media.



V. DATA SUMMARY

- Most number of respondents have a particular job, they are comparatively large in number than students.
- Most respondents travel for meeting friends and relative
- Tourists are more interested in natural beauty and adventure.
- Tourists are more capable of doing their own tours rather than depending upon any assistance.
- People mostly reject a particular destination due to bad weather conditions.
- The majority of respondents say that they do not choose to eat according to the negative impacts of social media
- Most of the respondents pay attention to the general situation of destinations, accommodations, conditions, and tourism through social media
- Most tourist does not upload their travel experience in social media, share and interact with social media users and provide guidance for them.
- The selection of tourist destinations is mostly with the help of social media.
- Most tourist travel and stay is not influenced by social media
- Most people give more importance to experiences rather than company’s own advertisements
- Social media is a way to collect information about travel for most of the tourists
- Collecting details about destinations is by the use of social media
- Social media can influence a tourist to visit an unknown destination
- Most people conclude that there is a difference between the travel information provided by social media
- Most respondents make a pre-tour plan
- Detailed information can be obtained from Social Media
- The majority of the respondents say that they had not impacted travel mode by the detailed information in social media.

VI. WAY FORWARD

- Popularise unknown tourist destinations through social media
- It could be a better move if the developers of such social media sites start to monitor fake information posted in social media about destination.
- Since the tourist depends upon other people’s attitude and experience the posts which the people upload should be clear and true.
- The advertisement of the company about a destination should concentrate more on customer-oriented other than profit-oriented so that customers can trust the primary source of a destination rather than get cheated.



- Since most people find the difference between the actual destinations and pre knowledge that has been uploaded in social media, the details regarding a destination must be clear in case of information and quality.

VII. CONCLUSION

The travel desires of people started from many years ago. The younger stage is the time when people get more freedom to explore the world beyond imagination. This study explores the concept of social networks as a new channel for promoting tourism products and as a tool to influence the intention of young tourists. Social media continues to grow and increasingly influence many social and economic aspects of the tourism industry. Social media is fundamentally changing the way travelers and tourists search, find, read and trust, as well as collaboratively produce information about tourism suppliers and tourism destinations. Most of youngsters choose destinations according to the demand of the destination as they don't want to spoil their tours. The current scenario shows that social media has become very influential among young tourists as it is now the most helpful and more transparent media for sharing information. Comparatively the negative impacts are very less because the usage of social media become positive or negative according to how the user uses it.

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