SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON TOURISM IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Social media has been playing an essential role in our daily life. As tourism has become the fastest-growing company in all over the world. Tourism also becomes a great source of annual earning, cultural exchange, economic growth, jobs for the local community, infrastructure development, employment opportunities, exchange of goods, and foreign exchange nationwide. Usually, travelers attract mountains, peaks, lakes, snows, rivers, beaches, lovely valleys, glaciers, deserts, food, motels, hotels, historical places, hiking trails, culture, plains, Northern areas, religious, seasonal varieties, unique art, and handicraft. Pakistan is a very beautiful country and it is blessed with all types of beauty and international traveler's tourists came here to visit these beautiful places which are itself better for the tourism industry and to make it more developed and grow faster. But somehow Pakistan had faced some of the issues in the tourism industry that is some people and even some countries show Pakistan the worst image internationally which is effecting our tourism industry and in recent past years, there are some security conditions which is somehow created problems for the international travelers as well as domestic travelers this need to be sorted out so that Pakistan can become the safest place for tourists destination. So, basically social media can easily play a vital role to encourage tourism in Pakistan. Social media platform and even tourism websites which help visitors providing information and cost of the trip. We have generated a questionnaire that gives us information regarding the usage of social media for travel planning and results revealed that the vast majority of people use social media sites for travel planning and even the cost of trips.

Keywords: Tourism, social media, travel sites, information, economic growth, infrastructure, cultural exchange, destinations, posting pictures, traveling planning, blogs, social media advertising, negative image, vloggers
JEL Codes: A10, Z30, Z32, Z33

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan comes under one of those few countries that are blessed with a diversity of destinations, four climates for tourism attraction. Pakistan has the potential to boost its tourism industry for both international and domestic travelers. World Tourism and Travel Council predicted that the Pakistan tourism industry has great potential to grow around $39.8 billion. According to the report released by the World Economic Forum, the total contribution of tourism in 2017 was about $19.4 billion and 6.9% of the GDP. In 2018 the contribution of tourism in GDP is 7.1%. As British Backpacker society considered Pakistan as the world's best travel destination in 2018, he narrates Pakistan as the friendliest country on earth due to its people hospitality and he beautifully described the mountains regions that it is beyond the imagination. According to Forb's magazine, Pakistan has attained a prominent position in the world's ten potential tourist destinations. According to the Tourism Competitiveness Index released by World Economic Forum in 2019 Pakistan was ranked 121 out of 140 countries. The results show that Pakistan is least competitive in terms of tourism because the tourism industry needs improvement regarding safety and security. Because in past decades Pakistan's image in the world is negative due to security issues but the reality is much different than the local and even international media is showing the bad image of Pakistan, so basically stop relying on these media because ground realities are different. The media becomes a strong barrier for international tourists to travel to Pakistan and even this also leads to discouraging domestic tourists as well. As famous vloggers, Beck smiles and Gabriella is using social media platforms to show a better image of Pakistan and share their experience and beautifully describe the natural beauty of Pakistan, so basically, they share their valid and authentic views and tend to break the biased media coverage. Rosie Gabrielle is a Canadian vlogger she used to explore the world destinations alone on her bike recently she visits Pakistan. These vloggers encouraging people to visit Pakistan and help Pakistan to open the door for domestic and international travelers.

International and even domestic visitors need safety and security, better health facility, and better hygiene food these are the important measures which need to be improved to move upward in the list of indexes. After all, tourism would be a game-changer for struggling economies like Pakistan. As the tourism industry is the largest source of employment opportunities, cultural exchange, economic growth, jobs for the local community, infrastructure development, employment opportunities, exchange of goods, and government income through taxes which is mainly collected from the hotels and motels sector. If international and domestic tourists increase it will increase the activity of sectors include hotels, motels, restaurants, cafes, air transport, and road transport. As the tourism industry is growing social media plays an essential role because of advertising and marketing tools in the tourism industry. As social media becomes the mode of attraction among people, they exchange information and ideas. As the tourism industry relies on social media because of destination reputations regarding the opinions of people in which they share their personal experiences they had on that specific destination, which may be negative or positive for that specific destination or spot and cost of that specific destination which we can easily get through social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp Twitter, and travel planning websites. Social media platforms are also used for business objectives as they are using these platforms to reach customers. By using social media, tourists can be updated about road conditions, weather conditions of any tourism destination. The main objective of this research is to show the social media impact in promoting tourism in Pakistan, as this research only focuses on social media as a source of information regarding destination planning, cost of trips and experiences of the travelers to inspire the tourist all across the world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a plethora of literature available on social media impact on tourism from the perspective of developing and developed economies. This topic has been discussed by many authors in the literature. There are some key studies we will discuss in this section that deal with the social media impact on the tourism industry in the context of Pakistan. We include some of the important studies as according to Kumar & Singh (2019) the tourism industry helps to generate employment opportunities, economic growth and also tends to support the gross domestic product. The tourism industry is competing in terms of foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities for people, reduction in poverty, develop infrastructure, and generating government revenue (Surugiu & Surugiu, 2013). The tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing industry which is one of the best ways to improve economic growth not only in developing countries like Pakistan but also good for developed countries.

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Moreover, Fotis et al., (2012) the opinions of the people in which they share their experiences are anticipated to be more authentic as compared to tourism official sites, media advertisements, and travel agents. According to Kim et al., (2013) did a study to do the investigation that how social media affect the perceptions of tourist and how it affects the affection of tourist during their trip. The study shows that social media platform such as Facebook tends to affect tourist affection and feelings. Sahin & Sengün (2015) did a study to investigate the impact of social media on tourism and the study was based on a survey questionnaire on students of Atilim University to evaluate the use of social media among youngsters or youth. Moreover, the evaluation shows that social media has a significant impact on tourism in both positive and negative ways as well and the result also shows that tourism planning by the young generation is strongly influenced by comments of users on that specific destination picture and personal experiences, they share with family and friends that they had on that spot or destination.

According to Jamal & Getz (1995), tourism built a relationship between tourist and local members of that country through interaction and these relationships later becomes a reason for business deals in economic terms which somehow better for country economic development. There is the widespread use of social media among consumers worldwide for decision making, interaction among dealers and consumers and it is one of the important tools for information nowadays (Ali, 2011; Solomon, 2014; Ali, 2015; Ali, 2018). According to Fetscherin & Stephano (2016), developed economies are pursuing and tend to enhance their tourism industry more so that there will be an increase in the value of market share which is better for the economic growth of a country.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are so many studies available that deals with the impact of social media on tourism. These all studies are related to developed countries and developing countries. This research has been made in the context of Pakistan. We conducted a primary database study that is a survey or questionnaire. The questionnaire was generated from google forms and it was effective tools for primary data collection. The questionnaire survey is distributed among 500 participants out of which only 300 responses were received by the participants. The link to the questionnaire was shared on Facebook groups and WhatsApp groups. A random sampling technique was used in this research. The majority of questions consist of yes or no option for participants to instant reply. The basic objective of this survey is to find out the effectiveness of social media on travel planning in Pakistan and then suggest some suitable policies to enhance the tourism industry of Pakistan. We are using the following formula;

Likelihood to recommend $= (\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_{5\ldots\ldots\ldots} + \beta_k X_k)$

(Probe Y= *social media use)*

$$Log\ (P/1\text{-}P) = a + b_1 x_1 + b_2 x_2 + b_3 x_3 + b_4 x_4 + b_5 x_5 + b_6 x_6 + b_7 x_7 + b_8 x_8 + b_9 x_9 + b_{10} x_{10} + b_{11} x_{11} + b_{12} x_{12} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

x_1 =Social media for information

x_2 =Social media for cost checking

x_3 =Postponed the trip due to social media

x_4 =Social media in trip finalization

x_5 =Social media suggestion

x_6 =Social media promotion of tourism

x_7 =The trip on my own

x_8 =The trip by getting inspired by the Pictures

x_9 =Pictures posted by the tourists

x_{10} =Instagram posts

x_{11} =YouTube video

x_{12} =Response from your friends   and ε =Error term

So, we can write an equation as:

Social media use =f (social media for information, social media for cost checking, postponed the trip due to social media, social media in trip finalization, social media suggestion, social media promotion of tourism, the

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trip on my own, the trip by getting inspired by the pictures, pictures posted by the tourists, Instagram posts, YouTube video, response from your friends) + Error term

Social media use $_i$

$_=$*social media for information $_i$ + social media for cost checking $_i$ + postponed the trip due to social media $_i$ + social media in trip finalization $_i$ + social media suggestion $_i$ + social media promotion of tourism $_i$ + the trip on my own $_i$ + the trip by getting inspired by the pictures $_i$ + pictures posted by the tourists $_i$ + Instagram posts $_i$ + YouTube video $_i$ + response from your*

Friend's $_i$ + ε $_i$

IV. FINDINGS

The pie chart shown below was automatically generated by google forms. The data was collected based on research questions. We will discuss the responses of people, all responses will be explicitly shown in the form of a pie chart and bar chart. The below pie chart shows the use of social media for travel-related information, which clearly shows that 90.7% of people use social media for travel-related information while 9.3% of people don't use social media for travel-related information.
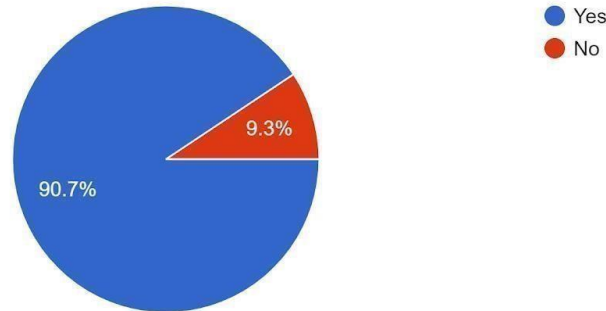

Figure 1: social media for travel-related information

The second question of our survey belonged to the preference to use the information provided by social media which shows that 89.3% of people prefer to use the information provided by social media while 10.7% of people don't prefer to use the information provided by social media. The following pie chart is giving us an overview of both categories.
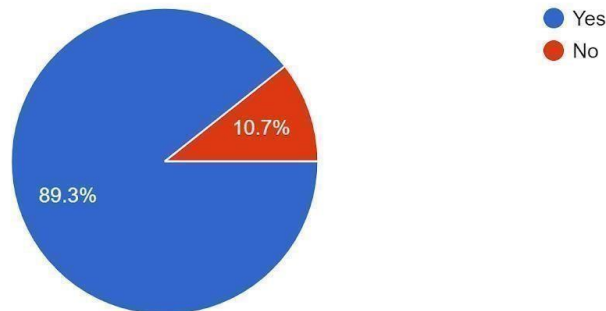

Figure 2: information provided by social media

The next question belongs to the use of social media platforms to get information regarding the cost of the trip. The pie chart below shows that 87.3% of people use social media platforms to get information regarding the cost

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of trips while 12.7% of people don't use social media platforms to get information regarding the cost of trips. The majority of participants use social media to get information regarding the cost of the trip.

Do you use social media platforms to get information regarding the cost of trip?
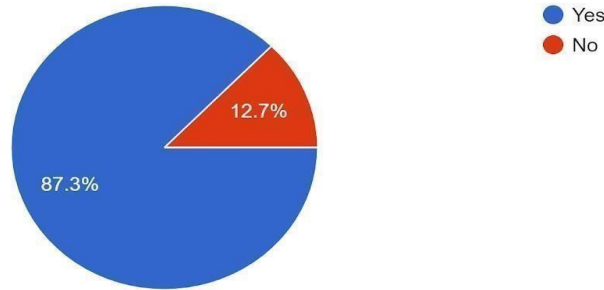300 responses

Figure 3: social media for cost checking

The next question of the survey was related to the usefulness of social media platforms for travel planning. The below pie chart shows 88.7% of people find social media platforms effective for travel planning while 11.3% of people don't find social media platforms effective for travel planning. The majority of people find social media fruitful for travel planning. The following pie chart shows the responses in a compact way.

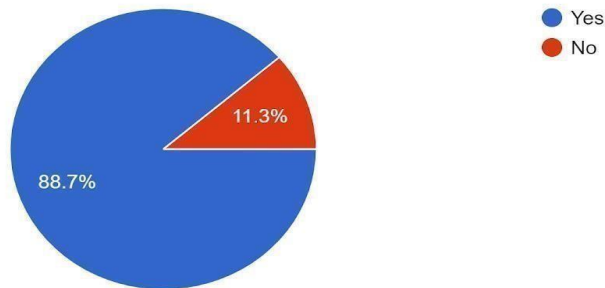Do you find social media platforms useful for travel planning?
300 responses

Figure 4: use of social media for travel planning

The next question deals with the favorite tourist spot after noticing on social media platforms. However, the below pie chart shows that 62% of people like Northern areas after noticing it on social media while 38% of people like historical places after noticing it on social media. The majority of participants like to visit Northern areas.

Which one of the following became your favorite tourist spot after noticing it on social media platforms?
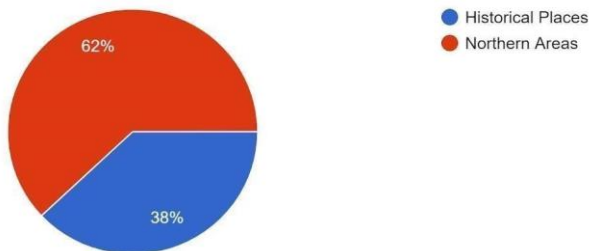300 responses

Figure 5: favorite tourist spot

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The next question deals with the finalization of the destination by using social media. The given pie chart below shows that 87.7% of people use social media platforms to finalize a destination they are intended to visit while 12.3% of people don't use social media platforms for finalization of destination. The following pie chart shows the responses in a compact way.

Did social media platforms ever helped you out to finalize a destination you are intended to visit?
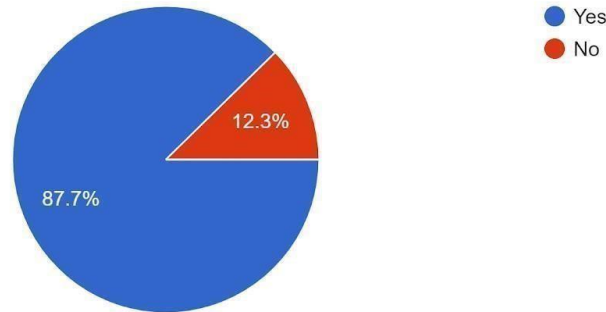300 responses

Figure 6: social media platforms to finalize the destination

The next survey question is about sources of information people used last time when they went to a destination to spend their holidays. The graph shows that 54% of people went to a destination to spend holidays last time was their perspective they selected that specific destination from their own while 55.7% of people went to a destination to spend holidays last time was getting inspired by the pictures posted by the tourist.

Which of the following sources of information you used last time when you went to a destination to spend your holidays?
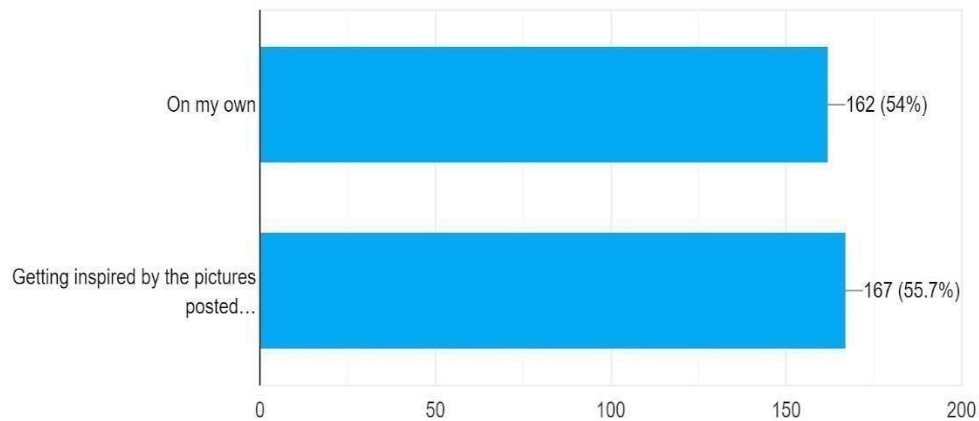300 responses

Figure 7: information used last time when went to a destination to spend holidays

The next question deals with what inspires people on social media to finalize their destination. The pie chart below shows that 70% of people finalize their destination by seeing pictures posted by the tourist and 18.7% of people inspire through Instagram posts while 11.3% of people inspire by YouTube videos.

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What inspires you most on social media to finalize your destination?
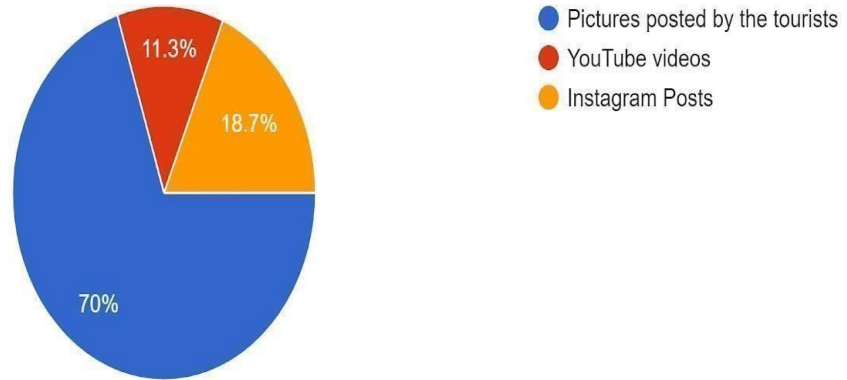300 responses

Figure 8: social media inspiration to finalize your destination

After the keen analysis of survey responses, we can make some general inferences that there is a great social media impact on the tourism industry in Pakistan. Social media play a vital role in the tourism sector. The majority of people visit social media applications and tourism websites for Travel planning.

V. ESTIMATIONS

Results of Logistic Regression Model

Dependent Variable = Social Media Use (Yes=1, otherwise zero)

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	z-Statistic	P-Value
Social media for cost checking	1.260505	0.798557	1.578479	0.1145
Social media for information	1.789649	0.710291	2.519601	0.0117
Postponed trip due to social media	1.049570	0.807834	1.299240	0.1939
Social media in trip finalization	3.655507	0.756125	4.834525	0.0000
Social media suggestions	-0.441121	0.902836	-0.488595	0.6251
Social media promotion of tourism	0.131748	0.794827	0.165756	0.8683
the trip on my own	0.978027	0.918710	1.064565	0.2871
the trip by getting inspired by the pictures	1.780673	0.991922	1.795173	0.0726
Pictures posted by the tourists	-3.128767	1.243893	-2.515303	0.0119
Instagram posts	-3.903661	1.399538	-2.789248	0.0053
YouTube videos	-4.443091	1.368719	-3.246168	0.0012
Response from your friends	-0.628617	0.739091	-0.850527	0.3950

Table 1: Logistic Regression Model

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Null hypothesis: $H_0=\beta=0$ (unimportant or insignificant)
Alternative Hypothesis: $H_A=\beta\neq0$ (important or significant)
$\alpha=0.05$ or 5% significance level

Table 1 shows that variables include social media for information, social media in trip finalization, pictures posted by the tourists, Instagram post, and YouTube videos is statistically significant or important at the 0.05 significance level we can conclude that the changes in these variables are associated with the probability that this event occurs. Now we have to analyze which of the variables makes the event more likely or less likely from the given coefficients of the variables. The coefficient of social media for trip finalization is 3.655507 which means it has higher probabilities that the event will occur. The negative coefficient of social media suggestions,

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pictures posted by the tourists, Instagram posts, YouTube videos, and response from your friends is less likely to occur.

Correlations matrix

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	
(1) social media for information	1.00						
(2) social media for cost checking	0.48	1.00					
(3) postponed trip due to social media	0.18	0.19	1.00				
(4) social media in trip finalization	0.59	0.61	0.17	1.00			
(5) social media suggestion	0.34	0.52	0.04	0.50	1.00		
(6) social media promotion of	0.29	0.41	-0.00	0.39	0.45	1.00	tourism

Table 2: matrix of correlations

The correlation matrix shows the relationship between the independent variable. Table 2 shows correlation coefficients between several variables related to social media impact on tourism in Pakistan. For example, the fourth cell shows the correlation between 'social media in trip finalization' and 'social media for cost checking' which indicates that they're strongly positively correlated. Whereas the correlation between 'social media promotion of tourism' and 'postponed trip due to social media' indicates that they are weakly negatively correlated. The coefficients along the diagonals show that each variable is perfectly correlated with itself.

VI. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The study has been simply made to find out social media's impact on tourism. Findings suggest that most of the respondents show a greater level of interest towards the usage of social media platforms to get information in planning their trips and it is very good that social media is contributing positively to give information in the form of pictures of that specific destination. There have been similar results like ours in other studies like Aftab & Khan's (2019) result shows the same evidence that the trend of using different social media platforms become common nowadays. Social media not only helps to satisfy the social needs of consumer but they also satisfy consumer psychological needs. According to Cantos et al. (2015) cultural and natural heritage are the main attributes that formed the image for a tourist destination. As our findings also suggest that most of the people like to visit northern areas as they respond as its favorite tourist spot. We concluded that social media helps in attracting customers in Pakistan especially through personal experience share on social media and comments or reviews of people on that specific spot. The study indicates that usage of social media has a significant impact on information purposes, cost checking, trip finalization, and suggestions. Pakistan is blessed with all types of beauty includes geographical location, landscapes, mountains, green valleys, and many more. But in the meantime, Pakistan is unsuccessful in developing a better tourism industry. As mentioned earlier the tourism growth of the country has a great impact on economic growth. Tourism becomes a great source of annual earning, cultural exchange, and economic growth, jobs for the local community, infrastructure development, and employment opportunities. According to khan & Rasheed (2016), and infrastructure is an influential tool in the tourism sector. The best infrastructure attracts visitors.

  ➢ The government must ensure safety and security, better health facilities, and better hygiene food and to the visitors.
  ➢ The government should take serious steps to control pollution. The tourist spot must be kept clean and people should avoid throwing garbage, strict action must be taken against them. It can be controlled through strict law enforcement.
  ➢ The government should enhance the infrastructure like roads, transport, motels, hotels, etc for the visitors. Historical buildings maintenance should be on time to time if requires.
  ➢ The government should publicize all traveling spots on social media to attract visitors internationally and domestically as well.

➢ PTDC, TDCP, TCKP, and other tourism organizations ensured their presence on their websites but none of them meet the needs of tourists. The government should focus on these issues as well

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APPENDIX
Tourism Survey

The enclosed questionnaire is one of 500 we are distributing to the tourists. Would you be kind enough to respond to this brief survey? Your answers will help us determine the effectiveness of social media in promoting tourism in Pakistan. We appreciate your assistance and look forward to receiving your response.

Question: Have you ever used social media for travel-related information? Yes No

Question: Do you use social media platforms to get information regarding the cost of the trip?
Yes No

Question: Do you prefer to use the information provided by social media?
Yes No

Question: Are you ever reluctant to seek travel-related information from social media?
Yes No

Question: Did it ever happened that you have to modify the plan of your existing trip after getting disappointed with information obtained by social media platforms?
Yes No

Question: Which one of the following became your favorite tourist spot after noticing it on social media platforms?
Historical Places Northern Areas

Question: Do you find social media platforms useful for travel planning?
Yes No

Question: Did social media platforms ever helped you out to finalize a destination you are intended to visit?
Yes No

Question: Do you think that tourism companies serve a lot to attract potential tourists towards a particular destination?
Yes No

Question: Have you ever traveled through any of these companies?
Yes No

Question: If yes then how was your experience with the company?
Never experienced
Normal
Bad

Worst

Question: Are these companies honest, trustworthy, reliable, and sincere towards their clients?

Yes No

Question: Do you trust tourism companies to plan your future trip?

Yes No

Question: Do you suggest any social media platform when your friend needs your suggestion regarding the planning of his/her future tour?

Yes No

Question: Which of the following sources of information you used last time when you went to a destination to spend your holidays?

On my own

Getting inspired by the pictures posted by the tourists

Question: What is the most important factor that helps you to prioritize your destination?

The beauty of the place

Enjoyment

Question: What inspires you on social media to finalize your destination?

Pictures posted by the tourists

YouTube videos Instagram Posts

Question: Do you post your pictures and experiences of your tour on social media platforms?

Yes No

Question: How is the response of your friends and users on your posts?

Good

Very good

Average

Bad