

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION FOR TRAVEL MOTIVATION ON TOURISTS

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how social media might encourage travel within Pakistan and promote tourism. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework, it examines the effects of travel motivation and social media tourism marketing on travelers' real behavior. Deductive reasoning was used in a quantitative, descriptive study design. The final sample of 80 respondents was chosen using multi-stage probability sampling, and the population was made up of followers of five Facebook pages run by Pakistani tour operator companies that are registered. A systematic, closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale was used to gather data. The findings indicated that the majority of respondents were male (77.3%), while females accounted for 22.7% of the sample, showing a higher participation of male tourists. The findings highlight the significance of social media as a tool for influencing traveler behavior by confirming that social media tourism promotion has a favorable and significant impact on travelers' real behavior. The study also found that tourists' actual behavior (ABT) is greatly influenced by their behavioral intentions (BIT). This study concludes that social media and travel motivation have a major impact on Pakistani visitors' behavioral intentions and actual travel behavior. The results underline the necessity for tourism to use motivation-aligned, planned social media marketing and support the Theory of Planned Behavior.

Keywords: Impact, Social media promotion, Travel motivation, Tourists

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting travel, significantly impacting travelers' behaviors and motivations in recent years. The transition from travel intention to actual visitation is influenced by a blend of psychological factors and digital engagement, particularly on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These platforms provide visual stimulation and

destination awareness, while also facilitating influencer marketing and user-generated content that emotionally engage potential tourists, thereby enhancing their motivation and intention to travel. Research indicates that social media tourism promotion significantly shapes travel intentions. For instance, it was found that short-form videos from TikTok influencers, showcasing

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authentic and compelling experiences, enhance youth travel motivation. These visual narratives often evoke strong emotions, which, in turn, strengthen the desire to travel. Similarly, it was highlighted that the quality and reliability of tourism-related content on social media positively influence travel intentions [1]. Content that resonates with a user's self-perception fosters trust and increases the likelihood of action. Travel motivation, encompassing both internal (push) and external (pull) factors, plays a critical role in determining whether travelers will act on their intentions. It was asserted that social media significantly impacts travel intentions through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—key components of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Peer pressure and online interactions further shape these elements, underscoring the importance of social media platforms in influencing travel preferences [2-4].

It was examined the effects of online celebrity-driven destination content and found that the relationship between social media use and actual travel behavior is mediated by place attachment and perceived value. Users who form an emotional connection with a destination through online content are more likely to translate their intentions into actions. However, not all intentions result in action; emotional involvement and satisfaction serve as mediators in this process. A study highlighted that travelers' satisfaction with online marketing materials is crucial for converting their travel plans into real actions. Furthermore, research published in the *Journal of Small Business Strategy* emphasized that targeted social media advertising significantly enhances tourist visitation, especially for rural destinations [5].

To effectively influence actual travel behavior, tourism marketers must not only

raise awareness but also foster emotional engagement, establish credibility, and ensure consistent, high-quality messaging. In recent years, Pakistan has gained popularity as a travel destination. Developed economies are aggressively expanding their tourism sectors to capture market share, benefiting national economic development. This study aims to explore how social media can be leveraged to promote travel and tourism in Pakistan. Additionally, it will delve into the factors that influence travelers' planning processes, which have been underexplored in previous research [6, 7].

The role of social media in tourism promotion has garnered significant attention, with research indicating a positive correlation between social media engagement and actual visitor behavior. A literature review shows that social media affects traveler behavior and supports the marketing of tourist destinations. Due to the extensive information it provides and the active engagement of its users, social media serves as a powerful tool for destination marketing, influencing travelers' choices and actions. Moreover, social media and the Internet significantly impact tourists' intentions and behaviors, shaping how they seek information and make decisions. The way travelers use social media to guide their decisions can substantially affect tourism-related facts and schedules. Research indicates that tourists' opinions and decisions are swayed by content generated by friends and influencers on social media platforms. To effectively address online reviews and boost their social media presence, tourism providers must create a strategic tourism management plan. Furthermore, traditional travelers seeking travel information should recognize the growing importance of social media in travel-related searches [8].

Another crucial factor that influences tourism behavior is tourist motivation. Studies have shown a direct correlation between tourists'

motivations and their behaviors. For instance, it was found that travelers' attitudes toward a destination, which impact their behavior, are positively linked to their motivation to travel. Additionally, it was determined that motivation serves as a strong mediator of tourist behavior, directly affecting satisfaction and future actions. Since travelers are likely to choose destinations based on the impressions conveyed by social media, the marketing image plays a vital role in destination promotion. The perception created by this image significantly influences destination selection, with social networks continuing to shape these perceptions. By sharing content on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, potential travelers can highlight specific locations and enhance their desire to visit unique attractions. Moreover, user-generated content offers reliable and diverse information that boosts a destination's appeal [9].

It was examined how travelers' behavioral intentions are shaped by their perceptions of online content. Their findings reveal that visitors' satisfaction with online information directly influences their travel intentions and their willingness to share experiences electronically, which subsequently affects their tourist behavior. In the realm of e-loyalty it was discovered that factors such as information quality and ease of use on travel websites significantly enhance visitors' e-loyalty and e-satisfaction. These features foster positive behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, underscoring the importance of reliable information in driving repeat business and referrals. The study highlighted that travelers' purchase intentions are significantly influenced by their trust in digital content and the legitimacy of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), emphasizing the critical role of trustworthy information in decision-making.

Theory of Planned Behavior forms the foundation of this study, highlighting how

behavioral intention impacts the relationship between media tourism advertising, social media exploration, and travelers' actions. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), three main factors influence an individual's behavior: personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These factors determine subsequent actions based on one's attitudes and social norms [10].

Our analysis reveals that social media tourism promotions and travel motivations significantly shape travelers' attitudes, their perceptions of friends and peers (subjective norms), and their sense of control over decision-making (perceived behavioral control). The effectiveness of media marketing for a destination and the desire to travel are the two primary factors affecting tourists' plans. When destination marketing resonates emotionally with tourists, aligns with the opinions of their friends and family, and instills confidence, strong travel plans are formed. Consequently, when these factors align, individuals are more likely to travel to the destination. This theoretical framework enables the researcher to explore how social media promotes travel and influences travelers' motivation to seek destinations, particularly in Pakistan [11].

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach for analysis. It adopts a deductive framework guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, with variables derived from existing literature. The population targeted consists of Pakistani tourists using social media platforms, specifically Facebook, for planning their trips. Due to time and resource constraints, the study focuses on tourists engaging with Facebook pages managed by five registered tour operator companies in Pakistan [12].

The Department of Tourist Services, Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, Pakistan,

identified the official Facebook pages of selected companies. This figure was used to determine the study's population. A multi-stage probability sampling method was employed, and the sample size of 80 respondents was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan table. In the first stage, five tour operator companies were randomly selected. In the second stage, followers of these Facebook pages were invited to participate in the study through a Google survey form, and their consent was obtained. Data was collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire that utilized a 5-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the tool were confirmed through a pilot study with 80 respondents, along with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis [13-17].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed various analytical methods, including demographic analysis (such as gender and age), one-way ANOVA, descriptive statistics, reliability tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis (following Hayes' process) to explore potential associations between variables. It was presented a detailed demographic information, indicating that 77.3% of respondents were male and 22.7% were female. Additionally, 52.5% of respondents were aged 18-30, 30.4% were aged 30-40, 17.1% were aged over 40.

It was showed an insignificant association between gender and actual behavior in tourism (ABT) ($\text{sig} = .71$). Similarly, it was indicated no significant association between age and ABT ($\text{sig} = .52$). Cronbach's alpha is commonly used to assess reliability and internal consistency among diverse Likert scales. It is crucial to confirm that all constructs have a reliability score of at least 0.65. The social media tourism promotion (SMPT) is measured with three items, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7. Travel motivation (TM) is assessed with four items, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.59.

Correlation analysis reveals the relationships between various variables. This study analyzes the associations among several constructs, including social media tourism promotion (SMPT), travel motivation (TM), actual behavior of tourists (ABT), and behavioral intention of tourists (BIT). It was indicated a positive and significant correlation between SMPT and ABT ($r = .39$). Additionally, a positive and significant link exists between TM and ABT ($r = .47$). There is also a significant correlation between BIT and ABT ($r = .52$) at a 0.01 significance level. [18-23]

Recent studies reinforce the idea that travel motivation is a crucial predictor of tourist behavior. For instance, it was argued that travel motivation significantly shapes tourists' attitudes, which in turn affects their behavior. Additionally, this study identifies destination image as an intervening variable between travel motivation and tourist behavior, corroborating motivational factors in tourism found in other research. Similarly, it was examined the connection between travel motivation and the behavioral intentions of domestic tourists, establishing that push and pull motivational factors significantly influence overall satisfaction, which in turn affects domestic tourists' actual behavior. This supports the argument that travel motivation directly precedes tourist behavior, especially when coupled with positive travel experiences [24].

The study confirms that BIT significantly impacts ABT. This finding aligns with the theory of planned behavior, which suggests that intentions are the most immediate determinants of behavior. Previous research has also indicated that tourists' intentions to visit a destination strongly predict their actual travel behavior. While these contributions are validated, the study has limitations. It focuses solely on tourists interacting with the Facebook pages of selected tour operators, which may limit the generalizability of the

findings to other social media platforms or populations. Additionally, the reliance on quantitative data and a descriptive research design, though structured and statistically rigorous, restricts a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for tourists' behaviors and motivations [25].

The diverse and subtle elements impacting travelers' choices and behaviors cannot be adequately captured by quantitative data alone. Contextual factors that influence tourism behaviors include the availability and usage of social media platforms, cultural perspectives on travel, and the degree of technological adoption, all of which can vary greatly between geographical areas. As a result, it is unclear whether these findings may be applied in different situations.

Since the current study concentrated on internal travel, there is a great deal of room for more research from a global standpoint, especially in relation to social media's role in promoting foreign travel in Pakistan. Longitudinal studies are also required to monitor how visitor behavior changes over time and to confirm if changes in the independent variables affect the dependent variables, especially when it comes to actual conduct.

CONCLUSION

Within Pakistan's tourism industry, this study provides insightful information about the complex relationships among social media, travel motivation, and visitor behavior. In particular, the results show how behavioral

intentions moderate the relationship between travel motivation (TM), social media tourism promotion (SMTP), and actual tourist behavior (AB), confirming the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This emphasizes how important social media is in influencing traveler behavior, serving as a forum for establishing and reiterating behavioral intentions in addition to being a promotional tool. The study also emphasizes how critical it is to comprehend and address travel motivations since they have a direct impact on visitor behavior. Practically speaking, these results imply that travel agencies and marketers should use social media in a smart manner and modify their messaging to suit the interests of travelers. Tourism organizations can improve engagement and success in the competitive tourism market by focusing on these factors, which will help them impact behavioral intentions and ultimately drive real tourist behavior.

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