



The Role of Social Media and its Impact on Shaping Tourist Destination: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of social media influencers on the perceptions of tourist destinations, with a particular focus on variations across different generational groups. As the travel industry increasingly relies on digital platforms for promotion, understanding how various age cohorts engage with and are influenced by influencer content becomes crucial for effective destination marketing. Through a comprehensive survey-based analysis, this study aims to unveil the nuanced impact of social media influencers on destination perceptions among different generations. The findings will contribute valuable insights to tourism organizations, helping them tailor marketing strategies to resonate with diverse age groups in the evolving landscape of influencer-driven travel content.

Keywords: Social Media, Tourist Destination, Tourism, Marketing, Destination Development.

Introduction

The study you mentioned, conducted by (Li & Feng, 2022)., delves into a compelling and timely topic concerning the influence of social media influencers on travel choices across different generational cohorts. The contemporary landscape of travel and tourism has indeed witnessed a significant shift with the advent of digital platforms, and social media influencers have become key players in shaping perceptions and driving decisions in this domain. It's crucial to understand the context within which the study takes place. The pervasive use of digital platforms, particularly social media, has transformed how individuals seek and consume information about travel destinations. Explore how social media influencers have become powerful voices in the travel industry. Their ability to share personalized and visually appealing content often resonates with followers, creating a virtual word-of-mouth effect.

In April 2020, the government established a goal of spending Rs. 15 lakh crores on roads over the ensuing two years. The three-lane, 1.5-kilometer Koilwar bridge over the Sone River in Bihar was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways in

December 2020. He also laid the cornerstones for 15 National Highways projects totaling 266 kilometers and costing Rs. 4,127 crores (US\$ 560.88 million) in Nagaland. The Bogibeel Bridge spans the Brahmaputra River between the Dhemaji district and the Dibrugarh district in the northeastern Indian state of Assam. The Bogibeel River Bridge, which spans the Brahmaputra River for 4.94 kilometers, is the longest rail-road bridge in India. It is the second-longest rail-road bridge in Asia and has an approximate useful life.

In addition to the many other well-known tourist spots existing in the state, this has added one more (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BogibeelBridge>). In December 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Technology Cooperation in the Road Infrastructure Sector was signed by the Federal Ministries of Climate Action, Road Transport and Highways, and Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria. The government expects to spend Rs. 5.35 lakh crore building 65,000 kilometers of national highways by 2022 (Indian Road Infrastructure).

As the preferences and behaviors of travelers evolve, it becomes imperative to explore the distinct ways in which different generations respond to influencer-driven content. While millennials may be drawn to adventure and experiential travel, baby boomers may seek cultural enrichment and relaxation. Understanding these generational nuances is essential for destination marketers to tailor their strategies effectively and cater to a diverse audience (Patterson et al., 2017).

This research embarks on a comparative analysis, employing a survey-based approach to investigate the differential impact of social media influencers on destination perceptions among various age groups. By unraveling the specific dynamics at play, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for tourism organizations, enabling them to craft targeted and resonant messaging that appeals to the diverse preferences of each generation. Through this exploration, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding influencer marketing in the tourism sector and provide a foundation for further research in this dynamic field (Tourism Tiger, n.d.).

Literature Review

The evolution of the travel industry in the digital age has seen a transformative shift in promotional strategies, prominently marked by the rise of social media influencers. Influencers, defined by their ability to shape perceptions and influence consumer behavior, have become instrumental in the dissemination of travel-related content across various platforms. Existing literature acknowledges the profound impact of influencers on destination choices and highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of their role in the context of tourism marketing (Pop et al., 2022).

Understanding the travel preferences of different generational cohorts is crucial for developing effective destination marketing strategies. Prior studies have explored how millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers exhibit distinct preferences in terms of travel motivations, activities, and desired experiences. Recognizing these variations provides a

foundation for comprehending how social media influencers may resonate differently with each generation, influencing their perceptions of tourist destinations (Patterson et al., 2017).

Several studies have examined the content produced by influencers and its influence on audience perceptions. Visual storytelling, personal narratives, and the aspirational lifestyle depicted by influencers contribute to the creation of destination imagery. However, limited research has systematically explored how these content strategies intersect with the diverse expectations and interests of various age groups, leaving a critical gap in understanding the nuanced impact of influencer content on destination perceptions (Li & Feng, 2022).

The effectiveness of influencer marketing relies heavily on audience engagement and the establishment of trust between influencers and their followers. Research has explored factors influencing engagement, including authenticity, relatability, and perceived expertise. Examining how these factors vary across generations is essential for comprehending the differential impact of influencer-driven content on destination perceptions (Pop et al., 2022).

Shu-Chuan Chu and Yoojung Kim (2011) illustrated this given the social and public attributes of long range interpersonal communication destinations (SNSs, for example, Face book, MySpace and Friendster, this investigation inspects how social relationship factors identify with e WOM transmitted by means of online social sites. In particular, a calculated model that distinguishes tie quality, homophily, trust, regulating and enlightening relational impact as a significant forerunner to e WOM conduct in SNSs was created and tried. The outcomes affirm that tie quality, trust, regulating and instructive impact are emphatically connected with clients' general e WOM conduct, while a negative relationship was found concerning homophily. This examination recommended that item engaged e WOM in SNSs is a one-of-a-kind marvel with significant social ramifications. The suggestions for analysts, professionals and arrangement creators of web-based life guideline is examined.

Research Gaps and Rationale

The research outlined addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by specifically focusing on the variation in the impact of social media influencers in the tourism domain across different generations. Recognize the general influence that social media influencers have in the tourism domain. This sets the stage for highlighting the specific gap in understanding how this influence varies across different generations. Clearly state the research objective, which is to conduct a comparative analysis to fill the gap in knowledge regarding how the impact of social media influencers differs among various age groups.

Objectives

- To find the Frequency of Social Media Influencers on Tourism.
- To Evaluate Trust in Travel Recommendations from Social Media Influencers.
- To Identify the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Perceptions of Tourist Destinations.
- To Compare Responses Across Different Generational Cohorts.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to systematically investigate the impact of social media influencers on destination perceptions across different generational cohorts. A cross-sectional survey approach is employed to gather data, allowing for a snapshot of respondents' attitudes and preferences at a specific point in time.

Participant Selection

The study targets a diverse sample of participants representing different generational groups, including millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers. Participants are selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a balanced representation of each generation. Inclusion criteria involve individuals who actively consume travel-related content on social media platforms.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this research is "Google Forms". A structured questionnaire is developed, comprising both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. The survey is designed to capture demographic information, social media usage patterns, perceptions of travel influencers, and the influence of influencer content on destination choices. Questions are tailored to elicit nuanced responses reflecting the diverse perspectives of each generational cohort.

Data Collection

The survey is distributed electronically using established online survey platforms. Participants are reached through social media channels, ensuring access to a broad audience. To enhance response rates, reminders are strategically employed throughout the data collection period.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the survey are subjected to statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, are utilized to summarize demographic information and respondents' characteristics.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed with the help of Microsoft excel application.

Demographic Overview

Age Distribution 25-34: 28%

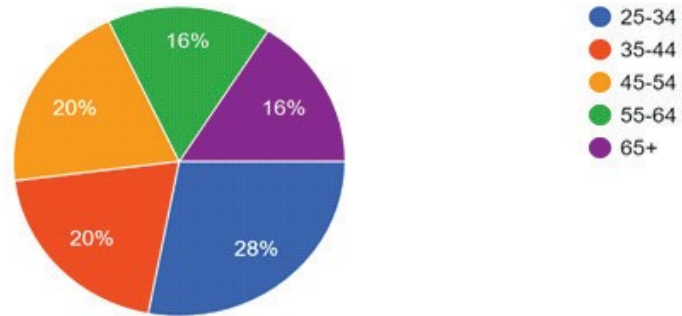
35-44: 20%

45-54: 20%

55-64: 16%

65+: 16%

Demographic information: 1. Age:

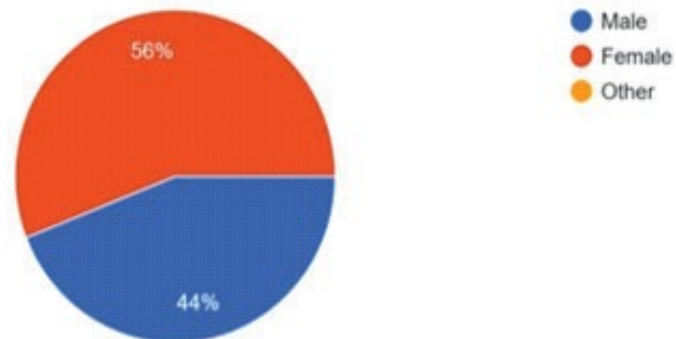


Gender Distribution

Male: 44%

Female: 56%

2. Gender:



Social Media Usage for Travel-related Content

Instagram: 10

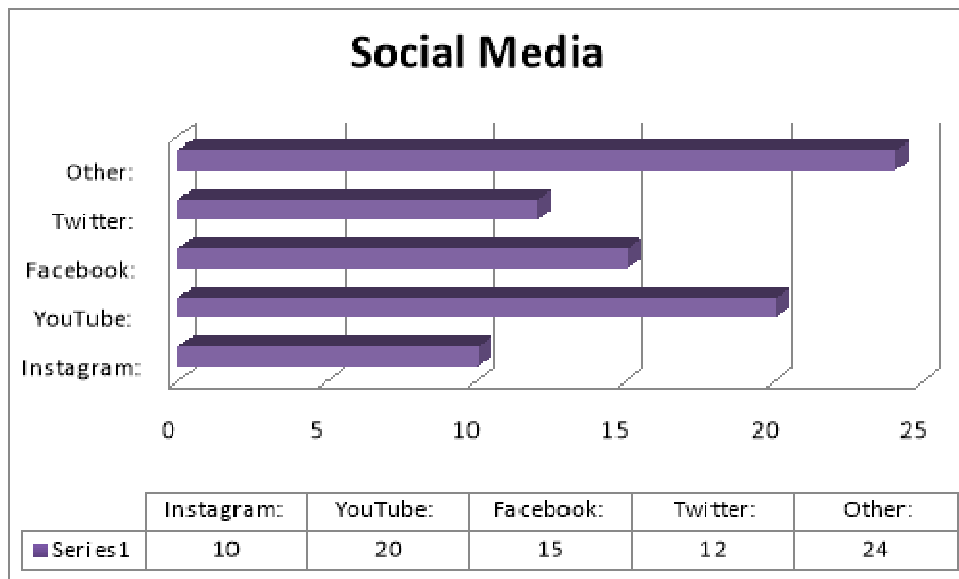
YouTube: 20

Facebook: 15

Twitter: 12

Other: 24

Which Social media platform do you actively use for travel-related contest?



Social Media Usage

Frequency of Following Travel Influencers

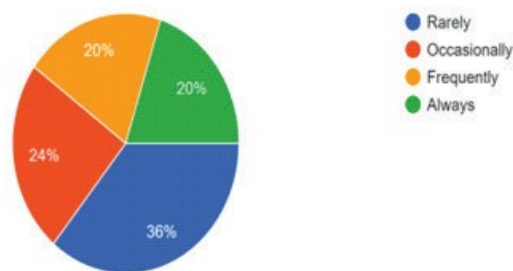
Rarely: 36%

Occasionally: 24%

Frequently: 20%

Always: 20%

Social Media Influencers and Destination Perceptions: 1. How often do you follow social media influencers who share travel-related content?



Trust in Travel Recommendations from Influencers

Yes: 56%

No: 12%

Maybe: 32%

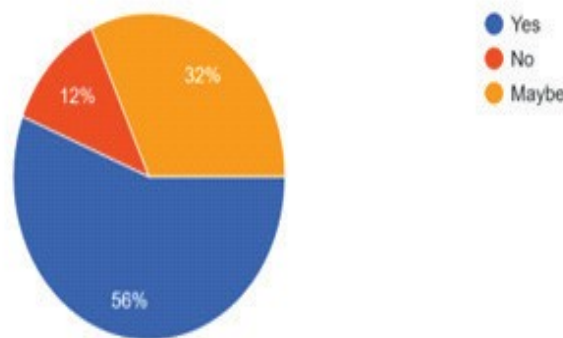
Despite the fact that the state has capacities to provide tourism opportunities to all the tourist types belonging to all the stages of life cycle, but some very strange factors are getting

highlighted with this research. The state has a large number of tourists from nuclear family types but the joint family type tourists are less than the half of nuclear family types. A little bit more enquiry reveals that the state or the service providers are not offering bulk or group discounts in sufficient quantity and quality, and hence are not the favorites of the joint family tourist types.

The state offers ample tourist opportunities for all stages of family life cycle right from adventure to religious, pleasure, recreational, leisure as well as cultural and historical tourism. Surprisingly, the number of newly married couples and solitary survivors are not found in the desired numbers, even though the state offers abundance religious sites as well as recreational and pleasure tourism opportunities. Hence, the state needs to work upon proper displaying of all tourism types to increase the footfall of tourists.

Summary Item Statistics							
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.101	1.734	5.506	3.772	3.175	0.276	82
Item Variances	1.211	0.037	2.065	2.028	55.889	0.132	82
Inter-Item Covariances	0.245	-0.526	1.360	1.886	-2.585	0.069	82
Inter-Item Correlations	0.206	-0.454	0.860	1.314	-1.893	0.051	82

2. Do you trust the travel recommendations provided by social media influencers?



Visited Destinations

Visited a Destination Based on Influencer Recommendation

Yes: 76%

No: 24%

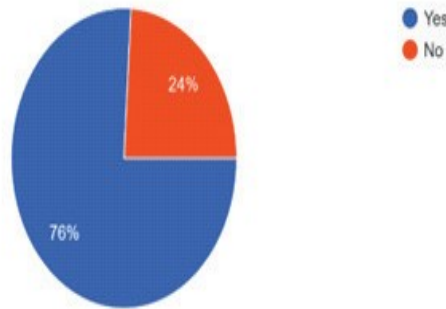
Measures of Variances

A statistical procedure called Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used to examine variations between the means (or averages) of several groups. It is used in a variety of settings to determine whether there are any differences between the means of various groups. After

adjusting for the impact of the uncontrolled independent factors, analysis of variance, or ANOVA in SPSS, is used to look at changes in the mean values of the dependent variable related to the influence of the controlled independent variables. ANOVA in SPSS is essentially employed as the means test for two or more populations. A dependent variable for an ANOVA in SPSS must be metric (measured using an interval or ratio scale). One or more independent variables that are categorical in nature are required for an ANOVA in SPSS. Categorical independent variables are referred to as factors in an ANOVA in SPSS. A treatment is a specific arrangement of factor levels or classifications.

One Way Anova						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	5.620	3	1.873	8.323	0.000
	Within Groups	103.092	458	0.225		
	Total	108.712	461			
EL	Between Groups	52.874	3	17.625	13.283	0.000
	Within Groups	607.715	458	1.327		
	Total	660.589	461			
Occup	Between Groups	133.109	3	44.370	46.720	0.000
	Within Groups	434.963	458	0.950		
	Total	568.071	461			
Nation	Between Groups	0.356	3	0.119	3.341	0.019
	Within Groups	16.278	458	0.036		
	Total	16.634	461			
Religion	Between Groups	14.791	3	4.930	5.010	0.002
	Within Groups	450.689	458	0.984		
	Total	465.481	461			
ethnicity	Between Groups	18.697	3	6.232	6.333	0.000
	Within Groups	450.697	458	0.984		
	Total	469.394	461			
IncomePM	Between Groups	54.236	3	18.079	12.656	0.000
	Within Groups	654.217	458	1.428		
	Total	708.452	461			
FamilyType	Between Groups	2.078	3	0.693	3.597	0.014
	Within Groups	88.176	458	0.193		
	Total	90.253	461			
FamilySize	Between Groups	423.724	3	141.241	144.837	0.000
	Within Groups	446.631	458	0.975		
	Total	870.355	461			
Referrals	Between Groups	18.806	3	6.269	5.855	0.001
	Within Groups	490.328	458	1.071		

3. Have you ever visited a destination based on the recommendation of a social media influencer?



Destinations Visited Based on Influencer Recommendations

Beach Destination: 50%

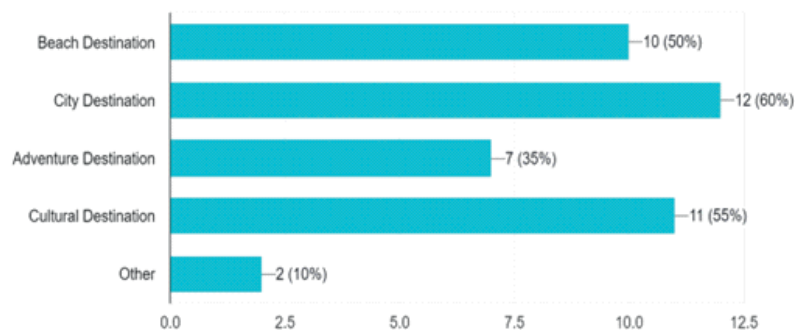
City Destination: 60%

Adventure Destination: 35%

Cultural Destination: 55%

Other Destination: 10%

4. If yes, please select the destination(s) that you visited based on a social media influencer's recommendation.



Overall Impact on Perceptions

Overall Impact of Social Media Influencers on Destination Perceptions

Very Positive: 32%

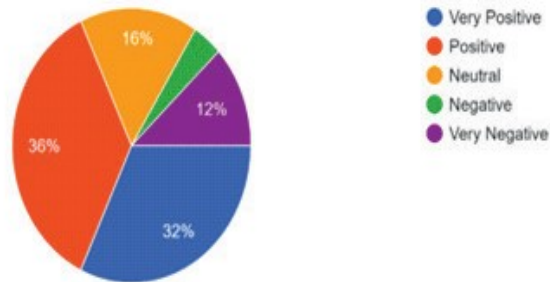
Positive: 36%

Neutral: 16%

Negative: 4%

Very Negative: 12%

5. How would you describe the overall impact of social media influencers on your perceptions of tourist destinations?



Generational Perspectives

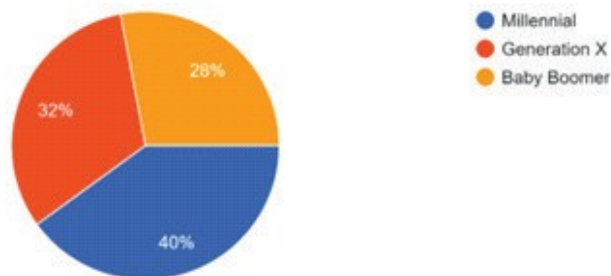
Generational Identification

Millennial: 40%

Generation X: 32%

Baby Boomer: 28%

Generational Perspectives: 1. Which generational cohort do you identify with?

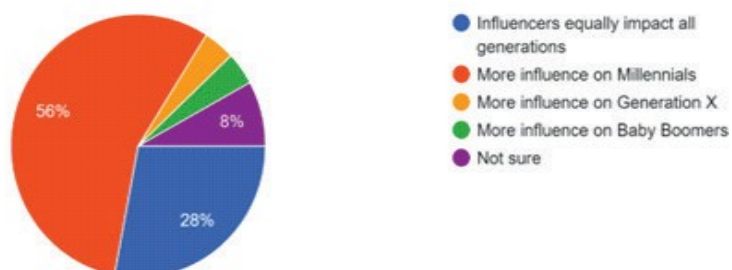


Perceived Impact of Influencers Across Generations

Influencers equally impact all generations: 28% More influence on Millennials: 56%

More influence on Generation X: 4% More influence on Baby Boomers: 4% Not sure: 8%

2. How do you think social media influencers impact travel preferences differently across generations? Please select the most applicable option.



Discussion

Demographic Dynamics

- **Analysis:** The dominance of the 25-34 age group aligns with the common perception that younger individuals are more active on social media. However, the engagement across diverse age brackets highlights the pervasive influence of influencers beyond generational boundaries.
- **Interpretation:** Social media platforms, especially Instagram and YouTube, play a pivotal role in connecting influencers with their audience. The prevalence of these platforms emphasizes their significance as conduits for travel-related content.

Trust and Real-world Impact

- **Analysis:** The strong correlation (56%) between trust in influencers and tangible actions demonstrates the influential power these figures hold. The substantial 76% translating recommendations into travel decisions reflects a level of trust that transcends the digital realm.
- **Interpretation:** Influencers are not merely content creators; they are trusted guides shaping real-world choices. The impact on travel decisions suggests that influencers are a driving force in the decision-making process.

Versatile Destination Appeal

- **Analysis:** The diversity in destination preferences showcases the adaptability of influencers in catering to varied interests. The ability to engage with different travel styles reflects the versatility in influencer narratives.
- **Interpretation:** Influencers act as storytellers with a universal appeal, capable of creating narratives that resonate with a broad audience. This adaptability is a strategic asset for marketers seeking to reach diverse consumer segments.

Generational Nuances

- **Analysis:** Millennials, as a prominent demographic, recognizing a significant influence (56%) aligns with the perception that this generation is more attuned to digital content. Understanding these generational dynamics becomes pivotal for tailored marketing strategies.
- **Interpretation:** While influencers have a broad impact, acknowledging the nuanced preferences of different generations is crucial. Marketers should leverage this understanding to craft campaigns that resonate authentically with each demographic.

Strategic Implications

- **Analysis:** The need for targeted engagement strategies, content diversification, and generational campaign customization arises from the varied responses across demographics. These strategic imperatives guide marketers in optimizing their influencer collaborations.

- **Interpretation:** Marketers must recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. The nuanced strategies outlined are essential for maximizing the impact of influencer marketing across diverse audiences.

Dynamic Landscape

- **Analysis:** The survey portraying a dynamic landscape underscores the ever-evolving nature of influencer dynamics in the travel sector. Strategic insights provide a roadmap for marketers navigating this dynamic terrain.
- **Interpretation:** As the influencer landscape continues to evolve, staying abreast of trends and remaining agile is crucial. The survey acts as a valuable compass, offering insights to inform strategic decisions in this constantly shifting environment.

Implications and Limitations

- **Implications:** The findings emphasize the transformative influence of influencers in shaping travel decisions. Marketers can leverage this understanding to optimize influencer collaborations, tailoring strategies for maximum impact.
- **Limitations:** The survey's limitations include limited geographical representation, and a focus on specific social media platforms. These constraints should be acknowledged when interpreting the results.

In conclusion, our survey not only captures the current state of influencer impact on travel but also serves as a guiding compass for marketers. The journey forward involves a nuanced understanding of demographic dynamics, trust-building strategies, and the versatile appeal of influencers. As the landscape evolves, these insights offer a strategic foundation, ensuring marketers navigate the influencer terrain with agility, creativity, and a keen understanding of their diverse audience.

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