

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS, FRIENDS, PEERS ON TRAVEL  
DECISIONS FOR TRAVELLERS IN  
RELATION TO THE HIGHEST IMPACT AMONG THEM  
THAT AFFECT PURCHASE INTENTION

by

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS, FRIENDS , PEERS ON TRAVEL  
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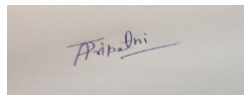
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### Dedication

Dedicated to my family and mentor without whose help this would be impossible.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr Mario and Dr Atul Tripathi for their help in the journey

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The role of social media and the associated posts done by influencers, friends as well as peers of a traveller is immense in today's world of travel, and it goes without saying how much it impacts a travel choice. And there is a research gap in understanding in India's perspective who has more influence among these three - influencers, friends and peers – in family as well as solo travellers' choice of travel. Hence this study 1) Measures impact of three stake holders on travellers 2) Offers a guide for social media marketing /digital marketing professionals of hospitality brands / tourism boards to understand who to target and with what set of elements/communications & social media channels /applications to get a better understanding of their target customers . This will help many B2C agencies in India to engage better on social media for their clients.

## KEYWORDS

1. Social media strategies, destination marketing, digital marketers
2. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat
3. Google Ads, Google My Business, Google Hotel Ads, SEO rankings
4. Travel influencers, user-generated content (UGC), target audience
5. Authenticity, engagement, conversion, trust, transparency
6. Targeted campaigns, personalization, multi-platform integration
7. Data analytics, influencer partnerships, immersive content
8. Visual storytelling, gamification, customer reviews
9. Mobile-friendly experience

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

E WoM = Electronic word of mouth

A WoM = Algorithmic word of mouth

Fomo = Fear of Missing Out

DMO = Destination Marketing Organisation

UGC = User Generated Content

SEO = Search Engine Optimisation

CAGR = Compound Annual Growth Rate

QoE = Quality of Experience

QUIC = Quick UDP Internet Connections

FHRAI = Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India

CDC = Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

WHO = World Health Organisation

CEO = Chief Executive Officer

SMI = Social Media Influencer

SMS , MMS = Short Messaging Service , Multi Media Messaging Service

ROI = Return on Investment

AI = Artificial Intelligence



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## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

In order to do a study on social media effects exerted by social media influencers in form of paid influencers to friends and peers alike, we need to look back as to what started the phenomenon and who was perhaps the first influencer and what was the first influencer campaign? As per the 2020 article, (Williams, Ferdinand and Bustard, 2020) suggests that study has crowned Nancy Green was one of the earliest known influencers dating way back in 1890 where she was the face of the pancake mix Aunt Jemima, its Amazon in 2010 that encouraged users to show their proud purchases on Facebook.

This led to notifications about birthday, anniversaries by Facebook that made digital marketers explore ways to communicate about recent offerings to their Page followers and accentuated by further use of social celebs who endorsed such brands. Social Media has its own pluses and minus and their impact today cannot be disregarded.

While Google search has been our intrinsic part of daily lives today, so has Instagram for photo sharing, Twitter for trend check and yes Facebook, for a digital personal connect. And not to forget LinkedIn that has now become a synonymous tool in professional world as was perhaps Blackberry Messenger Pin around 2010s.

With influx of all these applications, digital marketers are now confused as to arrive at best mix while planning an ideal campaign and which elements of social media influences which part of consumer buying journey. Yes, indeed world has become exciting but cluttered.

Our research is to look at, possible check points which triggers a buying proposition in consumer mind, specifically, for a travel purchase – be it choosing a destination, hotel, resorts or airline / mode of transport or even sim card to be used. Based on recent trends as evident on various reports the researcher categorised the impact on travel decision on various age groups as follows

**Table : 1 Impact on Travel Decision on Age Groups**

Rely on Information Sources/ Confirmation			
Age	Influencers	Friends	Peers
18-29	High	Medium	Low
29-35	Medium	High	Low
35-45	Low	Medium	High
55+	Low	High	Medium

Age	Use of Social Media Daily
18-29	High
29-35	Medium
35-45	Low
55+	Low

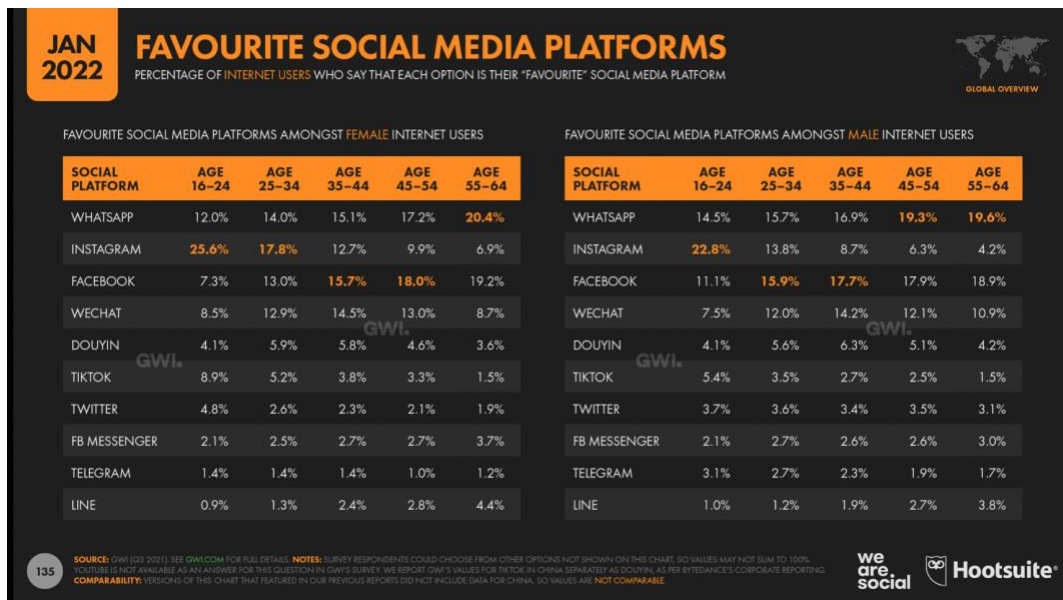
Age	Use of Specific SM Applications
18-29	Instagram
29-35	Instagram
35-45	Facebook
55+	Twitter

In the study done by (Digital 2022: The World’s Favourite Social Media Platforms — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 2022) on digital India shows some startling data . Number of internet users stand at 47% of total 1.4 billion population in 2022. The number of social media users remain at 476 million in January 2022 Facebook has 329 million, YouTube 476 million, Instagram 230 million, Snapchat 126 million, Twitter 23.6 million users in India

With such level of influx of data usage, internet penetration in India, its become more prevalent that we seek more information online than anywhere else – especially during the travel decision phase or destination choice phase and more so during the pre-planning phase.

And in such scenario, we come across posts of various forms, in social media channels – namely YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc. and with various level of quality, trustworthiness and extractives to help decide consumers on their travel choice. Global Trend of Social Media usage shows lot of interesting global trend which has its ramification in India as well.

Let’s observe the following chart , as per their January , 2022 report (Digital 2022: The World’s Favourite Social Media Platforms — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, 2022)



**Figure 1 : Data Report Portal 2022 : World’s Favourite Social Media Platforms , 2022**

It’s also worth highlighting that TikTok is considerably more popular amongst younger users but since India, the chosen country of research, where the same is banned, we will not be considering its impact . As per above cited report - Facebook remains the most popular global choice amongst men aged 25 to 44, even though it ranks a distant third amongst men aged 16 to 24 but gradually we do see a lot of impact of the same being lost as the report suggest.

Meanwhile, WhatsApp is the top choice amongst older users, with 1 in 5 global internet users aged 55 to 64 identifying it as their favorite social platform but we are not clear if the same is used as reference tool while deciding a travel purchase. These data provide deeper insights on behavior of usage of social media and various applications are evolving – demographic wise. Hence in a focused discussion, while making a digital marketing calendar, for a travel industry professional – the scope of our study, it becomes imperative to have detailed finding so that proper social media

The study thus elaborates on the scope if social media influencers have more effect, based on their credibility, followers and quality of content on travel influence behavior or it’s the e-WOM (electronic Word of Mouth ) that is generated by friends and

peers of the consumer that they find more relatable while making their final destination / stay / mode of travel choice . And in which social media platform does the impact be highest to move the consumer from a dreaming phase ( Think Google Report ) to finally decision to travel phase .

Branding of the destination and the holiday (Westwood et al., 2016) also is an important in aiding the decision-making process. A positive imagery of the destination as well as the brand servicing the holiday at that destination or acting as the travel aide is of utmost importance. For example perhaps during the 2022 economic crisis of Sri Lanka , not many would risk to travel there despite having beautiful locales and in contrast Kashmir (Tourism in Kashmir breaks all records as 3,40,000 visitors throught valley in 3 months - India News, 2022) has received a record 3,40,00 tourist in Q1 2022 thanks to the initiatives Government has taken to make it a tourist haven that it was few years back

In this study while we will measure the impact of social media influencers, friends and peers and the effects they exert on purchase decision making on travel, we will also try to have a cursory glance when we take in depth interviews of the targeted profiles in the chosen geography.

So in a broad terms the research is relevant as it studies cross impact of various forms of influencers that we come across during our dreaming phase of a holiday plan to a final decision making phase and across various social media applications that are available and relevant in today's day and age of the study .

Also since such cross referencing has not been done before that takes in to elements the varying degree of influences that each of the three influencers have on travel decision making as well as understanding of which social media tools are more important at what stage of travel and travel decision making , the study would become a template for future researchers to dive more on the tools that can be deployed both by digital marketers as well as social media influencers to make a positive influence on the decision making both for consumers as well as brands on various levels.

Travel and Social Media today have become inseparable and when we talk of social media – we look at being influenced by either paid influencers ( YouTube / Instagram being

the largest ) , whose posts try to influence our travel purchase decision . According to (Masoom, 2022) With the rise of social media, influencer marketing has emerged as a new and effective brand marketing method that marketing managers are interested in while some still believe that referrals generated by an existing customer via their social media posts or experiences shared during travel to a particular resort / location / theme parks / destinations plays more bigger role . As per (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014) The growing role of social media in tourism has been increasingly an evolving topic and even today its usage in promotion based marketing , digital - is limited and largely instinct driven rather than data driven .

As per the Digital Advertising Report published by Dentsu in 2022 - the digital advertising industry has witnessed a growth in market size from Rs 15,782 crore in 2020 to Rs 21,353 crore in 2021, growing at 35.3%. Digital media is expected to grow at 29.5% CAGR to reach a market size of Rs 35,809 crore by 2023. The highest proportion of spends on digital media is claimed by social media (29%, Rs 6,218 crore), closely followed by online Video (28%, Rs 5,907 crore). Paid search claims 23% (Rs 5,039 crore), while display banners claim 16% (Rs 3,420 crore). So digital media spends and more so social media spends is here to stay and is going to grow exponentially only and hence a focused study with respect to social media spending keeping travel tourism as focus is what we aim to achieve .

According to secondary data sources from Datareport Portal (<https://datareportal.com/>) digital India shows some startling data Number of internet users stand at 47% of total 1.4 billion population in 2022. With such level of influx of data usage, internet penetration in India, its become more prevalent that we seek more information online than anywhere else – especially during the travel decision phase or destination choice phase and more so during the pre-planning phase.

Mobile apps have become an integral part of many people's daily lives, helping them stay connected, manage their health, learn new things, and find entertainment. The average person spends a significant amount of time each day using mobile apps, and this time can be even higher if apps are also used for work or education purposes. As mobile

apps play an increasingly important role in people's daily lives, they have become a critical factor in determining customer satisfaction with mobile networks. The quality of experience (QoE) of these apps, referred to as App QoE, is directly tied to the performance of the network and the ability of the operator to optimize and manage it effectively. It is therefore crucial for mobile network operators to prioritize the optimization of App QoE in order to ensure customer satisfaction and retain them.

For most people around the world, COVID drove changes to how they used technology. For the millions of people without digital access, the digital divide widened between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” with digitization crucial to connecting, working, and learning during not only the pandemic, but 2020 and 2021’s upheavals from social unrest, climate change, and even war. For fixed and mobile networks, unpredictable traffic caused gigabyte surges. This forced operators to rapidly engineer what they had to better utilize preexisting capacity. To deliver pre-COVID reliability, many expedited capital expenditures for optical fiber, 5G, 5G Ultra Wideband, virtual private networks, and mobile cell sites.

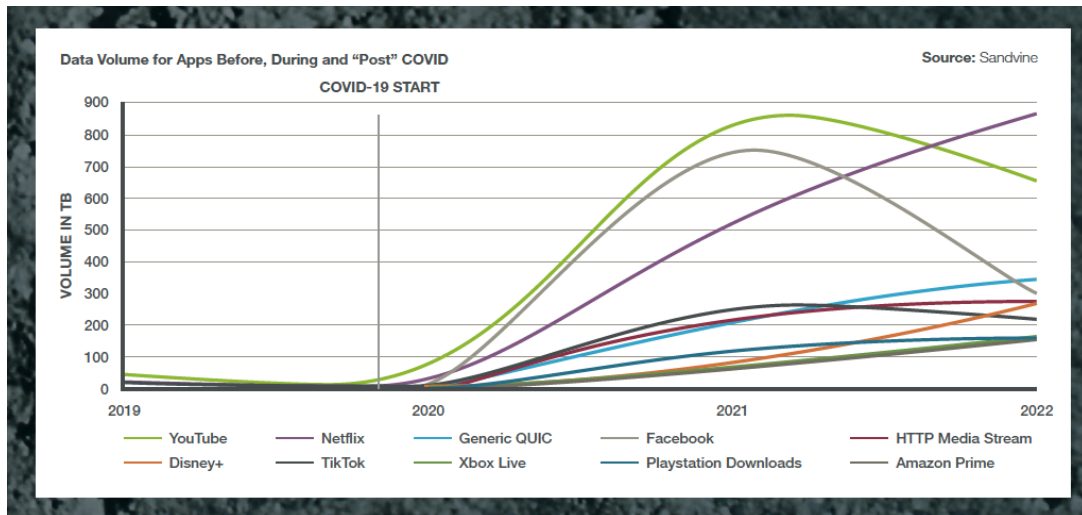


Figure 2 : Data Volume Apps, Before , During and Post “Covid “ , Source : Sandvine



	Brand	2021	2022
1	Google	20.99%	13.85%
2	Netflix	9.39%	13.74%
3	Facebook	15.11%	6.45%
4	Microsoft	3.32%	5.11%
5	Apple	4.18%	4.59%
6	Amazon	3.36%	4.24%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>56.35%</b>	<b>47.98%</b>

**Figure 3 : Internet Traffic from various sources , Source : Sandvine Jan 2023 report**

As per (Cantor, 2023) , report in Global Internet Phenomenon , there is a huge surge of data and across various platforms . The percentage of internet traffic generated by Netflix, Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, and Apple (MAMAA) has decreased as new app categories and new apps have emerged and contributed to data surges. Despite this, these companies still account for a significant portion of internet traffic at 48%. However, when discussing internet traffic, Netflix cannot be excluded as it has become a major player in internet volume. In H1 2022, Netflix's 45% growth in internet volume moved it to the top spot for traffic generated by an individual application among the "Big 6" (MAMAA + Netflix). The Big 6 companies generated nearly 48% of internet traffic in H1 2022, but there was a 9% decline in terms of their percentage contribution to total internet volume. This decline is due to the expansion of app categories and a greater number of apps producing more data overall, which has contributed to the 23% increase in overall traffic volume seen in H1 2022.

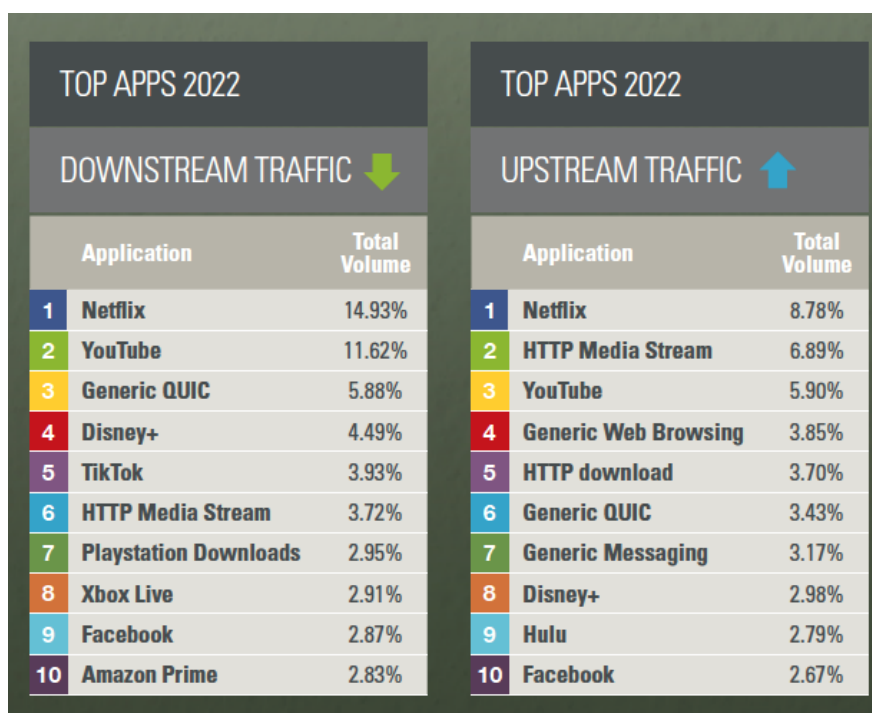
Google, through Alphabet, remains a dominant player in internet traffic with a 13.85% share in H1 2022. This is primarily due to YouTube, as well as traffic generated by a growing empire of platforms and services such as YouTube Shorts, Google Web Apps,

Android Market, Ad Analytics, Google Analytics, Google Cloud Storage, Google Docs, Google Drive, Gmail, Google Maps, Google Cloud Messaging, Google Maps, YouTube TV, Waze, Fitbit, and Nest. YouTube alone accounts for nearly 11% of bandwidth usage. YouTube has become a major player in the "creator economy," which Forbes estimates is worth \$100 billion globally. The biggest content creator on YouTube, T-Series, earns \$450 million and boasts 186 million subscribers as of Q3 2022.

**Global Top 10 Applications by Category**

	Video	Games	Social	Messaging
1	Netflix	Playstation Downloads	Facebook	Generic Messaging
2	YouTube	Steam	Twitch	WhatsApp
3	Generic QUIC	ROBLOX	Instagram	Facebook
4	HTTP Media Stream	Epic Games Launcher	Snapchat	Discord Voice
5	Disney+	Nintendo Online	Reddit	Wattpad
6	Tik Tok	Xbox Live TLS	Wordpress	Telegram
7	Amazon Prime	Steam Client	Pinterest	Discord
8	Hulu	Kayo Sports	Twitter	Microsoft Teams
9	Facebook Video	Generic Gaming	VK	WeChat
10	Operator Content	League of Legends	LinkedIn	LINE

**Figure 4 : Global top 10 applications by Category Source : Sandvine Jan 2023 report**



**Figure 5 : Top Apps 2022 , Upstream and Downstream Traffic : Sandvine Jan 2023 report**

YouTube's share of internet traffic has declined from last year during the same period, partly due to the return to in-person activities and growing interest in viewing TikTok and other short-form videos. In response, Google has introduced YouTube Shorts, which by Q3 2022 reached 5 trillion all-time views. Google plans to monetize this momentum with a 45% revenue split for creators, incentivizing anyone with at least 1,000 subscribers and 10 million Shorts views over 90 days. This move is part of Google's strategy to compete with TikTok, Pinterest, and Instagram Reels, all of which are vying for more views and engagement to attract more video ads. This aggressive competition in video and short-form video is expected to exert significant pressure on internet networks for the rest of the year. It is also important to note that a significant portion of YouTube traffic is encrypted Quick UDP Internet Connections (QUIC) which in H1 2022 data is the third-biggest contributor to volume at 5.41%, an increase from 2021. Many other big platforms are also using QUIC for more stable, fast, and encrypted video content-based applications. On the other hand, Facebook has dropped from its number two position to number three in

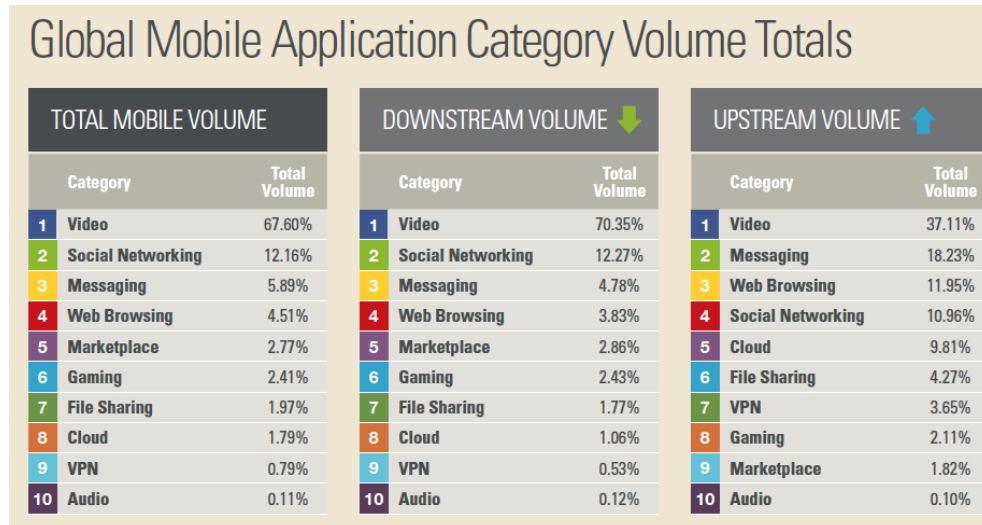
the overall "Brands" chart. The decline in Facebook's Daily Active Users started to decline for the first time in 18 years, and also due to the disappearance of pandemic consumption habits. Advertisers are spending less on social platforms, recognizing that a bigger percentage of younger audiences find rival platforms like TikTok and YouTube more appealing.

### **So What about Social Networking as a category ?**

As per (Cantor, 2023) , Social networking is still a significant contributor to internet traffic, despite a decline in its percentage of total traffic volume due to the rise in popularity of short-form videos. However, younger people are moving away from traditional social media platforms in search of more variety, personalization and engagement through personalized feeds such as TikTok's "For You" feed. Instagram and other platforms are trying to adapt by incorporating more video content and features to improve interest and engagement.

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, has invested \$100 billion in the development of 3D virtual spaces through Meta's RealityLabs for the creation of Metaverse and social virtual reality, but critics question the timing and potential success of this move amid Meta's first-ever revenue declines in H1 2022 and market forces such as inflation driving down ad revenues. Despite these challenges, Facebook is still the dominant social network worldwide with 2.96 billion monthly active users as of Q3 2022. Facebook is making video a bigger component of its platforms and is encouraging shorter, more frequent postings on Facebook Video and Facebook video chat to try and close the generational divide. Additionally, Facebook is offering video-on-demand for users who want to stream premium content. Time will tell if these efforts will be successful in reversing the company's first-ever drop in the Nasdaq index and financial losses.

## Is mobile a way to go ?

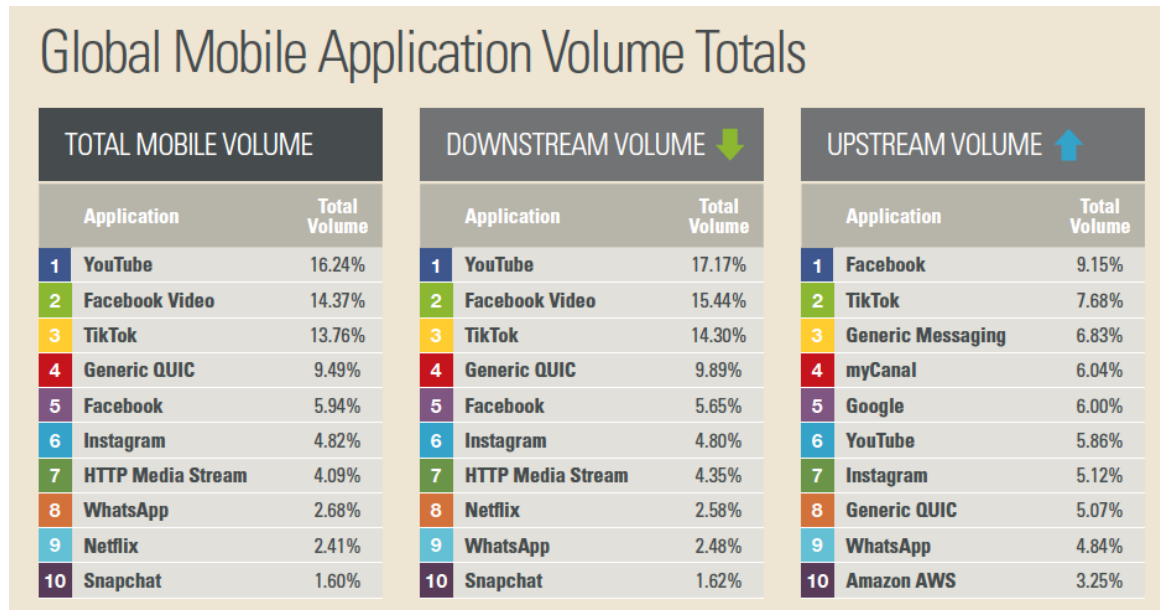


**Figure 6 : Global Mobile Application Category Volume Totals : Sandvine Jan 2023 report**

As per (Cantor,2023 ) Smartphone usage is reshaping app usage and internet traffic around the world. According to Ericsson, all growth in mobile data traffic will come from 5G by 2028. Time spent on mobile apps has grown from about three hours pre-pandemic to a global average of about 5 hours per day currently. The pandemic has led to an increase in the use of mobile devices for things such as viewing longer videos, video conferencing, file sharing, remote learning, delivery apps, gaming and more. In 1H 2022, people are spending more time on the go and some of the habits formed during the pandemic such as video-watching and uploading content continue to grow as people leave their homes and do more on the move. As a result, video traffic now accounts for a significant 67.60% of internet volume.

YouTube is the main driver of video traffic over mobile, with 16.24% of total volume and 17.17% of downstream. If we were to combine Facebook and Facebook Video, Facebook would be the top culprit for total and downstream volume over mobile. Facebook is the biggest "brand" when it comes to traffic, with Google in second place due to its YouTube traffic. Social networking ranks higher for traffic volume over mobile, with 12.16%, compared to its global traffic ranking, where it holds fourth place at 5.26%. A

large part of that volume is attributed to Facebook Video, which has rapidly risen from 8th place last year to 2nd, with 14.37% of total traffic. This popularity on mobile indicates that people are using Facebook Video for posting and viewing videos, and for one-to-one video chats on their mobiles.



**Figure 7 : Global Mobile Application Volume Totals : Sandvine Jan 2023 report**

And in such scenario, we come across posts of various forms, in social media channels – namely YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc. and with various level of quality, trustworthiness and extractives to help decide consumers on their travel choice. The study thus elaborates on the scope if social media influencers have more effect, based on their credibility, followers and quality of content on travel influence behavior or it’s the e-WOM (electronic Word of Mouth ) that is generated by friends and peers of the consumer that they find more relatable while making their final destination / stay / mode of travel choice.

Thus, we study relevant literatures that touches the above aspects and arrive at a conclusion gap that would justify doing the said research.

In the researcher’s article (Chakraborty, 2022) , Will Travel Industry in India recover from the Covid Jolt in 2022 and beyond, I have tried to analyze the impact that the

overall tourism have had during the pandemic, looking ahead if the landscape would change in the overall thought process as well.

World over travel, India included, has taken a pause since covid struck. But as cases decline, vaccination status of India reaching optimal stage and since April 2022 – most of the international travel and airline movement has been eased – we see a trend of travel in India – both inwards and outbound. This article discusses the current scenario of world travel, India story, emotions evoked due to lack of travel and how the recovery path is looking specially in H2 of 2022 and ahead. And, does a different form a travel in the way of eco-tourism will become a prominent travel option going ahead in 2022. The Indian travel and tourism industry has been one of the hardest hit due to the Covid pandemic. With international travel all but coming to a standstill, the industry is struggling to survive. In this article, we look at whether the industry will be able to make a comeback in 2022.

The travel industry is expected to grow exponentially by 2022. This is due to the increasing number of people who are traveling for leisure and business purposes. In addition, the growth of the sharing economy is also expected to contribute to the growth of the travel industry.

Hence, we try to explore following:

- How is the travel world seeing the changes in consumer mindset leading to travel?
- Is there a growth path visible?
- And lastly – does an alternate form of travel in eco-tourism get its due ?

### **Current Travel Industry Economics**

The travel industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 5.4% from 2017 to 2022. The growth of the travel industry can be attributed to the following factors:

Increase in leisure travel: The number of people traveling for leisure purposes is expected to grow at a rate of 6.5% from 2017 to 2022. This is due to the increasing number of people who are traveling to new destinations and seeking unique experiences.

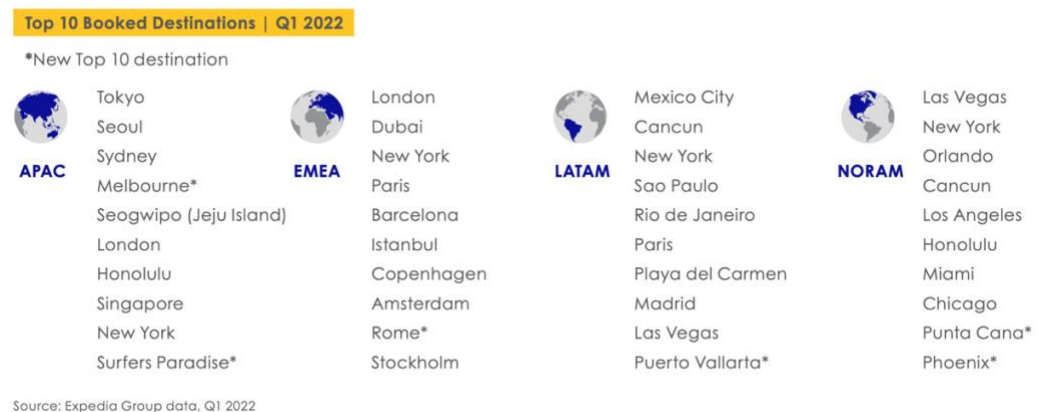
Rise in business travel: The number of people traveling for business purposes is expected to grow at a rate of 4.8% from 2017 to 2022. This is due to the increasing number of people who are traveling for work-related reasons.

### Global Travel Destination Trends

There are several global travel destination trends that indicate the Indian travel industry will recover from the Covid jolt. One trend is that people are increasingly interested in traveling to emerging destinations. This is due to a desire for new experiences and a willingness to try something different. India is an emerging destination that has a lot to offer travelers.

Another trend is that people are looking for more authentic travel experiences. They want to immerse themselves in the culture of a destination and really get to know the people. India is a very culturally rich country, making it an appealing destination for this type of traveler.

Finally, there is a trend towards eco-friendly travel. People are becoming more conscious of the impact their travels have on the environment. India is home to some of the most beautiful natural scenery in the world. It is also taking steps to become more environmentally friendly, which will appeal to eco-conscious travellers.



**Figure 8: Top 10 Booked Destinations Q1 2022 , Expedia**



## **Is Foreign Travel the go to option for Indians in 2022 ?**

There is no doubt that foreign travel is becoming increasingly popular, especially from India. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the increasing availability of affordable air travel, the growing number of tourist destinations around the world, and the increasing number of Indians who have the financial resources to travel. The second reason is the increasing number of international tourist destinations around the world. With new places to see and explore, more people are drawn to travel internationally. Additionally, the growth of low-cost airlines has made it more affordable for people to travel internationally. And with the rise of social media, people are more likely to hear about and want to visit new and interesting places. Another reason for the growth in foreign travel is the increasing number of Indians who have the financial resources to travel. In recent years, India has seen rapid economic growth, and as a result, more and more Indians have the means to travel. Additionally, the Indian government has been working to make it easier for Indians to travel abroad by relaxing visa restrictions and launching initiatives like the Incredible India campaign.

## **Are the hotels and resorts market showing signs of growth in 2022 ?**

The global lodging market is booming, with quarter-over-quarter growth of 35%. All regions are experiencing significant growth, with double-digit increases in bookings for both hotels and vacation rentals. According to a study by the World Travel and Tourism Council, the travel and tourism industry in India is expected to grow by 7.4% in 2022. This growth is expected to create 1.3 million jobs in the country and contribute 10.6% to India's GDP. The main drivers of this growth are expected to be the growth of the middle class, the increasing number of women travellers, and the growth of the medical tourism industry. The Indian hotel occupancy rate is expected to grow from the current level of 60% to 70% by 2022, according to a report by the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) and hospitality consulting firm Horwath

HTL. The report also said that the number of hotel rooms in India is expected to grow from the current level of 190,000 to 220,000 by 2022.

### **Can Travel industry overall see a rebound in 2022?**

Indian travel and tourism sector was one of the worst hit sectors due to the outbreak of Covid-19. The pandemic led to a complete shutdown of the industry with all domestic and international travel coming to a standstill. The industry is slowly starting to recover with domestic travel picking up in recent months. However, it will take some time for the industry to fully rebound. Reports suggest that in April, 2022 – Indian domestic air travel in April is only 5% lower than pre-covid era while international traffic for Indian carriers surpasses pre-Covid, as per Times of India, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 report.

### **Vacation Deprivation and the Pent-up Leisure Demand for 2022**

The Indian travel industry has been hit hard by the Covid pandemic. Travel restrictions and a general aversion to travel have resulted in a significant drop in demand. However, there are signs that the industry is starting to recover. Domestic travel is slowly picking up and there is pent-up demand for leisure travel in 2022. The challenge for the industry will be to attract customers back and convince them that it is safe to travel again. This will require heavy marketing and promotional campaigns. It is also important to note that the pandemic has changed traveller behaviour. People are now more interested in experiences than material possessions. They are also looking for value for money and are more mindful of their carbon footprint. The travel industry will need to adapt to these changes in order to succeed in the post-pandemic world.

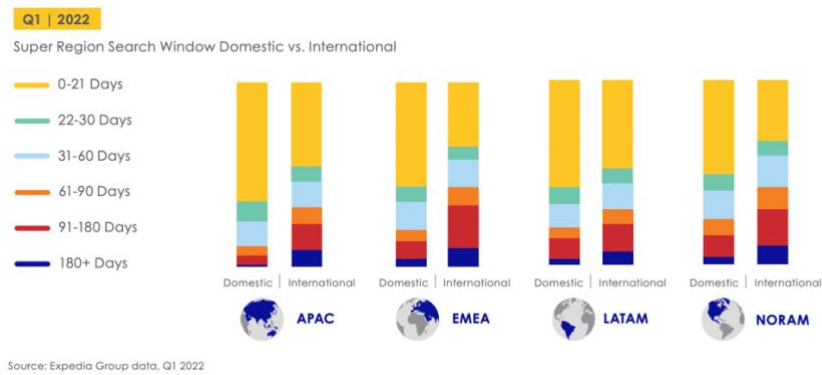
### **So, what will we see in travel world going ahead ?**

- Lengthening of search windows
- Vaccine requirements might put hold on few travel plans
- Eco tourism the way ahead ?

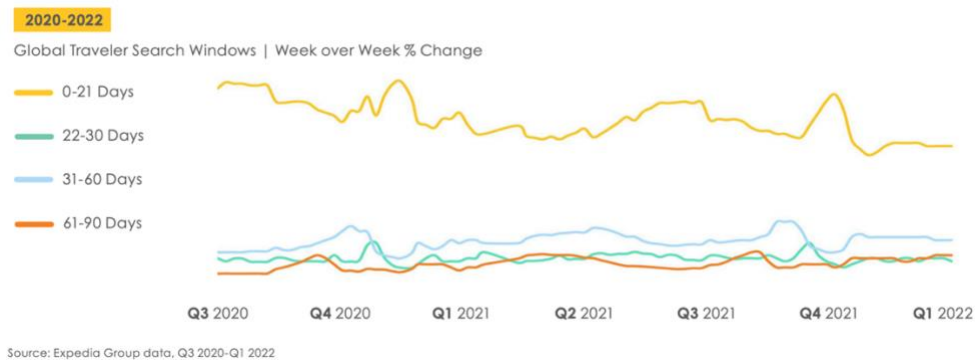
As traveler confidence continues to rebound, we're seeing an uptick in searches for travel in 2022. In fact, the average search window for travel in 2022 is lengthening compared to 2020, with more and more people looking to plan their trips well in advance.

**Here are some of the top trends we're seeing for travel in 2022:**

- Longer search windows: People are searching for travel dates further in advance than they were in 2020. The average search window for travel in 2022 is lengthening compared to 2020, with more and more people looking to plan their trips well in advance.
- Increased interest in domestic travel
- A focus on safety: Safety is top of mind for travelers, and we're seeing searches for "COVID-friendly" destinations and activities on the rise.
- A desire for unique experiences: Travelers are looking for unique experiences that they can't find at home. We're seeing searches for things like "glamping," "outdoor adventures," and "sustainable tourism."



**Figure 9 : Q1 2022 Super Region Search Window Domestic vs International**



**Figure 10 : 2020-22 Search window of travel Week over Week % Change**

### **Does Vaccine Restrictions limit the travel opportunity in 2022?**

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released their travel recommendations for 2022. The agency is urging people to get vaccinated before travelling. The CDC recommends that all travellers get vaccinated against common diseases such as measles, polio, and influenza. They also recommend that people get the HPV vaccine if they are planning on travelling to countries where HPV is common. The agency also recommends that people get tested for COVID-19 before travelling. This is especially important for people who are planning on travelling to countries where there is a high risk of contracting the disease. The CDC's travel recommendations are in line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations. The WHO also recommends that people get vaccinated against common diseases and get tested for COVID-19 before travelling. It is important to note that vaccine requirements and travel restrictions can change at any time. It is always best to check with the CDC and WHO before travelling to make sure that you are up-to-date on their latest recommendations.

### **Will eco-tourism see a huge demand in 2022?**

Yes, there is a very strong possibility that eco-tourism will see a significant increase in popularity in the next few years. This is due to a number of factors, including the increasing awareness of environmental issues and the desire to travel to more sustainable destinations. Eco tourism is defined as tourism that has a low impact on the environment and local community. It is often focused on adventure activities such as hiking, biking, and climbing. There are many reasons why eco-tourism is becoming more popular. Firstly, as mentioned before, there is a growing awareness of environmental issues. This means that more people are looking for ways to travel that are sustainable and have a low impact on the planet. Secondly, eco-tourism is often seen as a more authentic way to travel. When you visit a destination that is focused on eco-tourism, you are likely to have a more immersive experience. This can be very appealing to travellers who are looking for something different from the traditional tourist traps.

Finally, eco-tourism is often much cheaper than traditional forms of tourism. This is because it doesn't require the same level of infrastructure or support from the local community.

### **Is India doing enough ?**

Ministry of Tourism has initiated establishing 'YUVA Tourism Clubs' as part of the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 . Central Board of Secondary Education has come forward to support the initiative of Ministry of Tourism and issued instructions to all CBSE affiliated schools regarding formation of Yuva Tourism Clubs. The first Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022 was held on May 14<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in Mumbai. The Union Minister Of Tourism, Culture and the Development of the Northeastern Region (DoNER) Shri G Kishan Reddy also addressed the participants on May 15<sup>th</sup> about the various tourism related themes and discussions that included Potential of River Cruising and Cruise Tourism: Success Stories and Destination Development State Governments too playing crucial role in getting the travelling interest up. While Andaman and Nicobar Island Tourism Department is doing road shows and upping their social media presence – Kashmir State Team is opening up new destinations like Doodhpathri . 7<sup>th</sup> edition of ET Global Business Summit had best of travel brains announcing their India plans during the March 2022 session. Glenn Fogel, President & CEO, Booking Holdings announced their India focus story on their platform Booking.com and made customized air travel booking option from there – a first of its kind from the group. Tony Douglass, Group CEO, Etihad Aviation Group also announced to increase their weekly flight count of 161 to much higher number during the session. Airbnb partnered with local governments to encourage tourism to those areas to keep a hold on economic opportunities as the need of the hour.

It aims to understand and compare the impact of influencers, friends, and peers on social media when it comes to sharing holiday journey information. Additionally, it aims to identify which social media platform (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) has the greatest influence on travel decision-making. The insights from the study will help digital marketers in the travel industry (airlines, hotels, resorts, and online travel aggregators) to

make informed decisions about their budget and channel spend mix in their customer acquisition planning journey.

**Based on the description, the main goals of the study are to:**

1. **Determine the impact of influencers, friends, and peers on social media when it comes to sharing holiday journey information**
2. **Identify which social media platform (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) has the greatest influence on travel decision-making**
3. **Provide insights for digital marketers in the travel industry (airlines, hotels, resorts, and online travel aggregators) to help them allocate their budget and choose the appropriate channels for customer acquisition**

**The research problem that we can identify based on above which is further explored in the following chapter can be summarized as :**

- **"What is the impact of influencers, friends, and peers on social media when it comes to sharing holiday journey information, and how does this impact travel decision-making?"**
- **Additionally, how can digital marketers in the travel industry use this information to allocate their budget and choose appropriate channels for customer acquisition?"**

**The ideas that likely triggered the research problem you provided may include:**

- An interest in understanding how social media is used in the travel industry and how it affects decision-making.
- Recognition that influencers, friends, and peers all play a role in shaping people's perceptions and decisions when it comes to planning holidays.
- A desire to help digital marketers in the travel industry make more informed decisions about how to allocate their budget and choose appropriate channels for customer acquisition.

- Observation that there is a growing use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter in the travel industry, and a desire to understand which platform has the greatest influence on travel decision-making.
- A need to understand the impact of social media on travel planning, as the industry continues to evolve and adapt to new digital trends.

All of these factors may have influenced the development of the research problem, which aims to explore the impact of influencers, friends, and peers on social media when it comes to sharing holiday journey information and how this impact travel decision-making, and provide insights for digital marketers in the travel industry to help them allocate their budget and choose appropriate channels for customer acquisition.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

In today's travel environment that is constantly evolving – more so for outside factors than inward factors – we look at the current state of affairs that we can perhaps dig deep into . Social Media will play a large role in travel decision making and there is bound to be varied level of influence from three major factor – social media influencer, friends and peers and the combined effect of word of mouth ( electronic ) .

When speaking to digital / social marketers, and reading related article (Pop et al., 2021) have come across these interesting facets of human behavior when they consume social media posts concerned to travel (Oliveira, Araujo and Tam, 2020)

1. The level of impact friends, peer generated posts on similar topic when compared to SMI
2. The content posts leading to benign jealousy thus inducing travel purchase.
3. The elements of chat bots and data driven AI technology playing role in influencing travel intentions
4. The purchase journey and during which has which social media angels (SMI, friends, peers) has the highest impact.

5. The popularity index of current SMI and measure the highest trust factor when inducing travel purchase among the research population chosen and in the given time frame
6. The chosen social media channel (You Tube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. ) of choice when making travel decision making and in what stages are they being used
7. Use of link and location-based tools like Google Maps, Trip Advisor, etc. and their role in travel destination usage.

### **1.3 Purpose of Research**

#### **1.3.1 Aims**

The aim of the research is to find out

- Social media has effect on travel decision making and if yes how ?
- Influencers – be it paid , friends or peers – has varying degree of impact . The study aims to find out the same
- Also we try to find out if the image of the travel brand and destination over rides the positive or negative impact of the influencer in final decision making process

#### **1.3.2 Objectives**

The broader objective would lead to multiple sub objectives

1. To understand if social media plays a positive role in influencing travel decisions
2. To develop a better understanding that who among the three - Friends, peers, and paid influencers – in that order – affects travel purchase in study chosen
3. Understand if YouTube content followed by Instagram content are the two main channels that people use during their dreaming and decision-making phase or there are other applications in the chosen geography of study that exerts their influences in the given time frame.



4. Also develop better knowledge on the usage trend of apps like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TripAdvisor, if it grows exponentially leading to downloads of offline Google Maps in a period of 0-90 days of travel start.
5. If there is a buyer remorse that one can see, post or during travel , that he / she has taken under influence of any of the 3 influencers ? (SMI/ Friends / Peers )

Hence The major motive of the research is to provide mid to long term understanding of consumer behavior while making a travel purchase with respect to the varying impact that he /she experiences via social media posts of influencers, peers as well as friends.

In other words, unearthing the factors – be in form of posts, contents, videos, e WOM -across various social media channels that impacts their overall travel decision making journey – keeping in focus – 3 large impact creators ( SMI, Friends , Peers ) and the applications that they use to exert the same .

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the research will help digital and social media marketers choose a correct targeting strategy in social media while promoting a destination / brand / travel vehicle and help understanding the ever-evolving changing digital dynamic of the geography chosen for study. The research will also help to understand the varying level of usage of various social media applications during the travellers' journey of decision making and final purchase and hence attempt for better utilization of marketing budgets. The research we describe has several important implications for marketers of digital and social media in the context of promoting a destination, brand, or means of travel.

#### **Here are the key points that matter:**

Targeting strategy: the research will provide insights that can help marketers choose the most effective targeting strategy on social media platforms. By understanding the preferences, behaviours and demographics of potential travellers, marketers can tailor their messages and ads to reach the right audience at the right time and maximize the impact of their marketing efforts.

As per (Kumar and Mittal, 2020) , with the increasing use of smartphones and other mobile devices, brands and consumers are now in constant contact, surpassing the limitations of traditional customer connections. A wide range of channels, from traditional email to pay-per-click, search engine optimization, content writing, social media marketing, video, and in-game advertisements, allows brands to reach different audience segments according to their preferences and convenience.

Mobile marketing campaigns in today's landscape focus on optimizing corporate websites, emails, SMS, MMS channels, and building native apps, recognizing the significance of mobile phones as a preferred medium for accessing product and service information. This research emphasizes the importance of well-executed mobile marketing campaigns and analyzes the suitability of various mobile marketing channels for different customer segments.

Understand digital dynamics: research will contribute to a better understanding of the ever-evolving digital landscape in the chosen region. Social media platforms and digital trends are constantly changing, and by studying these dynamics, marketers can stay up-to-date on the latest platforms, features and trends that matter most to their target audience. This knowledge enables more effective and efficient marketing strategies.

As we read the book (Digital Marketing Strategy: An Integrated Approach to Online Marketing - Simon Kingsnorth - Google Books, no date) we get to understand the various dynamics that exists in modern digital world to understand the trend process and how things constantly evolve here .

**Summarising our learning that adds to the significance of the study would be :**

**#1 Digital marketing is the process of marketing a product or service through the use of digital media. It is part of almost every business decision, from product development and pricing to public relations and even recruitment.**

**#2 The focus of this book is on digital marketing, and the word marketing is as important as the word digital. It is critical that digital marketing be an integral part of all marketing activities.**

**#3 The modern Internet age began with the launch of Google in 1998, and the term Web 2. 0 was coined by Darcy DiNucci in 1999, but not popularized until 2004 by Tim O'Reilly. With Web 2. 0, there was no overhaul of technology, but rather a change in the way websites are created.**

**#4 The most important considerations when marketing your product or service digitally are whether it can or will sell online and whether there are ways to make it more suitable for online or mobile audiences.**

Social media application usage: The research will provide insight into how different social media applications are used differently during the traveller decision-making process and final purchase. This understanding will help marketers identify the key social media platforms that travellers engage with during their trip. By focusing their efforts on the platforms that are most frequently used at specific stages of the decision-making process, marketers can optimize their marketing budgets and resources.

We understand from (Amaro, Duarte and Henriques, 2016) the travellers' usage of various social media application study various facets on traveller behaviour . The existing research on social media usage among travellers has primarily focused on its impact on the travel planning process, highlighting the significant influence of social media on travel decisions. However, limited attention has been given to understanding the variations in social media usage among different types of travellers.

This study utilized cluster analysis based on travel social media usage to identify distinct segments among travellers. Additionally, the study examined the demographic and other travel-related characteristics of each cluster. The findings of this research are valuable for online marketers as they provide insights into the diverse ways in which travellers utilize social media and their corresponding characteristics. This understanding enables marketers to tailor their online marketing strategies based on the specific profile of each traveller segment.

Marketing budget utilization: With the insights gained from the study, marketers can make informed decisions about how to use their marketing budgets more effectively. By identifying the platforms and strategies that deliver the greatest impact and return on investment (ROI), marketers can optimize their spending and ensure their resources are being used efficiently to reach their target audience.

The results of the study provide marketers with valuable insights to optimize the use of their marketing budgets. Armed with this knowledge, they can make informed decisions about how to use their resources more effectively.

By identifying the platforms and strategies that deliver the greatest impact and return on investment (ROI), marketers can optimize their spend and ensure their marketing budgets are used efficiently to effectively reach their target audiences. This approach enables marketers to maximize the impact of their marketing efforts, improve the overall effectiveness of their campaigns, and achieve better results within their allocated budgets.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

**In order to address the research purpose as defined in section 1.3 , this study will address the following research questions :**

- **Social media has effect on travel decision making and if yes how?**
- **Influencers – be it paid, friends or peers – has varying degree of impact. The study aims to find out what level of impacts have on the target group of family as well as solo travellers?**
- **If image of the travel brand and destination overrides the positive or negative impact of the influencer in final decision-making process?**

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The study is based on the following theories that we started out and elaborated in the concept paper as well that serves as a theoretical framework as well

- Notions        social media plays a positive role in influencing travel decisions
- Notions        Friends, peers, and paid influencers – in that order – affects travel purchase in study chosen
- Notions        YouTube followed by Instagram are the two main channels that people use during their dreaming and decision-making phase
- Notions        Usage trend of apps like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TripAdvisor grows exponentially leading to downloads of offline Google Maps in a period of 0-90 days of travel start.

### **2.1 Introduction of Social media and Effect on Travel Behaviours**

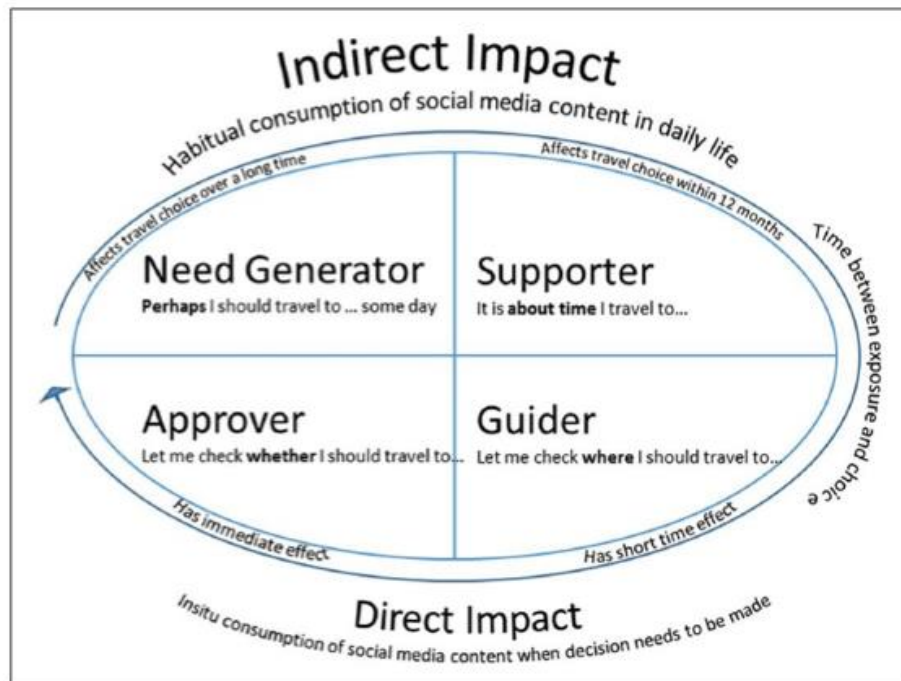
Social Media and its effect on travel behavior has been researched for ages. While studying the work of (Liu et al., 2020a) we understand that four roles of social media, namely Need Generator, Supporter, Guider and Approver has been discovered and studied and also suitable represented in a thematic framework as well. The study reveals the varying impact of social media in these roles frameworks – some being direct and some direct .

For example , while choosing the destination , social media role is more indirect as well as what mode to travel to that destination – but while on the destination , the decision from what mode of transportation to be used to which food joints to visit – social media has more of an approver . Relevant table and figures from the research have been added here as point of reference .

**Table 1.** Tourists' choices of travel components in relation to the use of online information.

Author (Year)	Travel behaviour framework
Sun (1990)	Transportation, accommodation, food, attraction, shopping, entertainment
Woodside and MacDonald (1994)	Destination, accommodation, activities, attractions, travel modes/routes, dining options, destination areas and routes, purchases
Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002)	Destination, travel party, attractions, activities, timing, route
Pan and Fesenmaier (2006)	Travel partners, destinations, expenditure, activities, travel dates, attractions, transportation providers, length of trip, rest stops, food stops
Xiang et al. (2008)	Accommodation, activities, areas, attractions, events, information, places, restaurants, shopping
Xiang and Gretzel (2010)	Accommodation, hotel, activities, attractions, park, events, tourism, restaurant, shopping, nightlife
Plank (2016)	Destinations, accommodation, attractions, activities, experiences

Table 2 : Tourists' choices of travel components in relation to the use of online information



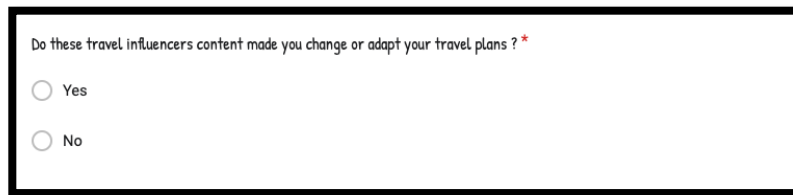
**Figure 11 : Role of Social Media in Tourist' Choice**

Here mention of location based apps or services like Trip Advisor , Yelp , similar plays an important role as per the researcher . The broad agreement to the research done by (Liu et al., 2020a) is the influence of varying degree of social media in our travel behaviour and decisions.

We see as scope here for our research to dive into the scope of finding specifics of social media influencers , comparison on the level of influence from peer reviewed features and word of mouth influence by friends community and an broader research pool .

Hence based on this finding we have added questions in our linked questionnaire as well as added the following question during our video interview as well . These being as follows

#### Linked Questionaries



Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ? \*

Yes

No

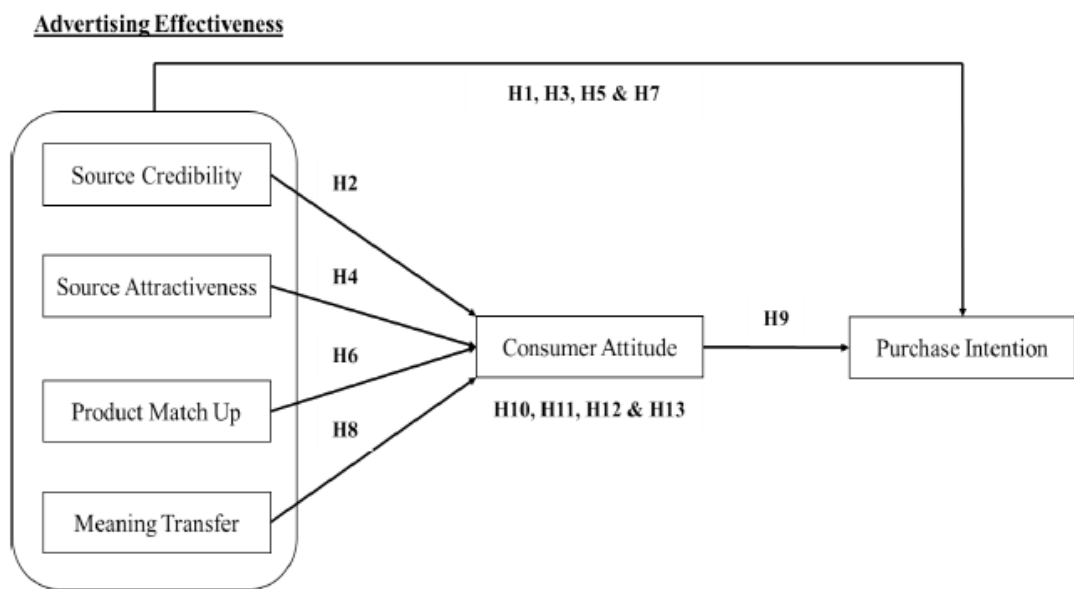
#### Questions used in Video Interviews

You have already selected a destination to visit but none of influencers endorsing it, what would be your stance on visiting that selected destination?

#### **2.2.1 Social Media Influencers (SMI) and their elements**

Influences exerted by social media influencers are studied by (Lim et al., 2017) focusing on four distinct elements like source credibility, source attractiveness, product match up and meaning transfer. An interesting take that critics the use of influencers, in a Asian set up – Malaysia – among university students – implies that that if the social media influencers are perceived to be less knowledgeable about the product or services that they endorsed as well as lack of product match up , least likely will it evoke a purchase intention.

Digital Marketeers are advised to take strong hint at this finding and the finding that attractiveness of the influencer too has minimal influence on the purchase stimulus. As per the researchers the scope of study was limited to university students with lesser purchasing power narrows the findings and hence a scope to take the methods ahead to get more critical understanding of the proposed research topic. Also details of apps, tools used by influencers and more importantly, to measure a specific product or service – remains interesting but unexplored facets to research .



**Figure 12 : Research Frame work used by researcher**

Hence based on this finding we have added questions in our linked questionnaire as well as added the following question These being as follows



How many social media applications do you use in your daily life ? \*

- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Other...

Which of these applications you refer before making a travel destination decision ? \*

- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Facebook
- TripAdvisor
- Google Search
- Other...

Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms ? \*

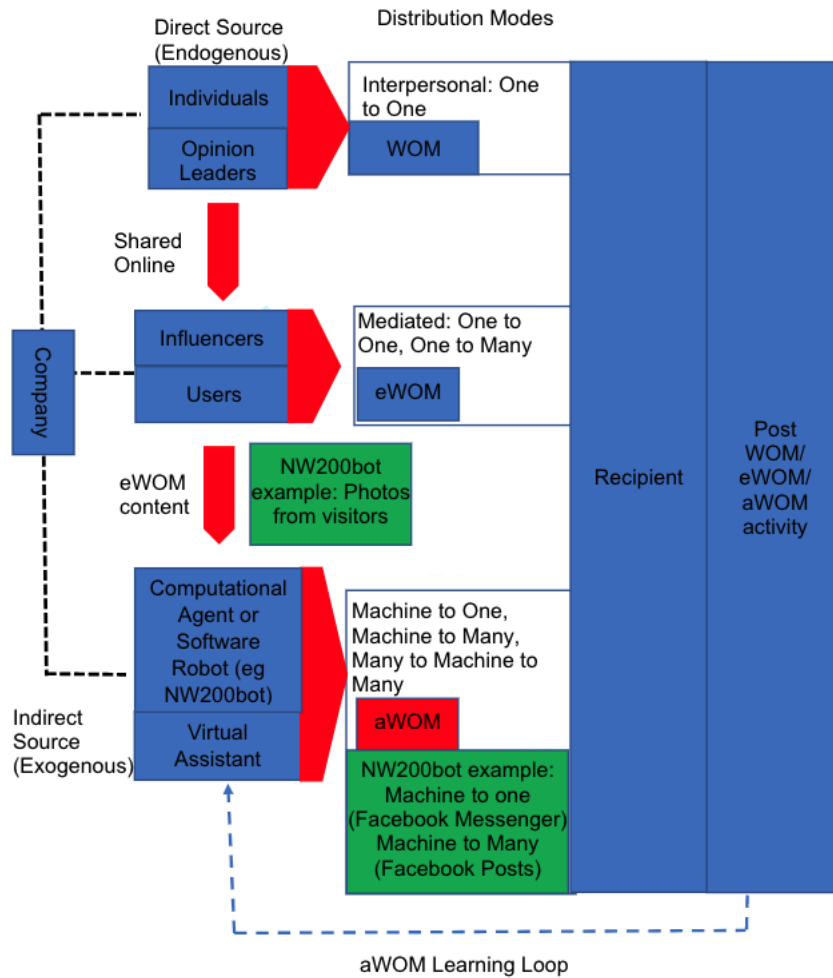
- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Facebook
- None
- Other...

### **2.2.2 Movement of Peer Reviews in form of WOM to eWOM to aWOM**

One of important element in social media research pertaining to travel behaviour influence is Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) which is studied by (Williams, Ferdinand and Bustard, 2020) and emphasizes the movement of WOM ( word of mouth ) to now Algorithmic Word of Mouth ( aWom) that can influence buyer decision . The same also focusses on opinion leaders' comments in e WOM and if they can be manipulated using aWOM which can increase or suppress demand of a particular tourism destination.

A great study that focused on new emerging world of AI (artificial intelligence) that can shape buyer behaviour – with growing scope of artificially induced bias. This study helps us to understand that we may look at tools like chat bots, Facebook look alike campaigns and similar AI enabled process that can now affect travel purchase decision and if the same be used on opinion leaders like paid influencers to stimulate buyer favoured response.

Figure 1: Characteristics and modes of communications.



**Figure 13 : Characteristics and modes of communication used by researcher**

The study opens up a scope to find out among digital marketers in the chosen research region of India, if they have managed to use such AI driven aWOM and if there has been some success in the same or do they rely more on eWOM that is being spread through users in social media , post their travel purchase . So through this study we have put a relevant question to each the same in the questionnaire or where the researcher have tried to fit in .

Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research ? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least ) \*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ? \*

Yes

No

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Did you feel it was worth the recommendation ? \*

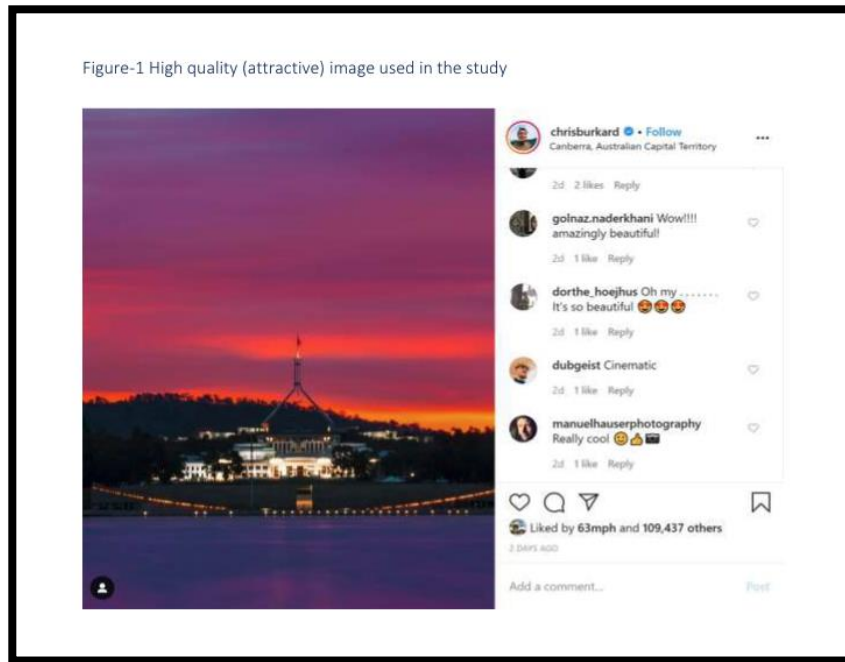
Yes

No

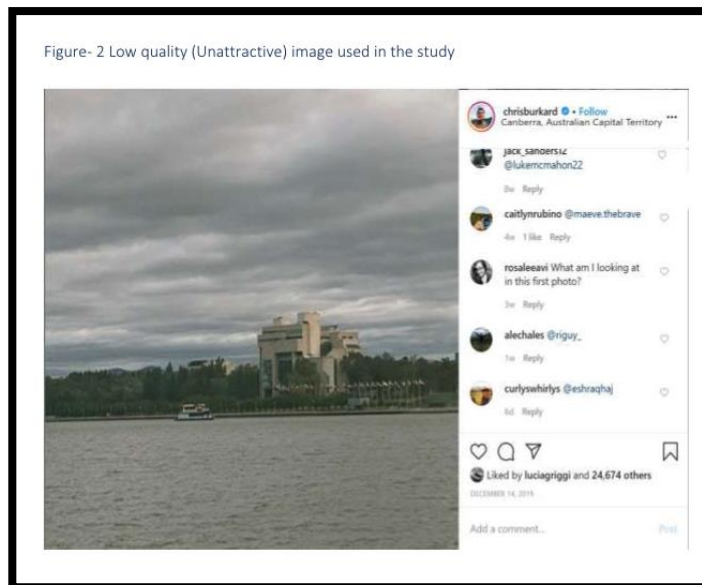
### **2.2.3 Instagram, Facebook , Youtube – major vehicles that SMI and friends / peers use**

The dissertation study done by (ANISH SHAH, 2020) on a very popular influencer application Instagram – and how they shape travel intention elaborates the effect that the population sample ( 18-30 age ) in New Zealand ( sample size 125) has via the posts done by Influencers vs non Influencers and comes up with interesting facts . The experiment took help of similar attractive posts done by an influencer vs non influencer and that the positivity to the influencer post was higher on major number of variables ( 6 out of 7) indicates that for a certain age group ( 18-30 ) Instagram influencers have a large impact .

Hence digital marketers using influencers in platform like Instagram need to ensure attractiveness of the quality of images as well since similar image posted by non-influencers did not evoke similar response in the sample population.



**Figure 14 : High Quality Image used for study by researcher**



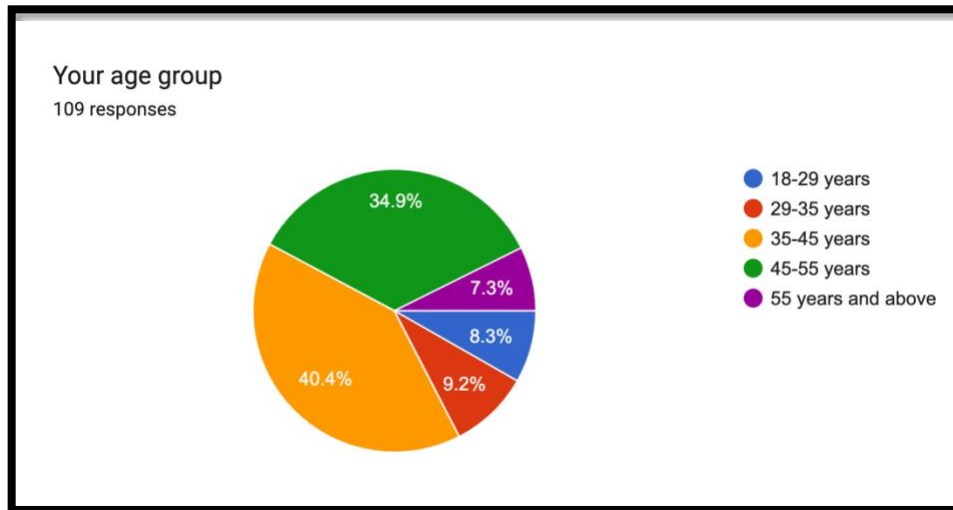
**Figure 15 : Low Quality Image used for study by researcher**

Table 1 – Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Source	Items	Scale
Persuasiveness of the ad	Pham & Avnet, 2004	The post Influenced my opinion about Canberra	1= doesn't influence my opinion 7= Influences my opinion
	Haws et al., 2010	The post changed my attitude toward Canberra  Cronbach's alpha = .905	1= Didn't change my attitude 7= Changed my attitude
Intention to visit	Alvarez & Campo 2014	I intend to visit Canberra in the near future  I would choose Canberra as the destination for my next holidays  I would prefer to visit Canberra as opposed to other similar destinations  Cronbach's alpha = .917	1= strongly disagree 7 = strongly agree

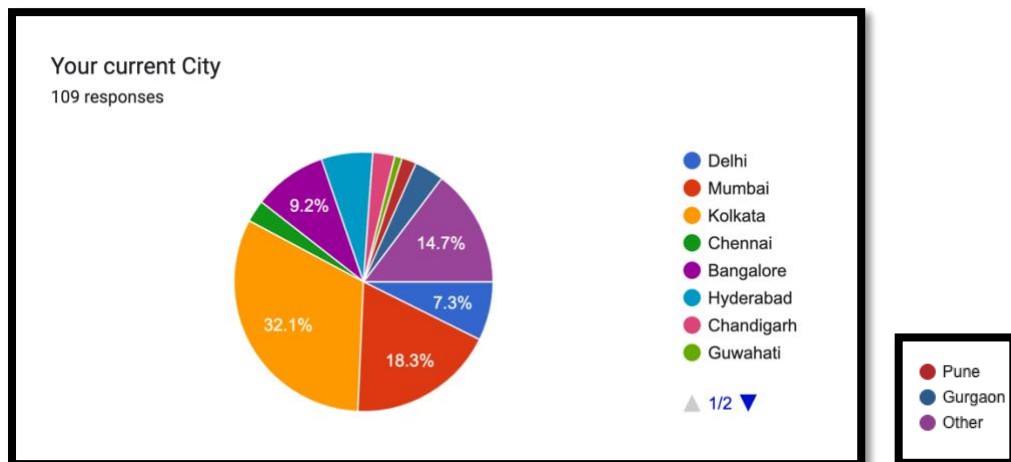
**Figure 16 : Variables used and their dependency and scale by the researcher**

That leads to the fact that trustworthiness coupled with attractive nature of the image posted – both plays an important role in positive decision making and leads us back to the earlier study done by (Liu et al., 2020b) that also highlights facts of source credibility and source attractiveness. This study hence identify gaps of the effects other major social media channel YouTube that has a large role these days during the dreaming phase of decision making of the travel purchase . Also since the age bracket chosen is relatively younger , there is gap where we can research to understand the effects that influencers across various platform has on the family travellers or mature travellers – scope of which is included in our study as seen below . A detailed analysis of the same has been taken in the later part of the thesis



**Figure 17 : Age analysis of the respondents used by me taken into account the gap in the said researcher study as discussed earlier**

Lastly , the region chosen was New Zealand which is a further developed and holiday prone region whereas India’s working ( business / jobs) are largely holiday deprived . The fact is evident from the graph of Indian Nationals travelling abroad for leisure as published by India Tourism Statistics at a Glance- 2021 when compared to the total population of India 1.35 billion shows a stark contrast percentage wise where in 2020 itself 1,00,000 New Zealanders have travelled abroad as per Stats New Zealand



**Figure 18 : Geographical city break up used by me in response to the geographical limitation as cited on the researcher’s study**

### 2.2.4 SMI vs Traditional Celebrities turning into SMI

On review of the study done by (Caraka et al., 2022) on Youtuber Influencer Raffi Ahmed and Nagita Slavina having more than 21 million YouTube followers on the effect that influencers have on Generation Y and Generation Z on travel intention – interesting results come across, the market being Indonesia. Since both Raffi and Nagita were popular actors earlier, their credibility matrix was higher and Gen Z and Gen Y, taking them as Social Media Influencers (SMI) and were found to be responding favorably to travel decision making from their VLOGS and also from their Instagram posts.

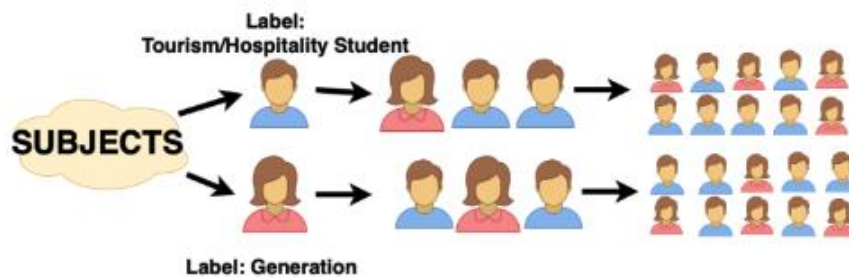







Figure 1. Snowball Sampling or chain referral.

### Figure 19 Snowball Sampling used by researcher

Table 1. Type of Social Media Users.

Generation	 Facebook	 Instagram	 TikTok	 Twitter	 YouTube	Others	Total
Millennials	15 (3.75%)	143 (35.75%)	8 (2%)	13(3.25%)	16 (4%)	5 (1.25%)	200
Zoomers	10(2.5%)	123(30.75%)	20(5%)	6 (1.5%)	24 (6%)	17(4.25%)	200
Total	25	266	28	19	40	22	400

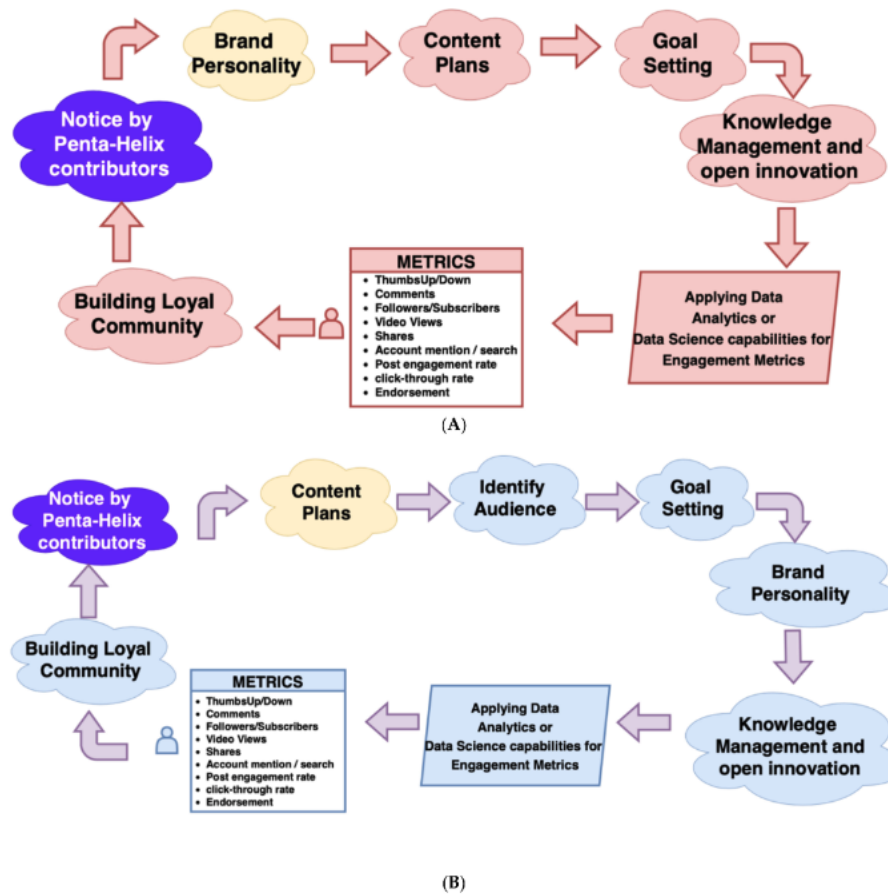
### Figure 20 Type of social media users



**Table 2.** Daily social media usage across generations.

Generation	<1 h	1–2 h	2–4 h	4–6 h	>6 h	Total
Millennials	18 (9%)	49 (24.5%)	57 (28.5%)	35(17.5%)	41(20.5%)	200
Zoomers	17 (8.5%)	31 (15.5%)	70(35%)	36 (18%)	46(23%)	200
Total	35	80	127	71	87	400

**Figure 21** Daily social media usage



**Figure 7.** Branding Strategy in the Digital Age for Actor Professional (A) and Newcomer (B).

**Figure 22** Branding strategy as proposed by researcher

This validates that SMI when used favorably can bring in impact on travel purchase and puts a very high quantitative study based on various statistical tools to measure the impact. This literature brings out the scope which we can fulfill from our research would be to compare a qualitative approach to a study as travel is largely emotional exercise. Also, each a study across at least 2 or more age groups – unlike only Gen Z and Gen Y being used here – shall give digital marketers a broader scope to customize their promotional plan from our research. Lastly, the measure of comparison between SMI vs friend’s vs peers is also a large scope that can help us understand which age group has the largest influence across all the said 3 said influencers.

**Based on the above gaps , the following questionnaires were used in the research**

Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ? \*

Yes

No

Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ? \*

Yes

No

---

Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ? \*

Yes

No

---

If yes , where did you travel ? \*

Short answer text

.....

---

Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ? \*

Yes

No

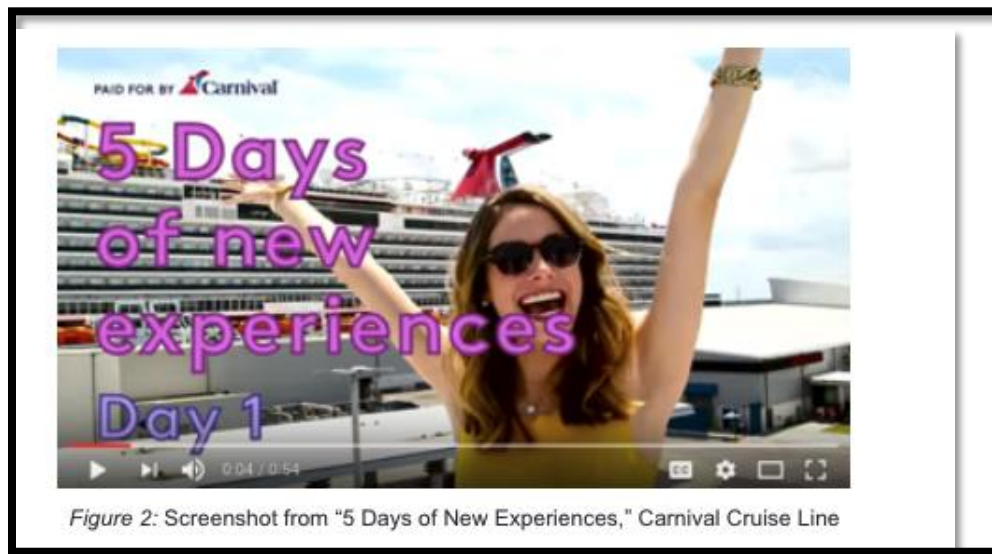
In the study of role of Social Media Influencers (SMI) – Lucie Fink - on LifeStyle Branding by (Morgan Glucksman, 2017) in brand promotions using two popular platforms – Instagram and YouTube and try to unearth how the 3 essential characteristics ( Confidence , Authenticity , Interactivity )of the former manages to work for / against the brand / services they are promoting .

The study reveals that as long as the SMI is showing the elements of the products being used is part of his/her daily life , pentadic analysis – shows higher level of trust building as the SMI has also indulged in higher level of interactivity with her followers ( Lucie Fink) .



Figure 1: Murad advertisement on Instagram posted by @luciefink

Figure 23 Sample Instagram post by influencer as used by researcher



**Figure 24 Sample video grab of the video posted by influencer as used by researcher**



**Figure 25 Sample video grab of the video posted by influencer as used by researcher**

The lack of larger research pool and geographical limitation enhances our scope of study on the effects of SMI on various allied life style subjects like holidays in reference here . Also cross study on the above effect that the SMI ( Lucie Fink) shown as when compared to friends or peers of her followers would have been an interesting angle , similar to which we like to study and explore in our research .

Friends and peers when they post travel related content exposure induces a benign envy as well as positive association among travel consumers says (Latif et al., 2020) in the study in Pakistan Facebook users (295). The hypothesis developed by the researchers was successfully defended and are in sync with our research theories of the impact that friends and peers have on travel consumers when they most of social media channels. The scope that comparison and final travel purchase was missing as well as a comparison if SMI would have changed a travel destination decision when compared to a destination posted by friends in social media channel would be the areas that we would like to understand and go deeper in our study.

**Following questionnaires were added in our research to remove the gaps**

Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ? \*

Yes

No

---

Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ? \*

Yes

No

---

If yes , where did you travel ? \*

Short answer text

---

Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ? \*

Yes

No

### **2.2.5 Consumer Decision Making Journey under effect of Social Media Influence**

The study done by (Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro, 2019) on customer decision journey in tourism under influence of social networks and digital influencers elaborates that the SMI has little impact on the travel decisions on their followers but tend to initiate a search on their suggested sites and applications – Instagram being the highest point of reference.

The study elaborates various phases of impact by SMI from knowing about products or services, evaluation, purchase decision and post purchase experience. This shows the impact that non-SMI posts on OSMC (Online Social Media channels) have lesser impact in a pre-planning stage as compared to what SMI posts.

Overall results indicate that only those who are followers of a particular SMI and in platform like Instagram rely on the experiences shared by the latter for a destination / travel choice than the non-followers – leading to believe that SMI has little or no influence on the final choice.

Impact of YouTube as search channels and Facebook posts by non-SMI are not defined broadly here. Also, respondents since were arrived at snowball technique, proper sampling universe was lacking as mostly Female respondents have participated here in the research, the response was also slightly skewed. Additionally, the research was done in a pre-Covid phase of August 2019 – lot of travel behaviour has changed since then.




**Based on above we added questionnaires that we asked people when did they travel taking a date range of 2017-2021 hence keeping pre covid and during covid travel as well . Also we took into account where all do our respondents follow their influencers and in which platforms ?**

Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years ( 2017-2021 ) ?

Yes ×

No ×

Add option or [add "Other"](#)

  Required  

---

Where have you been for the period (2017-2021) ? \*

India

Abroad

Both

Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms ? \*

Youtube

Instagram

Twitter

Facebook

None

Other...

Who is your favourite Travel / Social Media Influencer whom you follow regularly ? \*

Short answer text

.....

In contrast the study of impact analysis on traveller's mind based on SMI content and his / her trustworthiness (McNair, 2021) with respect to one particular SMI and the followers, leading to findings that puts emphasis on the trust, content quality that will lead to positive travel decisions. SMI marketing has been essentially ingrained from the past tenet of WOM (gradually moving from e WOM) has been rightfully discussed in the study.

The further research scope would help future researchers and current marketers, if provided with rating of major known SMI in travel field in chosen geography of the study and can help decide the level of ROI (return on investment) for such campaigns – depending upon the SMI chosen.

The impact of SMI has been proved umpteen times when inducing a travel purchase and this when compared to a traditional celebrity endorsement vs Instagram influencer, it was found that the latter has more positive influence on the consumers mind (Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu, 2019) . This also gives a broad framework to marketers when they plan campaigns in social media platforms and hence can take an organic approach on the use of SMI vs traditional celebrity.

The study leaves us with the want to understand if we can check how much of travel related products / services marketing will be impacted when used a SMI vs traditional celebrity and if the same would induce an immediate purchase towards the advertised brand. In the past few years, expenditure on influencer marketing has grown exponentially as we study the work done by (Lou and Yuan, 2019) where it was found that influencers trustworthiness , attractiveness has tremendous positive influence on their followers which is now by far established across various studies . This also hints at the fact the consumers when influenced by those who they follow would entice them to move towards a search phase and then towards a decision making and finally buying phase .

We can find out further through deeper analysis the time duration that consumer takes from seeing the influencer's post to final decision and how many times have the advertised brand / destination was finally chosen . Driving consumption choices was demonstrated in the study done on 514 Turkish Dutch population on social media brings in positive changes in the way people alter their consumption choices (Kizgin et al., 2018) .

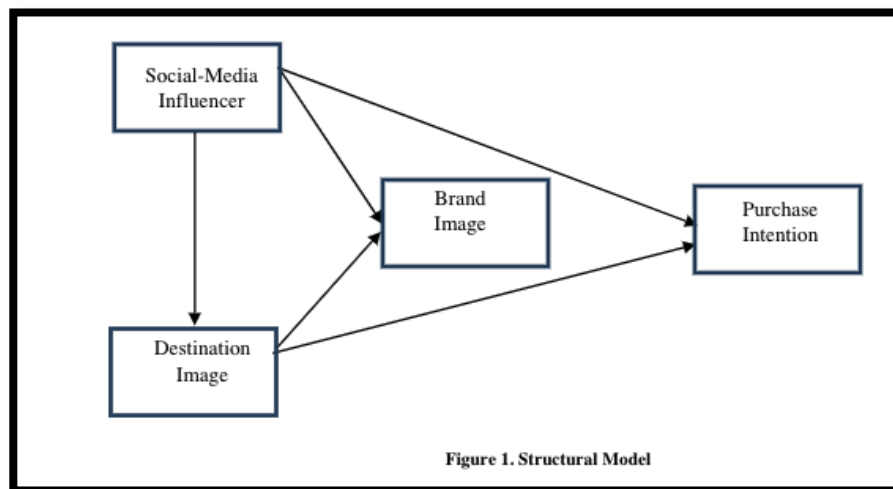


The effect of social media on immigrants on their choice , affected by peers and friends – brings an excellent facet that social media can bring communities closer , encourage brand intake and thereby leading to a positive environment.

The research brings to light the scope of use of alternate languages in Social Media Communication and posts that can bring in larger set of targeted population that otherwise would have been missed on assumption that entire universe speaks one language.

### **2.2.6 Destination Marketing through Social Media Channels and use of SMI**

The study on one of the major Indonesian destination – Bratan Lake brings us the knowledge from that a combination of SMI impact, Destination Image and largely brand image plays a very important role , according to (Putu et al., 2020) .



**Figure 26 : Structural model used by researcher**

**Table 1. Operation and Measurement of Variables**

Variable	Indicator	Source
Social-Media Influencer	Content of X brand's social-media influencer seems interesting.	Kim and Ko (2012)
	X brand's social-media influencer enables information sharing with others.	
	Conversation or an exchange of opinions with others is possible through X brand's social-media influencer.	
	Content of X brand's social-media-influencer account has the newest information.	
	I would like to pass on information about a destination image from X brand's social-media influencer to my friends.	
Destination Image	A lot of cultural attractions to visit	Lee, Lee, and Lee (2005) Qu, Kim, and Im (2011)
	Cultural diversity	
	Good quality of tourism infrastructure	
	Relaxed atmosphere	
	Unpolluted and unspoiled environment	
	Exotic destination	
Brand Image	In comparison to other products/brands, this is a high quality product/brand.	Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2009)
	This product/brand has a rich history.	
	Customers (we) can reliably predict how this product/brand will perform.	
Purchase Intention	I would visit this tourism destination rather than any other destination.	Shukla, 2010
	I am willing to recommend that others visit this tourism destination.	
	I intend to revisit this tourist destination in the future.	

**Figure 27 : Variables used by researcher**

Marketers of destinations need to carefully construct plan, as per researchers, to ensure that destination perception is portrayed in right spirit of being pleasant, pollution free and should match the perceived value analysis on money being spent and this study thus brings such factors closer to study in the process of destination marketing using social media influencers.

We will unearth in our study, post this literature review, how other friends, peers comments and posts on particular destination brings about some changes in the process of destination decision making as compared to what tourism board marketing team is trying to promote using SMI and in a specific geography like India.

### **2.2.7 Future of Social Media**

Social Media will have its own journey and path and (Appel et al., 2020) explains us a frame of social media marketing and its timeline based possible progress which can

serve as a tool for all digital marketing managers and even social media influencers who wants to add a scientific approach to their work.

**Table 1 Framework for the future of social media as it relates to marketing issues**

From: [The future of social media in marketing](#)

Predicted imminence		Focal stakeholders discussed		
		Individuals	Firms	Public policy
Immediate future		Omni-social presence	The rise of influencers	Privacy concerns on social media
Near future		Combating loneliness and isolation	Integrated customer care	Social media as a political tool
Far future		Increased sensory richness	Online/offline integration and complete convergence	Social media by non-humans

**Figure 28 : Frame Work for future of Social Media as it relates to marketing issues**

The path that social media has already been evolving from a human driven to data driven and use by bots would only bring in perhaps more quicker but less human approach is what is being described in the study . We have also spoken of the scope of movement from e WOM to a WOM can be anticipated from the study .This study paves a path where , post our research , we would be able to show a digital pathway framework on how marketers look at using social media from a image and text transiting platform to more sharp focused business intelligence guided platform that would make digital marketing the strongest tool in tourism marketing and travel experience sales .

### 2.2.8 Summary of the Literature Review and Research Gap

The literature review hence further establishes the need for further studies that would help digital marketers of holiday brands / destination marketing agencies to understand:

- The level of impact friends, peer generated posts on similar topic when compared to SMI
- The content posts leading to benign jealousy thus inducing travel purchase.
- The elements of chat bots and data driven AI technology playing role in influencing travel intentions
- The purchase journey and during which has which social media angels (SMI, friends, peers) has the highest impact.
- The popularity index of current SMI and measure the highest trust factor when inducing travel purchase among the research population chosen and in the given time frame

- The chosen social media channel (You Tube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter , etc. ) of choice when making travel decision making and in what stages are they being used
- Use of link and location-based tools like Google Maps, Trip Advisor, etc. and their role in travel destination usage.

While these above questions can be answered from this research however there will be a gap to understand the travel behavior pattern in vast landscape like India where even 3g penetration is yet to take place, leave alone 4g and 5g – hence question of social media usage. Having said that such vast landscape does have affluent people who can well afford a travel with family – be it in India or abroad. The further researchers can thus dwell more into rural heartland and tier 3,4 cities of India which remains largely untouched by digital or even traditional holiday marketers for whom this research is largely done.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Overview of the Research Problem**

In today's travel environment that is constantly evolving – more so for outside factors than inward factors – we look at the current situation that we can perhaps dig deep into. Social Media will play a large role in travel decision making and there is bound to be varied level of influence from three major factor – social media influencer, friends and peers and the combined effect of word of mouth (electronic) . In the research done by (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014) we study the impact of social media in tourism . And the key take away from the study would be that the research on the increasing role of social media in tourism has gained significant attention. Social media platforms have become crucial in various aspects of tourism, including information search, decision-making, tourism promotion, and consumer interaction. Utilizing social media for marketing tourism products has proven to be highly effective. This study conducts a thorough review and analysis of research publications focused on social media in tourism. It identifies the existing knowledge and understanding of social media's impact on tourism and proposes a future research agenda on the subject. The study concludes that research on social media in tourism is still in its early stages and highlights the importance of conducting comprehensive investigations into the influence and effects of social media in tourism management and marketing strategies. It also emphasizes the need to assess the economic contribution of social media to the tourism industry and its impact on local communities.

So in a broad terms the research is relevant as it studies cross impact of various forms of influencers that we come across during our dreaming phase of a holiday plan to a final decision making phase and across various social media applications that are available and relevant in today's day and age of the study.

As we refer (Fotis, 2015) we get to see and understand the fact that various forms of social media consumptions brings in varying degree of changes in consumer behaviour journey . The study discusses the significant impact of social media on consumer behavior, particularly in the context of holiday travel. While many studies have explored specific

aspects of social media's influence, there is still a lack of understanding of the overall picture of how consumers use social media throughout the travel process and decision-making stages.

To address this gap, the study employs qualitative research methods, including focus groups with active social media users who have recently taken a holiday trip. The findings reveal that social media is utilized during all stages of the travel process and decision-making, and six key themes are identified: information exchange, technology fluidity, functional spaces (inspiration, collaboration, decision making, self-expression, communication, and entertainment), and the social media-enabled travel process model. The study contributes to consumer behaviour theory, the theory of technology fluidity, and social media research in the context of holiday travel. Digital Marketing and varying use of social media tools have become the norm in modern customer acquisition programs (Digital and Social Media Marketing: A Results-Driven Approach - Google Books, no date)

Also since such cross referencing has not been done before that takes in to elements the varying degree of influences that each of the three influencers have on travel decision making as well as understanding of which social media tools are more important at what stage of travel and travel decision making , the study would become a template for future researchers to dive more on the tools that can be deployed both by digital marketers as well as social media influencers to make a positive influence on the decision making both for consumers as well as brands on various levels.

The role of social media in travel decisions is becoming increasingly important. Social media platforms have become powerful channels through which individuals can gather information, seek inspiration, and evaluate destinations, accommodations, and activities. The purpose of this research is to explore the varying degrees of influence exerted by social media influencers, friends and peers, and electronic word of mouth that collectively shape the decision-making process from the initial dreaming stage of holiday planning to the final decision-making stage.

One of the distinctive aspects of this research is the comprehensive examination of the different types of influencers and their respective impacts. By analysing how these

influencers influence each other, the study aims to provide insights into the relative importance of each factor and how they interact to influence travel decisions. Understanding the relative influence of social media influencers, friends and peers, and electronic word of mouth can help both consumers and brands make informed decisions and strategies.

In addition, this research aims to identify and evaluate the role of various social media applications in the different stages of travel and travel decision making. Different social media platforms serve different purposes and target different audiences. With new social media marketing techniques, one can deepen relationships with your most passionate and profitable customers — and win more of them than ever before (Social Media Marketing: Strategies for Engaging in Facebook, Twitter & Other ... - Liana Evans - Google Books, no date) . By examining the importance of specific social media tools at different stages of the travel process, the study aims to unearth valuable insights for digital marketers and social media influencers. These insights can help guide the use of effective tools and strategies to positively influence the travel decisions of both consumers and brands.

In addition, because this research approach cross-references and examines the combined impact of multiple influencers and social media tools, it fills a significant gap in the existing literature. Previous studies often focused on single aspects of influence or on specific platforms, neglecting the holistic understanding of cross-impacts and the varying degrees of influence each factor has. Therefore, this study has the potential to serve as a template for future researchers and provide a foundation for deeper investigations into the tools and strategies that can be used by digital marketers and social media influencers to positively impact decision making in the travel industry.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by comprehensively examining the mutual influence of social media influencers, friends and peers, and electronic word of mouth on travel industry decision making. By exploring the relative influence of these factors and identifying key social media tools at different stages of the travel process, this study has the potential to inform and guide both consumers and brands and influence their decision-making processes in the travel industry.

When speaking to digital / social marketers, and reading related article (Pop et al., 2021) have come across these interesting facets of human behavior when they consume social media posts concerned to travel (Oliveira, Araujo and Tam, 2020)

- The level of impact friends, peer generated posts on similar topic when compared to SMI
- The content posts leading to benign jealousy thus inducing travel purchase.
- The elements of chat bots and data driven AI technology playing role in influencing travel intentions
- The purchase journey and during which has which social media angels (SMI, friends, peers) has the highest impact.
- The popularity index of current SMI and measure the highest trust factor when inducing travel purchase among the research population chosen and in the given time frame
- The chosen social media channel (You Tube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. ) of choice when making travel decision making and in what stages are they being used
- Use of link and location-based tools like Google Maps, Trip Advisor, etc. and their role in travel destination usage.

### **3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

The focus of this study is specifically on Indian profiles who are avid travelers and actively engage with posts on social media platforms. The primary objective is to determine the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers on their travel decisions and purchases. By examining these factors across varying levels, the research aims to shed light on the factors that have a significant impact on the decision-making process of Indian travelers. As an exploratory study, the research aims to uncover and detail problems or phenomena that are not yet clearly established or explained. The nature of exploratory research allows for a comprehensive exploration of the topic and the identification of potential patterns, relationships, and influential factors. (Kalu, 2017)



By conducting this preliminary investigation, the research seeks to gain a better understanding of the dynamics between social media influencers, friends, and peers in shaping the travel decisions of Indian travelers. Through this exploratory research, the study will gather valuable insights into the casual phenomenon of travel decision making and the relative influence of various factors. This initial understanding will provide a foundation for future studies to conduct more detailed and in-depth investigations into the topic. Once the exploratory phase is complete and the casual phenomenon has been grasped, further research can be commissioned and conducted to delve deeper into the specific mechanisms, motivations, and impacts of each influencer type.

The findings of this exploratory study will serve as a starting point for more focused research. It will help identify key research questions and provide a framework for designing subsequent studies that can provide a deeper understanding of the intricacies of travel decision making in the context of social media influencers, friends, and peers. By establishing a solid foundation of knowledge through exploratory research, future studies can build upon these insights and contribute to the development of more comprehensive theories and models in the field of travel decision making . Destination management and tourism destintaion branding is the need of the hour and not being commonly practised (Blain, Levy and Ritchie, 2005) – hence makes the study more impactful and relevant as this gives the scope to digital marketer to understand the focus consumers and their influences when they plan their communciaiton exercises .

In summary, this exploratory research aims to uncover the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers on the travel decisions and purchases of Indian travelers. By conducting an initial exploration of the topic, the study will contribute to a better understanding of the casual phenomenon and provide a basis for further detailed studies to be conducted in the future.

Past studies have looked into promises vs delivery values (Dolnicar and Ring, 2014) but not dwelled much into the business communication effectiveness of such processes and hence remains a large gap that the study goes to fill on how effective promises via use

of influencers – that can be any form – friends , peers or social media influencers – can make a change to the travel purchase behaviour .

Such research is often used to detail out problems that is not clearly established or explained . Once the process of exploration is done , casual phenomeon has been understood , this would lead to a further detailed, deeper study that can be comissioned and conducted .

This study does not take into account the calculation arriving out of statistical significance or significance as indicated by (Johnson, 1999) where it was emphasized that such tools might confuse the real interpretation of the data in question . Instead, a qualitative case study approach will be employed, utilizing in-depth interviews with participants, to delve into the mindset of travellers and their impact on their travel decision making based on the varying degree of influence by three influencers : social media influencers , friends and peers . To ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings, a triangulation method will be employed, where data collected from multiple sources will be combined and analyzed.

This triangulation approach, as advocated (Johnson et al., 2017) helps mitigate any potential biases that may arise from relying solely on a single research method. By adopting this comprehensive approach, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the relationship between traveller mindset , impact on social media posts and final travel purchase . The triangulation approach to be taken is from data source ( Linked Suverys, In Depth Interviews ) asking about the same phenomenon ( Impact on travel influences , peers and friends on travel decision making ) across a time line ( May- December 2022 )

**In the research hence using triangulation was used to achieve the following :**

- Reviewed all related literature based on research objectives
- Conducted linked survey again in accordance to research objective so that the researcher can verify from the findings from the literature that have been reviewed
- Additionally as a third approach , the researcher have conducted one on one interview on chosen pool of respondents in order to analyse the data that has come

from linked surveys to in order to conclude the research and share the findings that would help further researchers.

### **3.3 Research Purpose and Questions**

The major objective of the research is to provide mid to long-term understanding of consumer behaviour while making a travel purchase with respect to the varying impact that he /she experiences via social media posts of influencers, peers as well as friends.

In other words, unearthing the factors – be in form of posts, contents, videos, e WOM -across various social media channels that impacts their overall travel decision making journey – keeping in focus – 3 large impact creators ( SMI, Friends , Peers ) and the applications that they use to exert the same . In order to address the research objective as defined above , this study will address the following research questions :

- 1. Social media has effect on travel decision making and if yes how?**
- 2. Influencers – be it paid, friends or peers – has varying degree of impact. The study aims to find out what level of impacts have on the target group of family as well as solo travellers?**
- 3. If image of the travel brand and destination overrides the positive or negative impact of the influencer in final decision-making process?**

The broader objective would lead to multiple sub objectives

- 1. To understand if social media plays a positive role in influencing travel decisions**
- 2. To develop a better understanding that who among the three - Friends, peers, and paid influencers – in that order – affects travel purchase in study chosen**
- 3. Understand if YouTube content followed by Instagram content are the two main channels that people use during their dreaming and decision-making phase or there are other applications in the chosen geography of study that exerts their influences in the given time frame.**
- 4. Also develop better knowledge on the usage trend of apps like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TripAdvisor, if it grows exponentially leading to downloads of offline Google Maps in a period of 0-90 days of travel start.**

5. *If there is a buyer remorse that one can see, post or during travel, that he / she has taken under influence of any of the 3 influencers? (SMI/ Friends / Peers)*

### **3.4 Research Design and Approach**

The way we human are designed to think, emote, and act, a logic driven deductive method might not generate the result that we are looking at the proposed study. Additionally preliminary literature review shows that the relationship between social media influencers vs friends vs peers are all segregated and no one concrete study to look the their relative influence in the targeted geography of study pertaining to travel decision making. In the realm of travel decision-making, understanding the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers is essential. However, existing literature lacks a comprehensive study that examines their distinct impacts, particularly within the targeted geography of interest. Recognizing the limitations of a deductive approach, this research opts for an exploratory and qualitative methodology to achieve the desired outcomes.

#### **Rationality explained :**

The proposed study acknowledges that a purely deductive approach may not yield the desired results given the complex nature of human thought, emotion, and action. The preliminary literature review reveals a gap in understanding the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers in the context of travel decisions, particularly in the destination of interest.

To address these limitations and fill the research gap, an exploratory and qualitative methodology was adopted. This approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the topic and provides valuable insight into the varying impacts of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions. By choosing an exploratory approach, the research aims to gain a holistic understanding of the dynamics between these different social actors and their influence on travel decisions. This qualitative methodology will allow researchers to explore the nuances of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviours related to social media and travel decisions. Through this approach, the study will provide a comprehensive examination of the relative influence of social media influencers, friends,

and peers within the destination region. This qualitative methodology will help to fill the existing research gap and provide valuable insights to the field of travel decisions.

**Methodology:**

**Step 1: Extensive Literature Review** - Conduct a comprehensive study of relevant literature exploring the impact of social media on travel behaviour. This initial step will provide a theoretical foundation for the research. The research delves into the detailed discussion of how social media data from various sources can be leveraged to extract travel attributes and land use variables, as well as socio-demographic attributes, with minimal cost and indirectly. By analysing social media data, researchers can gather valuable insights about travel-related information, such as the purpose of trips, transportation modes used, duration of activities, and destination choices (Rashidi et al., 2017) Additionally, social media data can provide information about land use variables, including the location of homes, workplaces, and schools. Moreover, socio-demographic attributes such as gender, age, and income can also be inferred from social media data. The article emphasizes the cost-effectiveness and indirect nature of extracting these attributes from social media source.

The first step of this research is to conduct a comprehensive literature review to examine the impact of social media on travel behaviour. For this comprehensive study, relevant literature from academic journals, books, industry reports, and other reputable sources will be reviewed and analysed. The goal is to gather existing knowledge and theories about how social media influences various aspects of travel behaviour, including information seeking, decision-making processes, destination choice, trip planning, and post-trip experiences.

The literature review will provide a theoretical foundation for the research and help identify gaps, trends, and key factors that determine the relationship between social media and travel behaviour. By summarizing and critically evaluating the existing literature, this step will provide the foundation for subsequent phases of research and allow for a more informed and focused examination of the influence of social media on travel decisions.

Step 2: Analysis of Influencers and Reports - Analyse specific studies and reports that focus on various influencers and their respective levels of influence on travel consumers throughout their decision-making journey. This analysis will help identify the role and significance of social media influencers (Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017)

This step in the research is to analyse specific studies and reports that examine the role of social media influencers in influencing travel consumers during their decision-making process. This analysis will focus on understanding the extent of influence that various influencers have on travel shoppers. To this end, studies and reports will be identified and reviewed that specifically examine the influence of influencers, such as travel bloggers, vloggers, celebrities, or industry experts, on travel-related decision-making processes.

The analysis will look at the findings of these studies and reports and examine the methods used, sample sizes, and data collected. It will seek to identify common themes and patterns related to the effectiveness of influencers in shaping travel decisions. The analysis will also examine factors such as influencer credibility, reach, engagement, and authenticity in influencing travel behaviour.

By examining the role and importance of social media influencers, this analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of how influencers affect travel-related decisions. It will provide insights into the specific mechanisms and strategies used by influencers to target and persuade travel consumers. The results of this analysis will inform subsequent phases of the research and allow for a more comprehensive examination of the influence of influencers in the destination and their impact on travel marketing strategies.

Step 3: One-on-One Interviews - Conduct in-person interviews, either on-site or via digital tools like Zoom, to gather insights directly from participants. Interviews will be recorded to ensure accurate data collection. As part of the research, in-person interviews will be conducted with participants to gain direct insights into their perspectives and experiences related to social media and travel decisions. These interviews can be conducted either on-site or via digital tools such as Zoom, depending on logistical considerations and participant preferences. Also since the study and data collection took place during the time

span ( May – December 2022 ) when the over bearing effect of Covid – 19 and social distancing was still there , a digital approach was taken (Davies et al., 2020) .

The interviews follow a structured or semi-structured format that allows for a guided conversation that covers relevant topics and research questions. Interview questions are designed to explore participants' use of social media at different stages of the travel process, their interactions with influencers and peers, and the impact of social media on their travel decisions.

To ensure accurate data collection and analysis, interviews will be recorded with participant consent. Recording the interviews for getting observational data will allow for thorough transcription and verbatim quotes, preserving participants' responses and capturing the nuances of their experiences and also helps to cross verify the linked surveys that was sent out to selected related based with elements of random sampling and hence reducing chances of bias (Malmqvist et al., 2019)

Conducting one-on-one interviews will provide rich qualitative data that will allow for in-depth exploration and understanding of participants' thoughts, motivations, and behaviours related to social media and travel decisions.

Insights gained from these interviews will contribute to the overall findings of the study and provide valuable first-hand perspectives that complement existing literature and analysis of the impact of influencers on travel consumers.

Step 4: Questionnaire Distribution - Simultaneously, employ a snowball technique to distribute a questionnaire across major social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Facebook, to gather responses. This method will allow for a broader perspective on the influence of peers and friends in travel decision-making.(Mars, Arroyo and Ruiz, 2016)

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the relative influence of peers and friends in travel decision-making, a snowball technique will be employed to distribute a well-designed questionnaire across major social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Facebook. This method will enable the researcher to gather a wide range of responses from individuals who have experienced travel and engage with their peers and friends in the decision-making process.(Illenberger et al., 2011)

The snowball technique involves initially reaching out to a small group of participants who have relevant travel experiences. These participants will be asked to complete the questionnaire and then share it with their peers and friends who have also been involved in travel decision-making. By using this approach, the researcher can tap into existing social networks and collect data from individuals who may not have been directly accessible through other means.(Clifton and Handy, 2003)

The questionnaire will be carefully crafted to gather information about the respondents' travel experiences, their interactions with social media influencers, friends, and peers, and the perceived impact of these influences on their travel decision-making process. It will include questions that explore the specific platforms and channels through which they engage with social media actors, the extent of their reliance on recommendations from friends and peers, and the factors that influence their decision to trust and follow their recommendations.

To ensure the questionnaire reaches a diverse range of respondents, efforts will be made to encourage participation from different demographic groups, including age, gender, and travel preferences. Additionally, the questionnaire will be designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing for a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviours.

As responses are received, the snowball effect will come into play, with participants sharing the questionnaire with their own networks, thereby expanding the reach and diversity of the sample. This iterative process will continue until a sufficient number of responses have been collected to ensure data saturation and representativeness within the targeted geography of study.

Once data collection is complete, the researcher will meticulously analyse the questionnaire responses, identifying recurring themes, patterns, and insights regarding the relative influence of peers and friends in travel decision-making. This analysis will involve both qualitative techniques, such as thematic coding and content analysis, as well as quantitative techniques, such as statistical analysis and data visualization.



The findings from the questionnaire distribution will complement the insights gathered through the one-on-one interviews, enriching the overall understanding of the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decision-making. This combined approach will provide a more holistic perspective on the dynamics of these influences and their significance within the targeted geography of study.

In conclusion, the snowball technique will be employed to distribute a well-designed questionnaire across major social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Facebook. This approach will enable the researcher to gather a diverse range of responses and gain a broader perspective on the influence of peers and friends in travel decision-making. By utilizing this method in conjunction with other data collection techniques, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the relative impact of different social actors in shaping travel decisions.

Step 5: Data Analysis - Collect and analyze the findings from both the interviews and questionnaires to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relative influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decision-making. This analysis will help identify patterns, trends, and insights.

**Conclusion:**

By adopting an exploratory research approach and utilizing qualitative methods, this study aims to shed light on the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decision-making. The combination of literature review, analysis of specific studies and reports, one-on-one interviews, and questionnaire distribution will provide valuable insights into the influence of different social media actors.

The research findings will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of travel decision-making in the targeted geography, providing a foundation for future marketing strategies in the travel industry.

### **3.5 Population, Sample and Time Horizon**

Based on the criteria you provided, the target profile for primary research in travel decisions could be as follows:

- Social Profile
- Demographic profile
- Geographic boundary
- Additional focus on age specifics , income specifics , geographical specifics and travel history specifics

#### **Let's explore in detail**

Sociodemographic profile:

- Men, Women, Third Sex
- Married, unmarried, divorced
- Educational level (to be specified according to desired granularity, e.g., high school, college, post-graduate)
- Occupational status:
  - Business
  - Service
  - Self-employed
  - Freelancer

Additional focus areas:

- Men and women in two age groups: 18-29 years and 30-55 years
- Individuals who have travelled at least once in the past four years (2016-2021), either with their family or alone
- Household income level: -
  - Group 1: At least 7.5 lakhs to 15 lakhs
  - Group 2: above 15 lakhs
- An appropriate mix of married and unmarried respondents to gain insights into their understanding and perspectives

By considering these specific socio-demographic characteristics and focus areas, the primary research can target a broad range of individuals who have relevant travel experiences and diverse backgrounds.

This approach will help to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence travel decisions within the specified target population. Our target profile for primary research

We aim to reach top 10 cities (metro / Tier 1) in India in a 6-month time span

- The cities in question are as follows: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Pune, Gurgaon .
- Time period chosen for the study is from May 2022 to December 2022
- Social Media engagement of platforms regularly used: Facebook / Instagram / What's app / Twitter / Moj / Trip Advisor / etc .

To reach the top 10 cities in India (Metro/Tier 1) within a 6-month period for study, we have taken the following approach :

Sampling: randomly select participants from each of the target cities to ensure that the different geographic locations are represented.

Recruitment: use online platforms, social media channels to recruit participants for the study. We create online surveys or conduct interviews to collect the necessary data.

Fifteen research participants who met the specified requirements were selected for the study using purposive sampling via video interview through Zoom . Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher uses discretion to select individuals from the study population who are best suited for the study. In this case, the researcher carefully selected participants who met certain criteria and were deemed most appropriate for the study.(EBSCOhost | 154190436 | DESCRIBING POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES IN DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH., no date)

### 3.6 Data collection:

We collect data during the period from May 2022 to December 2022, which coincides with the time period we have chosen for the study. A combination of methods can be used, such as online surveys, interviews, and social media engagement analysis.

By following these steps, you can effectively engage with participants from India's top 10 cities, explore their social media engagement, and gain valuable insights into their travel decision-making processes during the specified time period.

### 3.7 Participant Selection

The methodology proposed for the study includes a combination of primary data collection through a semi-structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews, and the use of secondary data from reputable portals and their ratings on travel trends influenced by social media.

To collect the primary data, a random sample will be drawn through social media channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The researchers will distribute the semi-structured questionnaire to potential participants with the goal of obtaining responses from 109 individuals. This approach will allow for a wide range of participants and ensure diversity in the data obtained. The questionnaire will be designed in a semi-structured format that provides a framework of questions and allows respondents to explain their experiences and perspectives.

In addition to the questionnaire, in-depth face-to-face or digital interviews will be conducted with 15 individuals. The researchers will use a snowballing process in which initial participants help identify and refer other potential participants who meet the desired criteria. This method ensures that researchers reach individuals who are actively engaged in travel groups and have a strong interest in the topic. The in-depth interviews provide the opportunity to gain more detailed and nuanced insights that allow for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence travel decisions and purchases.

Respondents included in the study are drawn from a variety of travel groups and travel enthusiasts. This purposeful selection ensures that participants have a genuine interest and engagement in the travel industry, making their perspectives more relevant to the research objective.

Secondary data sources will be used to supplement the primary data. Reputable portals and their current to past reports on travel trends under the influence of social media will be accessed (Martins et al., 2018)

These sources provide valuable insights into existing trends, opinions, and experiences shared by travellers on social media platforms. The inclusion of secondary data allows the study to gain a broader understanding of the topic and compare the findings from the primary data with existing literature and trends.

By combining primary and secondary data, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions. The methodology ensures a diverse participant base, in-depth exploration of individual experiences, and validation of findings through primary and secondary data sources. And based on the above approach semi structured questionnaire is the proposed methodology that we aim to use for the study where we divide the process of finding primary data in two following parts

- Random sampling technique using social media channels like Facebook and LinkedIn by floating a semi structured questionnaire and get responses from 109 people .
- In depth face to face (digital / in person interview) of 15 individuals using a snowball technique in order to re verify the details that usually comes out from linked surveys
- Respondents were from various travel group members and travel aficionados
- Secondary data sources from reputed portals and their recent to past reviews on travel trends using social media influence.

### **3.8 Instrumentation**

The questionnaire is used to capture the respondents response is shown in Appendix A . As a summary , here is the over view of the questions asked :

- Whats your email ?
- Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years (2017-2021) ?
  - Yes
  - No
- Do you use social media in your daily life
  - Yes daily
  - Once a week
  - Not So regularly

- Not at all
- Where have you been for the period (2017-2021)?
  - India
  - Abroad
  - Both
- How many social media applications do you use in your daily life?
  - Youtube
  - Instagram
  - FaceBook
  - Twitter
- Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least )
- Which of these applications you refer before making a travel destination decision?
  - Youtube
  - Instagram
  - FaceBook
  - Twitter
  - Trip Advisor
  - Google Search
- Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms?
  - Youtube
  - Instagram
  - FaceBook
  - Twitter
- Which of these travel influencers do you follow?
  - Travelling Desi
  - Mountain Trekker
  - Flying Beast

- Travelling Mondays
- Tanya Khanijow
- Who is your favorite Travel / Social Media Influencer whom you follow regularly?
- Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans?
  - Yes
  - No
- Have your ever increased or decreased your travel budget on basis of recommendations by social media influencer that you like?
  - Yes
  - No
- Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations?
  - Yes
  - No
- Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination, and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have?
  - Yes
  - No
- If yes, where did you travel?
- Post coming back from the trip, did you feel it was worth the effort?
  - Yes
  - No
- Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ?
  - Yes
  - No

- Did you feel it was worth the recommendation?
  - Yes
  - No
- I have a firm travel plan and no one can influence my decision
  - Yes
  - No
- I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer?
  - If he has more than 1 million followers
  - If the content is digitally pleasing , no matter how many followers he/she has
  - Influencer recommended by a friend
  - Authenticity and nature of information given
- Do you share your post-holiday pictures / videos in any of these platforms ?
  - Instagram
  - Facebook
  - You Tube
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - I do not share them at all
- Among 3, I trust (choose one) while making a travel destination / hotel / airline / resort decision
  - Social Media Influencer
  - Friends
  - Peers



- Any other thing you like to share?
- My name is
- I am a
  - Male
  - Female
  - Others
- Your age group
  - 18-29 years
  - 29-35 years
  - 35-45 years
  - 45-55 years
  - 55 years and above
- Your current City
  - Delhi
  - Mumbai
  - Chennai
  - Kolkata
  - Bangalore
  - Hyderabad
  - Chandigarh
  - Guwahati
  - Pune
  - Gurgaon
- Your current marital status
  - Married
  - Divorced
  - Single
  - Won't like to comment

- Your Income Bracket
  - INR 7.5 lakhs to 15th lakhs per annum
  - INR 15 lakhs and above per annum
  - Won't like to disclose
- Your Current Occupation
  - Working/ Salaried
  - Business / self employed
  - Professional (Doctor / Lawyer/ Consultant )
  - Retired
  - Student
  - Home Maker

### 3.9 Research Design Limitations

The following are the research limitations as described below :

- a) Online Panel : Since the proces of respondents , apart from the non video graphed one who can in via snow ball technique , people who do not have internet access could not be taken into consideration . But having said that , since we have chosen a certain specific geography , do have internet access and those who don't which is rare , won't be in social media anyway .
- b) Random Sampling : Since this is a random sampling , perhaps we have looked into a small universe of the population .
- c) Snow ball technique : Because snowball sampling relies on each participant to recommend others, the data collection process is typically slow when compared to other methods. Hence perhaps the number of video graphed interviews were lesser than what we would have wanted .

Based on the research article, there are several limitations that must be considered. First, the use of an online panel for respondents may exclude individuals who do not have Internet access. However, because the study focuses on a specific geographic area where Internet access is widespread, it is unlikely that a significant number of potential

participants without Internet access would be active on social media platforms anyway. Nevertheless, this limitation should be noted.

Second, the study used a random sampling method, which means that the study may have examined only a small portion of the total population. Therefore, the results may not be fully representative of the entire target population, and generalizations should be made with caution. Finally, the snowballing technique used in data collection may be a slow process, as each participant is responsible for recommending other participants. As a result, the number of video camera interviews conducted may be less than the number of respondents

4.0 Conclusion Increase the conclusion in order to make the chapter 4 relatable for some else reading the chapter .

In accordance to the research design that I have chosen and the method of study that I have chosen , the data being collected is being presented in the fashion that best explains the purpose of study

## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### 4.1 Introduction to Results

In order to address the research purpose as defined above , this study will address the following research questions :

- Social media has effect on travel decision making and if yes how?
- Influencers – be it paid, friends or peers – has varying degree of impact. The study aims to find out what level of impacts have on the target group of family as well as solo travellers?
- If image of the travel brand and destination overrides the positive or negative impact of the influencer in final decision-making process?

This chapter presents the analysis of the research findings based on the study conducted, which aimed to explore the impact of social media on travel decisions, examine the varying degrees of influencer influence, and examine whether travel brand and destination image override influencer influence in the final decision-making process. The chapter provides an in-depth examination of the data obtained and highlights the key findings and patterns that emerged from the research.

Impact of social media on travel decision making:

The first research objective was to determine the impact of social media on travel decision making. Analysis of the data collected revealed that social media does indeed play a significant role in influencing travel decisions. The study found that social media is a valuable source of inspiration, information and recommendations for travelers. It allows them to explore destinations, learn about experiences and gather insights from other travelers, which influences their decision-making process. It highlights (Werenowska and Rzepka, 2020) how social media has rapidly developed and brought together users worldwide, influencing various aspects of human life, including leisure and tourism.

In addition, research has shown that social media platforms provide travelers with a platform to engage with travel content, share their experiences, and seek advice from others. This interaction fosters a sense of community and trust among travelers, making social media a powerful tool for influencing travel decisions

Varying degrees of influencer influence:

The second research objective was to examine the varying degree of influence of influencers, including paid influencers, friends, and peers, on the target group of family and solo travelers. Analysis of the data revealed that influencers do indeed have varying degrees of influence on travel decisions.(Gholamhosseinzadeh, Chapuis and Lehu, 2021)

Paid influencers were found to have a significant impact on both family and solo travelers. Their curated content, recommendations and endorsements had a major impact on travel preferences and decisions.(Volo, 2010)

However, the study also showed that while paid influencers raise awareness and provide considerations, their influence wanes when it comes to the final decision-making process.

On the other hand, friends and peers proved to be highly influential among both family and solo travelers. The personal connection, trust, and authenticity associated with recommendations from friends and peers had a strong influence on travel decisions. Their first-hand experiences and direct communication played an important role in the final decision-making process.

Travel brand and destination image vs. influencer influence:

The third research objective aimed to investigate whether the image of the travel brand and destination overrode the positive or negative influence of influencers on the final decision-making process. The analysis of the data revealed an interesting result.

While influencers, whether paid or friends/peers, had a significant impact on travelers' decision-making process, travel brand and destination image had a significant weight in the final decision. Respondents indicated that a positive perception of the travel brand and destination outweighed any negative influence from influencers. The reputation,

credibility, and quality associated with the travel brand and destination were critical factors influencing the final decision.

In addition, the study found that influencer influence was more pronounced in the early stages of travel planning, when travelers were looking for inspiration and information. However, as the decision-making process progressed, the image of the travel brand and destination became more influential and eventually influenced the final choice.

Conclusion:

This chapter presented the analysis of the research findings, focusing on the impact of social media on travel planning decision making, the varying degree of influence of opinion leaders, and the role of the travel brand and destination in the final decision making process. The results show that social media has a significant impact on travel decision-making, with influencers playing a crucial role. However, the image of the travel brand and destination has a significant impact and may override the influence of influencers in the final decision. These findings provide valuable implications for travel marketers and brands in using social media and understanding the varying degrees of influence.

The researcher , as mentioned in the methodology chapter , qualitative studies and a triangulation method to re verify the depth of the results . The researcher hence has conducted 15 interviews with different types of travellers from various parts of India and across the chosen age groups .

In the research conducted by (Decrop, 1999) Qualitative research in tourism is often accused of not conforming to the principles of "good" science. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand, positivism is still the dominant paradigm in many areas of tourism research. On the other hand, qualitative researchers often fail to explain how and why their methods are sound. This leads to confusion and misunderstanding. This paper lists basic criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study and proposes triangulation as a way to implement them. Triangulation refines the concepts of confirmation and validation and consists of corroborating qualitative findings by showing that multiple independent sources agree with them, or at least don't contradict them. Denzin's four basic

types of triangulation (i.e. data, method, investigator and theoretical triangulation) are described and illustrated with appropriate examples from tourism.

The interviews were conducted between May to December 2022 . The interviews time duration hovered in the range of 30-57 minutes and all were done using a Zoom Platform . The study used Respondent to represent the respondents and alphanumerical to indicate the serial number .

**Table 3 : Sample Details of the respondents of video interviews**

Respondent	Sex	Age	Occupation	City	Marital Status
R1	Male	45-55	Self Employed	Hyderabad	Married
R2	Male	40-45	Service	Mumbai	Married
R3	Female	30-35	Service	Bangalore	Un Married
R4	Female	35-40	Self Employed	Bangalore	Un Married
R5	Male	45-50	Service	Delhi	Married
R6	Female	30-35	Home Maker	Indore	Married
R7	Female	40-45	Business Owner	Kolkata	Married
R8	Female	25-30	Service	Kolkata	Married
R9	Male	45-50	Business Owner	Kolkata	Married
R10	Female	35-40	Self Employed	Delhi	Un Married
R11	Male	25-30	Business Owner	Jaipur	Married
R12	Male	40-45	Business Owner	Mumbai	Un Married
R13	Female	50-55	Self Employed	Hyderabad	Divorced

R14	Female	35-40	Service	Kolkata	Un Married
R15	Female	40-45	Service	Chandigarh	Un Married

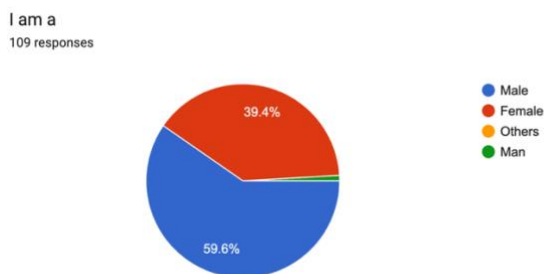
## 4.2 Findings of Results

We have kept mind the overall research objectives and have framed questions accordingly. Based on the same , we divided the responses and they results in broad frame work in order to make the study from detailed as per the objective in question.

4.2.1 A demographic study was done keeping in the target profile . The following questions were asked and these were the results

Question 1 : The Sex of the person responding
Question 2 : Your current city
Question 3 : Your age group
Question 4 : Your income group
Question 5 : Your current occupation

Question 1 : The Sex of the person responding



**Figure 29 : Sex Break up of respondents**

Findings : A mix of 60.5 % men and 39.4 % women responded to the queries . This is at par to the typical Indian population mix of 51.6 % men and 48.4 % as per 2023 census calculation report as suggested in <https://countrymeters.info/en/India>



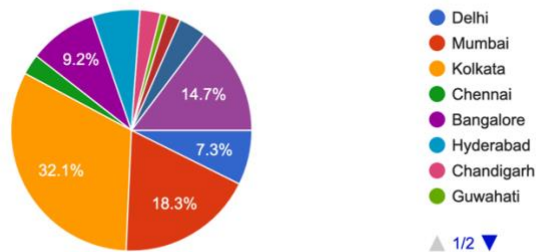
**Table 4 : Sex break up of the respondents taking video interview**

Sex	Total	%
Female	9	60%
Male	6	40%
Grand Total	15	

The overall ratio of Male to Female conducting the video interviews were kept at 40:60 ratio which means of the total 15 respondents , 60 % were female and 40 % were male .

Question 2 : Your current city

Your current City  
109 responses



**Figure 30 : City break up of respondents**

Findings : At the start of the research journey we aimed at keeping certain tier 1 cities as focus ( Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Pune, Gurgaon as mentioned in research methodology Chapter 3.5 ) .

We have received responses in these following percentages Kolkata (32.1 % ) , Mumbai ( 18.3 % ) , Bangalore ( 9.2% ) , Delhi (7.3 % ) , Hyderabad ( 6.4 % ) , , Gurgaon ( 3.7 % ) ,Chandigarh and Chennai ( 2.8% each ) , Pune ( 1.8 % ) Guwahati (0.9%) and rest 14.7 % . This falls largely within the bracket of city that we intended to target with 85.3% of the respondents coming from the city that we targeted .

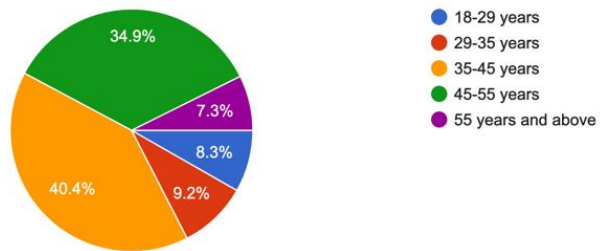
**Table 5 : City break up of the respondents taking video interview**

City	Total	Percentage
Bangalore	2	13%
Chandigarh	1	7%
Delhi	2	13%
Hyderabad	2	13%
Indore	1	7%
Jaipur	1	7%
Kolkata	4	27%
Mumbai	2	13%
Grand Total	15	100%

We got people hailing from Kolkata ( East of India ) city forming 27 % of the respondents , followed by 13 % each from Bangalore ( South of India ) , Delhi ( North of India ) , Hyderabad ( South of India ) and Mumbai ( West of India ) responding and taking video interview of the topic . We also had people from Chandigarh ( North of India ) , Jaipur ( North West part of India ) , Indore ( Central India ) each contributing 7 % of the respondents . The researcher wanted to keep a healthy mix of participants from various parts of India .

**Question 3 : Your age group**

Your age group  
109 responses



**Figure 31 : Age group of respondents**

Findings : The Age group that responded was well within the target as range as we started out for (Men / Women in two age group (18- 29 years) and ( 30-55 years) , please refer in research methodology Chapter 3.5 ) , with 35-45 years making the largest share with 40.4 % of the respondents closely followed by 45-55 years with 34.9 % of the total respondent count .

The balance were 29-35 years making a 9.2% of the count , 18-29 years making 8.3% of the respondents . But since the technique of data collection was adopted as random sampling , we ended up getting responses from 55 years and above making a low 7.3% since they were largely beyond the scope of the study.

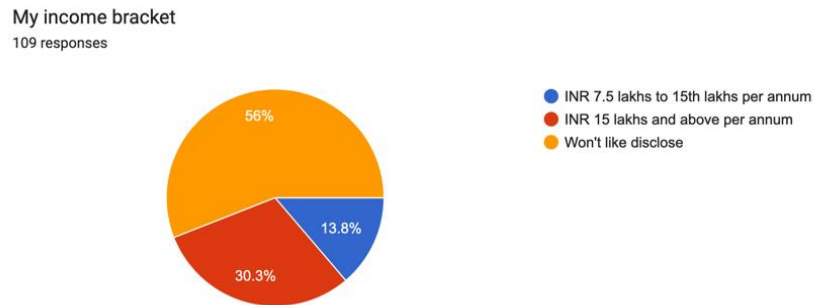
So overall of the two target sets of (18-29 years ) and (30-55 years ) we ended up getting a healthy mix of respondents where the latter showed up 8.3% of the overall respondents , which can be taken as a limitation of random sampling data collection technique , the formed count was a healthy , looking at 84.5% of the total count.

**Table 6 : Age break up of the respondents taking video interview**

Age	Total	Percentage
25-30	2	13%
30-35	2	13%
35-40	3	20%
40-45	4	27%
45-50	2	13%
45-55	1	7%
50-55	1	7%
Grand Total	15	100%

The age bracket appearing for the interview were from 25-30 years that accounted for 13% of the respondents , 30-35 years formed 13 % of the respondents , 35-40 of the respondents made up for 20 % respondents , 40-45 years made up for 27 % respondents , 45-50 years made for 7 % and 50-55 years made for 7 % respondents .

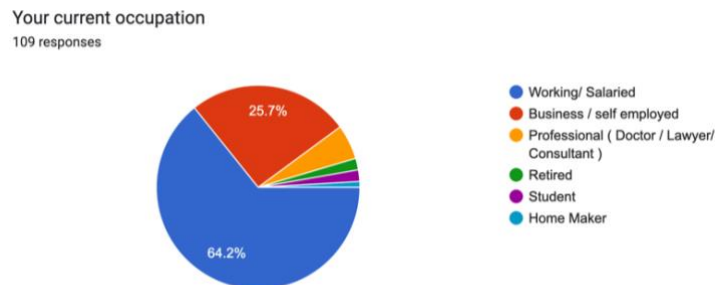
#### Question 4 : Your income group



**Figure 32 : Income bracket of respondents**

Findings A typical count where people largely up to 56% were not comfortable sharing their income . However , we got as much as 30.3% saying their income were INR 15 lakhs and above and 13.8 % sharing that the income hovered in the range of INR 7.5 lakhs to 15 lakhs per annum.

#### Question 5 : Your current occupation



**Figure 33 : Occupation break up of respondents**

Findings A large section as much as 64.2% were working / salaried class followed by 25.7 % were from business . We intentionally kept the question of occupation as its important to get an idea from a cross section of people across the top 10 cities the we targeted .

The rest included Professional ( Doctor / Lawyer/Consultant ) as 5.5 % of the respondents , 1.8 % as retired and same percentage as student . Balance small percentage of 0.9% are of home makers .

**Table 7 : Occupation break up of the respondents taking video interview**

Occupation	Total	Percentage
Business Owner	4	27%
Home Maker	1	7%
Self Employed	4	27%
Service	6	40%
Grand Total	15	100%

The Business owners formed a 27 % of the respondents of the video interview , Home Maker formed the 7 % of the respondents , Self Employed formed 27 % and service holders formed 40 % of the respondents . A deliberate mix of all walks of life were taken to get unbiased view of the topic .

**Additionally**

**Table 8 : Marital Status break up of the respondents taking video interview**

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Divorced	1	7%
Married	8	53%
Un Married	6	40%
Grand Total	15	100%

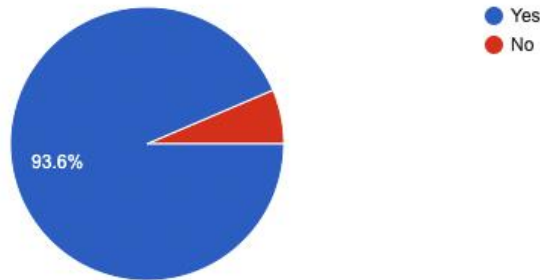
Married people formed a higher 53 % of the respondents while unmarried formed a 40 % of the respondents . We also took into account one divorced but extremely well-travelled single parent as well to add an interesting mix to the people responding .

4.2.2 A set of questions were also kept in order to understand the holiday habits of the respondents

Question 6 : Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years ?
Question 7 : Where have you been for the period in question (2017-2021) ?

Question 6 : Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years ?

Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years ( 2017-2021 ) ?  
109 responses



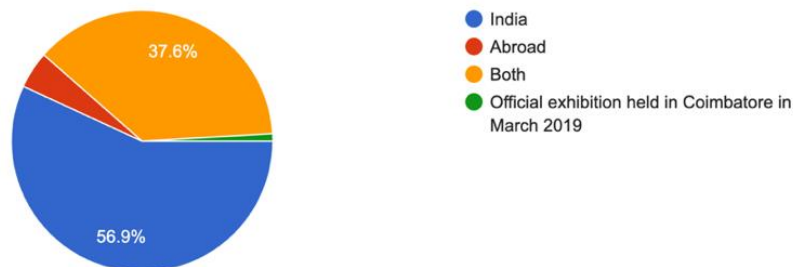
**Figure 34 : Holiday behavior in the period 2017-2021**

Findings :The respondents when asked how much of travel they have undertaken in the period 2017-2021 , as many as 93.6% of the total number of 109 respondents came up with a resounding yes and balance said No.

This shows that the people that whom we were targeting we correct with larger mix have had taken travel during the period of study in question . We have kept a slightly broader study period as the time horizon of 2021 and large part of 2021 , travel as such was highly neglected due to the covid impact.

Question 7 : Where have you been for the period in question (2017-2021) ?

Where have you been for the period (2017-2021) ?  
109 responses



**Figure 35 : Travel history of respondents for the period 2017-2021**

Findings :When quizzed which all areas where they have travelled , with options asked for if only India , only abroad , both , the responses that came in were as follows : India : 56.9 % Abroad : 4.6 % Both 37.6 % . There was a small percentage of Official Work Visit : 0.9 % that also responded .

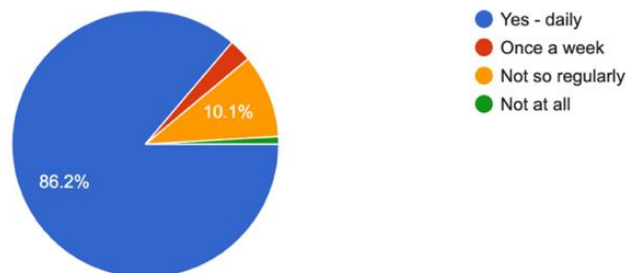
4.2.3 A set of questions that explored social media habits, influencers followed or not . If yes who all and associated questions. The section is divided into parts that focusses on various aspects of social media usage and influences exerted by each of the three areas of study: Friends , Peers and Social Media Influencers

4.2.3.1	A set of questions on social media usage habits
	Question 8 : Do you use social media in your daily life ?
	Question 9 : How many social media applications do you use in your daily life ?
	Question 10: Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research ? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least )
	Question 11 :Which of these applications you refer before making a travel destination decision ?
	Question 12 : Do you share your post-holiday pictures / videos in any of these platforms ?

Question 8 : Do you use social media in your daily life ?

Do you use Social Media in your daily life

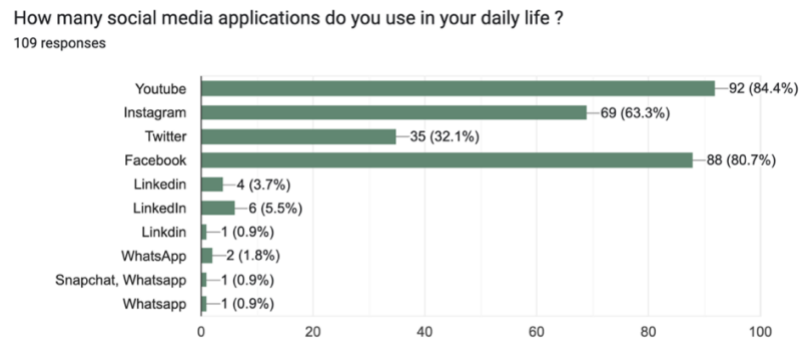
109 responses



**Figure 36 : Social Media Daily Usage understanding**

Findings : Since the theme of discussion of the research is social media and its impact , we asked the level of usage of the participants so that we can be sure that we are speaking to the right set of audience . Here the results that showed were true to the population sample targeted where as many as 86.2% used social media daily , 10.1 % Not so regularly and small percentage of 2.8 % used once a week and a minimal 0.9% not at all.

Question 9 : How many social media applications do you use in your daily life ?



**Figure 37 : Types of social media applications used in daily life**

Findings : A very large number of people when asked about social media consumption habits ranked Youtube ( 84.4% ) as the highest followed by Instagram ( 63.3% ), Twitter ( 32.1 % ) , Facebook ( 80.7 % ) , Linked In (10.1%) followed by communication sharing platform like WhatsApp ( 2.7 %) and followed by a minimal mix of Snap Chat and Whats app ( 0.9%)

As we read (Huertas, Míguez-González and Lozano-Monterrubbio, 2017) we understand the use of YouTube by Spanish destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to promote their destinations and communicate their brand identity. The study focuses on two key elements, namely attraction factors and emotional values, to understand how these videos shape the destination's brand. The research methodology involved analyzing the interactivity and visibility of the official YouTube channels of various destinations, along with a content analysis of the most recent 25 videos uploaded by the DMOs. The findings indicate that Spanish tourist destinations widely utilize YouTube, albeit with certain limitations. The videos predominantly convey informative content, emphasizing attraction

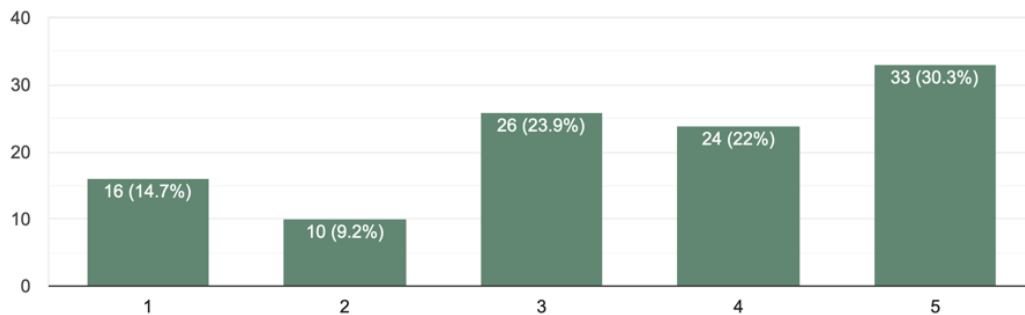


factors rather than emotional values. However, the presence of brand values correlates with better visibility and interactivity. Overall, this article provides insights, best practices, and recommendations for effectively communicating destination brands on YouTube.

Question 10: Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research ? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least )

Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research ? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least )

109 responses



**Figure 38 : Understanding social media application use for travel research**

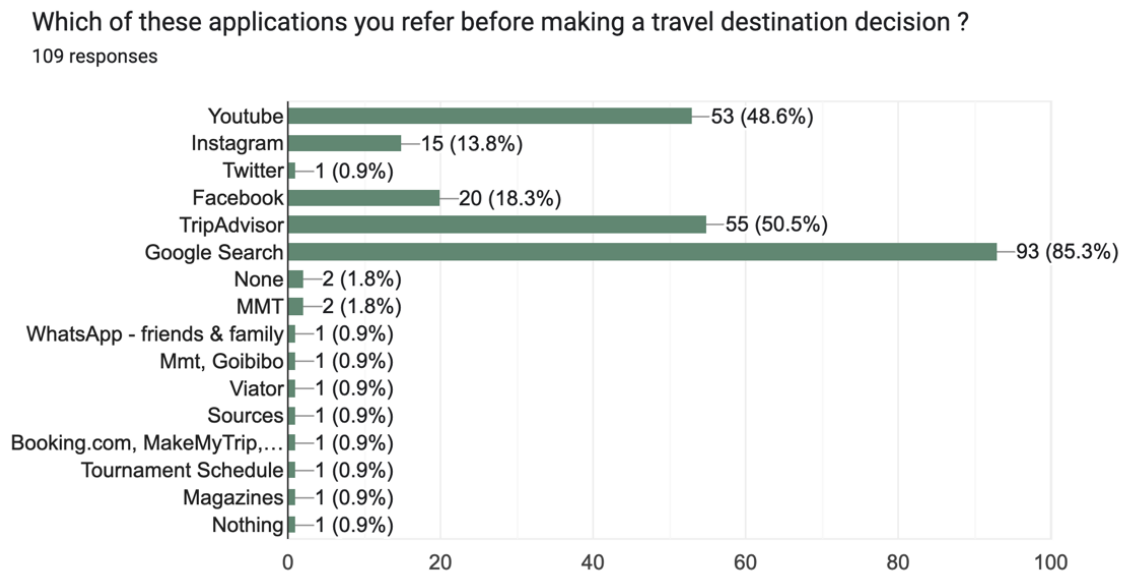
Findings: The scale study shows that a large section , 52.3 % has higher propensity to use social media platforms usage before making a travel plan that hovers between the higher range of 4 and 5 . And around 23.9 % of the respondents did adopt a median scale of 3 of the scale provided .

A smaller fraction of 9.2 % did show a low score of 2 in the scale and a slightly higher 14. 2 % did exhibit a lowest rating of 1 on the usage of the social media while making a travel plan.

The role and impact of user generated content has been established by (*Sci-Hub / The Role of User-Generated Content in Tourists' Travel Planning Behavior. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 18(8), 743–764 | 10.1080/19368620903235753, no date*) . This article presents research findings on the usage of websites with user-generated content (UGC) by consumers and their impact on information search and travel behavior. The study, conducted through an online survey, represents the perspectives of

over 12,000 hospitality and tourism consumers. The results indicate that while UGC sites are popular, they are not yet regarded as credible or trustworthy as established sources of travel information like government-sponsored tourism websites. Instead, UGC sites are seen as an additional information source that travelers consider during their search process, rather than relying solely on them. This study is noteworthy as it sheds light on the perceptions of travel consumers and their relationship with the informational value associated with Web 2.0 sites, offering valuable insights in a relatively unexplored area of research.

Question 11 :Which of these applications you refer before making a travel destination decision ?



**Figure 39 : Understanding specific social media application use for travel decision making**

Findings: The options that came up were varied and interesting as well. Youtube as a media consumption application remains the highest source of search when we start the travel plan with 48.6 % of the respondents using the same . Facebook with 18.3 % . Instagram with 13.8 % are amongst the one that usually respondents are looking into or logging in for search for their travel planning .

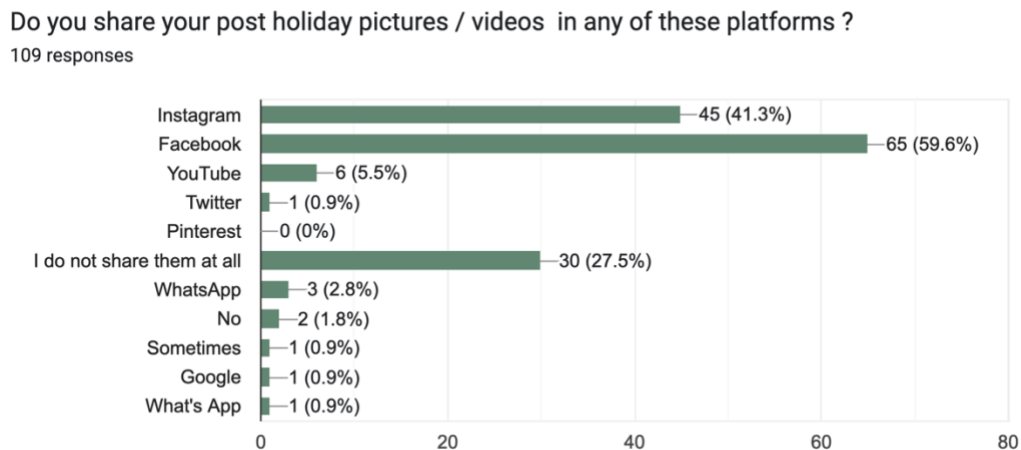
Twitter is low at 0.9 % and there are people who opted for None ( 1.8 % ) , Nothing (0.9 %) as well. A certain count shows on Sources ( 0.9 % ) where there is no explicit mention of the source , so did traditional search of magazine as well ( 0.9 %)that got mention in the findings .Tournament schedules is also one variable that showed up (09 % ) as part of search options .

Other low scoring sources being Make My Trip and Go Ibibo Travel Aggregator Platform ( 1.8% , 0.9 % ) , a shared data coming as well. Viator , another travel aggregator platform also did get a low rating of 0.9 % , Booking .com ( 0.9%) shows as well.

The data also shows traditional search tool Google ( 85.3%) as the base source of search due to the very high volume of respondents followed by Trip Advisor ( 50.5 %) that did throw up interesting data on how search functions amongst the 109 respondents .

Further suggestion : Google dominates hence You Tube is high – further area of study can be added

**Question 12: Do you share your post-holiday pictures / videos in any of these platforms ?**



**Figure 40 : Holiday picture sharing habits**

Findings: When quizzed about the sharing habits of post holiday pictures on various platforms we found out that Facebook ( 59.6% ) Instagram ( 41.3% ) were two very high percentage of shared medium .

This was followed by You Tube ( 5.5 %) , What’s App ( 3.7 % ) , Twitter ( 0.9 %) , Google ( 0.9 %) and sometimes ( 0.9 %) as options . While the last one has no credible source attached .

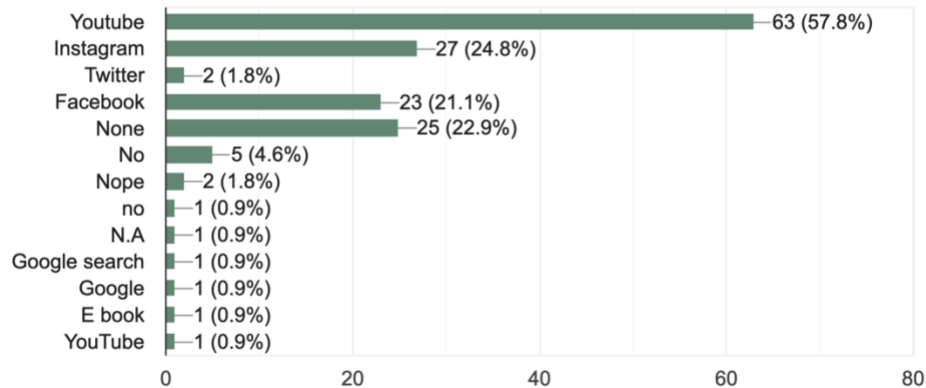
Interestingly a high percentage of 26.3 % of the respondents shared that they do not post their post holiday pictures on any platform .

4.2.3.2	A set of questions that explored influencers based questions and how much are the followed in the chosen respondent set
	Question 13 : Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms ?
	Question 14 :Which of these travel influencers do you follow ?

Question 13 : Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms ?

Do you follow travel influencers in any of these platforms ?

109 responses

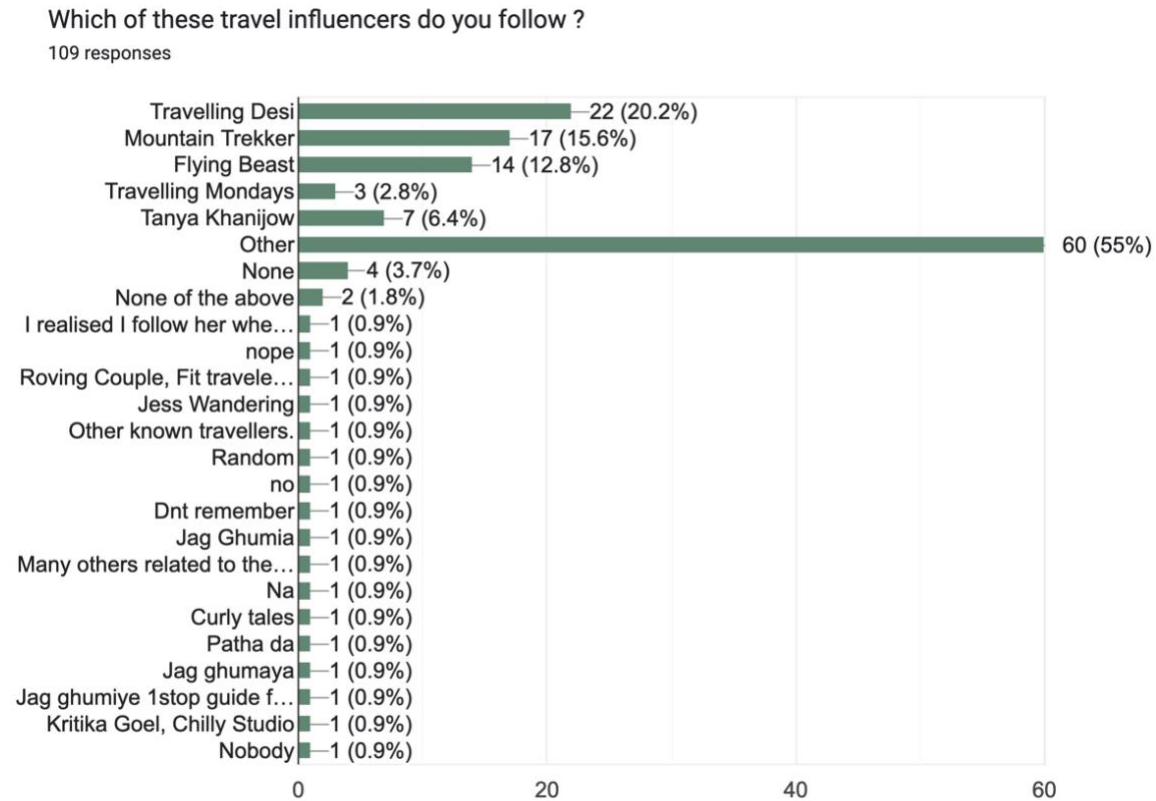


**Figure 41 : Understanding influencers following pattern application wise**

Findings: You tube has the highest responses where people follow influencers ( 58.7 %) followed by Instagram ( 24.8 %) , Facebook ( 21.1 %) and Twitter ( 1.8 % ) . We did receive responses from non clear options like Google Search ( 0.9 %) and Google ( 0.9 %) as well as E Book was shown as option ( 0.9 %) as well. A certain percentage of respondents – a cumulative ( 31.1 % ) said they don’t follow as such anyone in any of the platform .

Respondent 4 mentioned few reference of influencers she followed in You Tube , Respondent 6 has mentioned about following on Instagram , Respondent 9 has mentioned about following social media influencers on Facebook, You Tube . P 10 mentioned “ YouTube as the most important platform for getting information “

Question 14 :Which of these travel influencers do you follow ?



**Figure : 42 Understanding special influencer following**

Findings: A lot of options did show here with Travelling Desi (20.2 % ) , Mountain Trekker (15.6 % ) , Flying Beast ( 12.8 % ) , Tanya Khanijow (6.4 % ) , Jag Ghumiya ( 3.6 % ) , Travelling Mondays ( 2.8 % ) , Roving Couple ( 0.9 % ) , Jess Wandering ( 0.9 % ) , Curly Tales ( 0.9 % ) and a mixed response of Kritika Goel – Chilly Studio ( 0.9 %).

A large percentage of 55 % mentioned other amongst the chosen set that was shared against the questionnaire . Some of the responses did not mention the names or the respondent seem to have forgotten the exact channel handle hence have been ommitted in

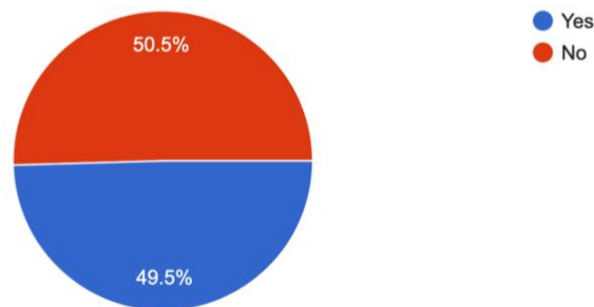
the findings as their overall percentage is 4.8 % .The response of No , No body , None , Na , None of the above has a cumulative score of 10 %

Respondent 4 mentioned “ Travel Vlogger Bruised Passport and more . 2 Tickets to Freedom. And few others . Larisa Das . Respondent 9 mentioned “specific YouTube channels, like In Viral Scope, helpful for travel insights “

4.2.3.3	Questions on influences that Social Media Influencers exert or affect the travel decision making ?
	Question 15 : Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ?
	Question 16 :Have you ever increased or decreased your travel budget on basis of recommendations by social media influencer that you like ?
	Question 17 : Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ?
	Question 18 : I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline
	Question 19 : Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer ?

Question 15 : Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ?

Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ?  
109 responses



**Figure 43 : Travel influencers effect on plan change of travel by respondents**

Findings: 50.5 % of the respondents said that social media travel influencers do not make them change or adopt their travel plans while the balance of 49.5 % agreed that they were influenced to make changes on their plans based on the travel content that was shared by them .

Respondent 2 mentioned of social media influencer’s effect on deciding choice of properties where they intend to stay . Respondent 3 mentioned “ No Influencer is being followed but not consciously . Save some post in case the social media influencer has posted anything relevant to bucket list . Doesn’t rely on people reviews. “ .

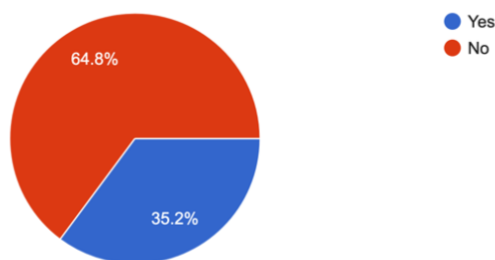
Respondent 4 mentioned “Travel Vlogger Bruised Passport and More 2 Tickets to Freedom. And few other - Larisa Das. But they won’t change a travel decision based on their influence. “ .

Respondent 5 mentioned “Influencer Impact has not yet been influenced by travel influencers' content to change or adapt their travel plans “.

Respondent 9 mentioned “the role of travel influencers in their decision-making process, specifically their preference for informative content and local information in videos. “ . Respondent 10 mentioned that recommendations from influencers are trustworthy and that they would not visit a place if no influencers recommended it.

Question 16 :Have your ever increased or decreased your travel budget on basis of recommendations by social media influencer that you like ?

Have your ever increased or decreased your travel budget on basis of recommendations by social media influencer that you like ?  
108 responses



**Figure 44 : Budget decision changes based on social media influencer recommendation**

Findings: The question when asked if the respondents have increased or decreased their travel budget based on the social media influencers recommendations based on the content that they show , 64.5 % confirmed that they do not get influenced by the latter’s content .

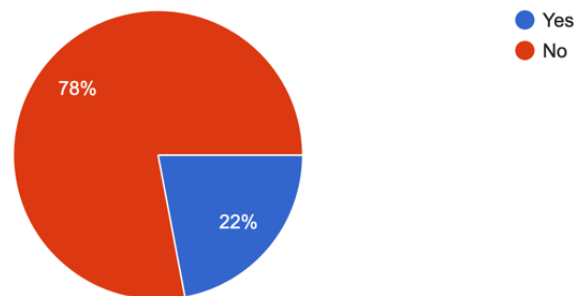
A 35.2 % of the balance respondents did agree that they were influenced to change their budgets based on the recommendations shared by the social media travel influencers.

Respondent 7 mentioned that they don't rely on influencers on budget making for holidays and they prioritize budget along with value proposition before choosing a location or property but respondent 10 trust social media influencers the most as per travel choice decisions are concerned and would not like to visit a place if its there is no travel influencers are recommending it .

Question 17 : Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ?

Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ?

109 responses



**Figure 45 : Travel decision solely based on travel influencer recommendation**

Findings: The next question that was asked to the set of survey respondents were that if they have travelled to a particular destination solely based on the recommendations that were suggested by the social media travel influencer –78% of the respondents replied that they were not influenced to that extent that they would make a travel plan solely based on the social media influencers's recommendations .

Rest 22 % did agree that they did make some plans that were solely based on the social media influencer's recommendations that came from the content he / she produced .



Question 18 : I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline

I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline  
109 responses



I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline  
109 responses



**Figure 46 and 47 : Understanding the level of belief on travel influencer’s recommendation of a hotel / airline**

Findings: We tried finding out the level of authenticity that a social media influencer induces through the content on travel and the responses that came are being tabulated below with the percentage .

Not sure peaked the response with 65.1 % respondents , followed by Yes ( 19.3 % ) , No ( 9.2 % ) , May Be Not ( 0.9% ) , Not Always ( 0.9 % ) , Cant Say ( 0.9 % ) , Few tells truth ( 0.9 % ) , Needs authentication check from my end too ( 0.9 % ) , Not Necessarily ( 0.9 % ) , I do not follow them so I don’t know ( 0.9 % ) .

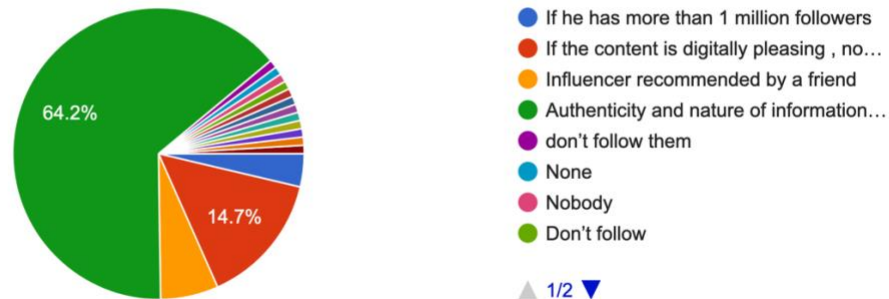
Respondent 11 affirms that they trust and value recommendations of influencers on travel decision and even sponsored content is also taken as reliable as long as “ they are transparent about it “ .

Respondent 14 also relies on the information given by social media influencers but “ prioritizes to speak to travel experienced individuals about the topic / destination / holidays plan “

Question 19 : Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer ?

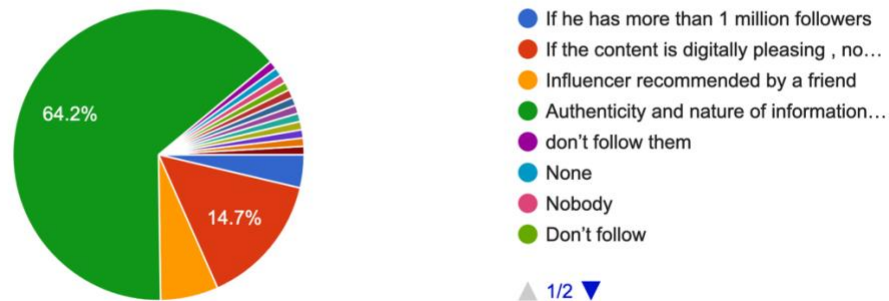
Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer ?

109 responses



Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer ?

109 responses



**Figure 48, 49 : Understand factors that make a social media influencer trustable**

Findings: The question on the factors that leads to trust a social media influencer has varied responses . These are summarised as follows .

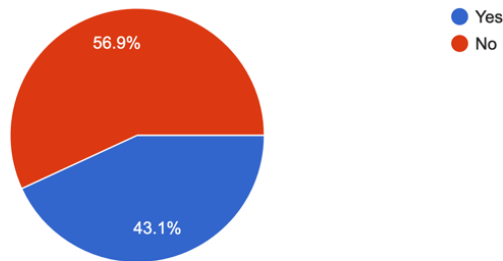
Authenticity and Nature of Informtion given scored a high 64.2% , If the content is digitally pleasing no matter how many followers ( 14.7 % ) , Influencer Recommended by a friend ( 6.4 % ) and If he has more than 1 million followers ( 3.7 % ) topped the list .

The lower scores were on Nobody ( 0.9 % ) , Most of them lies specially in India ( 0.9%) , I do not follow so I don't know ( 0.9%) , None of the above and I don't trust social media influencers ( 0.9 % ) , Don't follow them ( 0.9 % ) , Not follow travel influencers to make my plans ( 0.9 % ) , Not applicable ( 0.9 % ) , None , Nothing ( both 0.95) , Explore hidden gems as recommended by locals ( 0.9%)

4.2.3.4	Questions on influences that Friends exert or affect the travel decision making ?
	Question 20 : Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ?
	Question 21 : If yes , where did you travel ?
	Question 22 : Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ?

Question 20 : Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ?

Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ?  
109 responses



**Figure 50 : Travel plans based on friends choice**

Findings: The question that was asked was if anyone has ever made travel plans to a particular destination because of a friend has travelled and the respondent's travel was largely to satisfy the hunger and ensure that there is no fear of missing out ( FOMO) as its known . A 43.1 % responded to an Yes and rest 56.9 % said No .

Question 21 : If yes , where did you travel ?

S.No.	Location	Percentage
1	Landsdowne	0.95%
2	Dubai, and many more	0.95%
3	Ladakh	0.95%
4	Maldives	0.95%
5	Goa	1.9%
6	Phuket	0.95%
7	Tarapith	0.95%
8	Dubai shopping festival	0.95%
9	Bhutan	0.95%
10	Amsterdam	0.95%
11	Hongkong	0.95%
12	Kodai	0.95%
13	Vietnam	0.95%
14	Kasol	0.95%
15	I travel to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal	0.95%
16	To see sea	0.95%
17	Sunderbans	0.95%
18	Panchgani	0.95%
19	Europe, Bali & Goa	0.95%
20	Bali	0.95%
21	Gujarat	0.95%
22	Tehri floating cottage	0.95%
23	Mcleodganj	0.95%

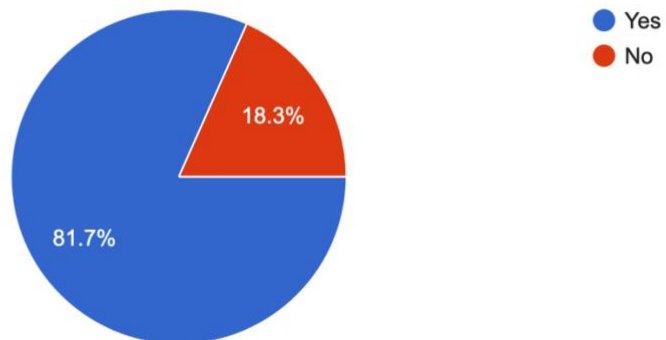
24	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.95%
25	Thailand	0.95%
26	Soyal Village in Kullu Valley	0.95%
27	Bangkok	0.95%
28	Udaipur	0.95%
29	Doesn't arise	0.95%
30	North East India	0.95%
31	Echche Gaon, Darjeeling	0.95%
32	Agra	0.95%
33	Darjeeling, Puri, Deoghar and Madhupur, Shantiniketan, Taki, Digha, Sankarpur (2017-2021)	0.95%
34	Ooty	1.9%
35	Shantiniketan	0.95%
36	Australia	0.95%
37	I didn't say yes, so the question is irrelevant	0.95%
38	No such place	0.95%
39	Nowhere	0.95%
40	Not applicable	1.9%
41	Nil	0.95%
42	Abroad	0.95%
43	Vishakhapatnam	0.95%
44	Rajasthan	0.95%
45	Mandi, Himachal Pradesh	0.95%
46	Sikkim	0.95%
47	I did not travel much in the pandemic situation	0.95%
48	Kenya	0.95%

49	Bolpur	0.95%
50	Coorg	0.95%
51	Leh Ladakh	0.95%
52	Innsbruck	0.95%
53	Singapore	0.95%
54	Wrong question	0.95%
55	Since I said No, this is NA	0.95%
56	I gave a no	0.95%
57	Not relevant	0.95%
58	Himachal, Rajasthan	0.95%
59	Leh, Siachen	0.95%
60	France	0.95%
61	Rishikesh	0.95%
62	No, I don't make any such plan	0.95%
63	Amritsar	0.95%

**Figure 51 : List of travel choices made based on friend’s travel choice**

Question 22 : Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ?

Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ?  
109 responses



**Figure 52 : Understanding traveller’s remorse post travel based on friends’ choice**

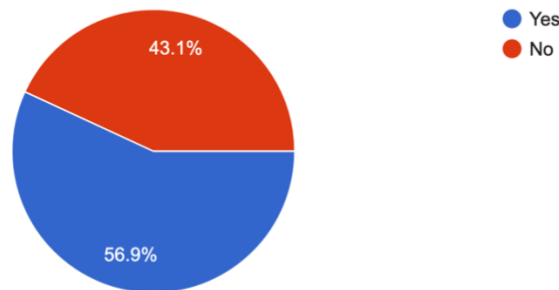
Findings: A question was asked if travelling to destinations was satisfying or not based on the friend's recommendations . 81.7 people agreed that friends suggesting that places to visit was worth the recommendations . 18.3% felt the same was not worth it .

4.2.3.4	Questions on influences that Peers exert or affect the travel decision making ?
	Question 23: Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ?
	Question 24 : Did you feel it was worth the recommendation ?

Question 23: Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ?

Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ?

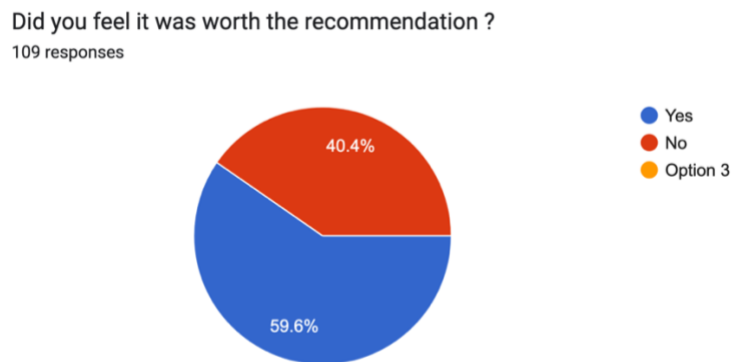
109 responses



**Figure 53 : Travel decision based on peers' recommendation**

Findings: The question was asked if any of the respondents have travelled to a destination solely based on recommendation of their peers / office colleagues / business partners. 56.9 % of the respondents said yes they did travel to certain destinations that were recommended by peers . The balance 43.1 % said they have not travelled to any destination solely based on the recommendations done by peers ( office colleague / business counter part )

Question 24 : Did you feel it was worth the recommendation ?

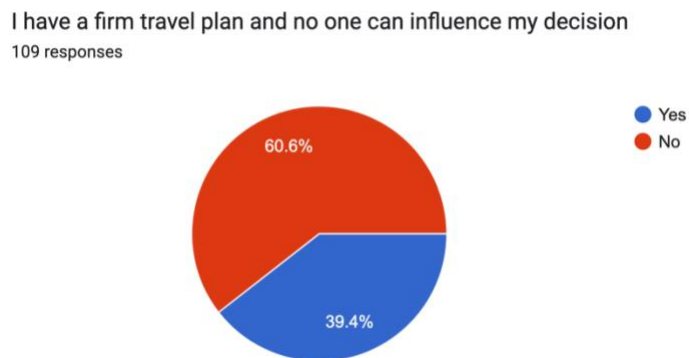


**Figure 54 : Checking the peer travel recommendation worth post travel**

Findings: The question was asked if any of the respondents felt if the recommendations done by the business counter parts were worth the effort . 56.4 % agreed that it was worth the effort while balance of 40.4 % said that they felt it was not worth the same .

4.2.3.5	Questions on individual choices and affirmations on the plans being done
	Question 25 : I have a firm travel plan and no one can influence my decision
	Question 26 : Among 3, I trust (choose one ) while making a travel destination / hotel / airline / resort decision

Question 25 : I have a firm travel plan and no one can influence my decision



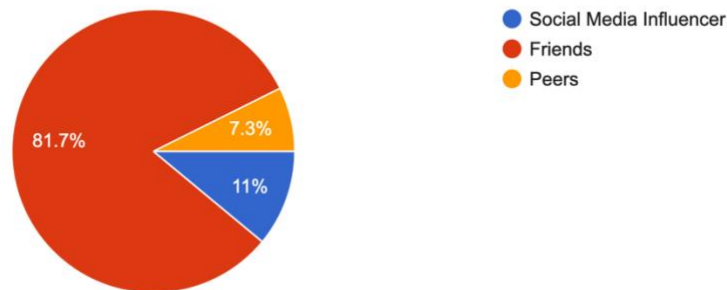
**Figure 55 : Understanding the firmness of travel decision and ability to be influenced**



Findings: The question was asked if some one has influence a travel decision of the respondents and that they have a firm planning for their travel.60.6% said they are firm and no one can influence their travel plan . Balance 39.4% said that they can be influenced .

Question 26 : Among 3, I trust (choose one ) while making a travel destination / hotel / airline / resort decision

Among 3, I trust (choose one ) while making a travel destination / hotel / airline / resort decision  
109 responses



**Figure 56 : Choice of influencers while making travel decision**

Findings: The final question on social media influence on travel behaviour impact by three pillars – Social media influencers , Friends and Peers was asked .

A high 81.7 % responded that they agreed that friends were the most influential on firming up or influencing their travel choices , followed by Social Media Influencers with a 11 % votes followed by Peers that came up with 7.3 % .

**Table 9 : Ranking of Influencers**

Respondent	Ranking 1	Ranking 2	Ranking 3
R1	Friends	Peers	Social Media Influencers
R2	Friends	Social Media Influencers	Peers
R3	Friends	Peers	Social Media Influencers

R4	Friends	Social Influencers	Media Peers
R5	Friends	Peers	Social Influencers
R6	Friends	Social Influencers	Media Peers
R7	Friends	Peers	Social Influencers
R8	Social Influencers	Media Friends	Peers
R9	Friends	Peers	Social Influencers
R10	Social Influencers	Media Friends	Peers
R11	Social Influencers	Media Friends	Peers
R12	Friends	Peers	Social Influencers
R13	Friends	Social Influencers	Media Peers
R14	Social Influencers	Media Friends	Peers
R15	Friends	Social Influencers	Media Peers

As many as 11 respondents of the 15 video interviewed mentioned Friends as Rank 1 among the 3 options as most trusted source and 4 respondents have mentioned Social Media Influencers and no one has mentioned peers as their most trusted source .

With as many as 6 respondents mentioning Peers as their second ranked followed by 5 of social media respondents .

### **4.3 Summary of Findings based on Research Questions**

Based on the above results , this chapter the researcher has summarised research question wise responses against each and elaborated a deep down finding that can be further explained in Chapter 5 of Discussions and Recommendations.

- **Research Question 1 : Social media has effect on travel decision making and if yes how?**

In order to unearth the nature of respondents and to reassure that we are reaching right participants , various questions surrounding the usage of social media was done as that would serve the basic construct of the research purpose that is essentially use of social media .

4.3.1 Results to Question 8 as mentioned in 4.2 Results chapter indicated A high 86.2 % use of social media use daily which is enough to justify that the respondents are right set of audience .

4.3.2 Results to Question 9 further justified various social media application and tools that showed You Tube rank the highest as consumption platform ( 84.4 % ) and also indication of related literature review (Sci-Hub | The Role of User-Generated Content in Tourists' Travel Planning Behavior. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 18(8), 743–764 | 10.1080/19368620903235753, no date) that confirms that user generated content and related websites makes a lot of important play in travel decision making.

**Table 10 : Age wise break up of social media application use**

How many social media applications do you use in your daily life ?	Your age group	Total
Youtube	35-45 years	1
	45-55 years	1
	55 years and above	2
Youtube Total		4
Youtube, Facebook	18-29 years	1
	29-35 years	1
	35-45 years	6
	45-55 years	9
	55 years and above	5
Youtube, Facebook Total		22
Youtube, Instagram	18-29 years	1
	29-35 years	1
	35-45 years	3
Youtube, Instagram Total		5
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook	18-29 years	3
	29-35 years	2
	35-45 years	8
	45-55 years	9
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook Total		22
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn	35-45 years	2
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn Total		2
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Whatsapp	18-29 years	1
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Whatsapp Total		1
Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp	45-55 years	1

Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Total		1
Youtube, Instagram, Linkdin	35-45 years	1
Youtube, Instagram, Linkdin Total		1
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter	45-55 years	1
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter Total		1
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook	29-35 years	3
	35-45 years	11
	45-55 years	7
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook Total		21
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn	18-29 years	1
	45-55 years	3
Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn Total		4
Youtube, LinkedIn	35-45 years	1
Youtube, LinkedIn Total		1
Youtube, Twitter	18-29 years	1
	35-45 years	1
	45-55 years	1
Youtube, Twitter Total		3
Youtube, Twitter, Facebook	35-45 years	1
Youtube, Twitter, Facebook Total		1
Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp	45-55 years	1
Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp Total		1
Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn	35-45 years	1
Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn Total		1

And since YouTube was the highest elements of commonality across major age groups we did a study as well and found out the following where we tried to measure age group wise analysis where You Tube was chosen as the stand alone medium of research as well as mixed along with Instagram, Twitter , LinkedIn , Whats App, Snap Chat and following

results are derived . **Implication and suggestions based on the same will be shared in the Chapter 5 of Discussions and Recommendations.**

**Table 11 : Age group wise study of various social media applications**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>YouTube</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>WhatsApp</b>	<b>Snapchat</b>
18-29 years	100%	13.33%	46.67%	6.67%	6.67%	0%	0%
29-35 years	80%	13.33%	33.33%	6.67%	6.67%	0%	0%
35-45 years	96.67%	53.33%	43.33%	30%	13.33%	3.33%	0%
45-55 years	96.67%	80%	73.33%	30%	46.67%	3.33%	0%
55 years and above	100%	46.67%	6.67%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The summary of findings from the above data is as follows:

a. Age Distribution:

- The majority of respondents fall into the age groups of 35-45 years (36.67%) and 45-55 years (40%).
- The 18-29 years and 55 years and above age groups have the lowest representation, each accounting for only 6.67% of respondents.

b. Social Media Usage:

- **YouTube is the most widely used social media application among all respondents, with 100% usage.**
- **Facebook has a high usage rate, with 63.33% of respondents using it.**
- Instagram and Twitter are also popular platforms, used by 53.33% and 36.67% of respondents, respectively.
- LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Snapchat have lower usage rates, with 10%, 6.67%, and 1.67% of respondents using them, respectively.

c. Combinations of Social Media Applications:

- The most common combination is YouTube and Facebook, used by 53.33% of respondents.
- Other popular combinations include YouTube and Instagram (33.33%) and YouTube and Twitter (20%).
- Combinations involving LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Snapchat have lower usage rates.

d. Age Group Preferences:

- **YouTube is widely used across all age groups, with 100% usage in the 18-29 years and 55 years and above groups.**
- **Facebook usage is highest in the 45-55 years age group, with 80% of respondents using it.**
- **Instagram is particularly popular among the 18-29 years age group (46.67% usage) and 45-55 years age group (73.33% usage).**
- Twitter and LinkedIn have relatively low usage rates across all age groups.
- WhatsApp and Snapchat have minimal usage rates, with no usage reported in the 55 years and above age group.

These findings provide an overview of social media usage patterns across different age groups. They highlight the dominance of YouTube as the most used platform, the popularity of Facebook and Instagram among various age groups, and the relatively lower usage of platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Snapchat.

**4.3.3 Question 11 on which of the applications one refers before making travel decision shows Google as a strong option with 85.3 % people** opting to search for it and this also brings into the connect that since You Tube is the most used specific social media consumption tool. This will also have implications on why digital marketers for destination marketing as well travel marketing need to focus of **various Google Ad inventories to rank higher in the Search Engine Optimisation .**

- **Research Question 2 : Influencers – be it paid, friends or peers – has varying degree of impact. The study aims to find out what level of impacts have on the target group of family as well as solo travellers?**

4.3.4 Question 15 and 16 raised queries on how much does a travel influencer or social media influencer can make the respondents to adapt and change plans and budget . While the response on change or adapt travel plan was divided with a percentage break up of Yes ( 49.5 %) and balance (50.5 % ) saying NO , we dig deeper into the following categories of age group and occupation as well as city if we can get some more understanding .

Based on the responses received, here are the key findings regarding the impact of travel influencers' content on travel plans:

1. 45.3% of respondents indicated that travel influencers' content did not make them change or adapt their travel plans.
2. 54.7% of respondents stated that travel influencers' content influenced them to change or adapt their travel plans.
3. **The age group of 35-45 years had the highest number of respondents (27.5%) who were influenced by travel influencers' content to change or adapt their travel plans.**
4. Respondents from various cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, and other locations, reported both being influenced and not being influenced by travel influencers' content.
5. **Married individuals comprised the majority of respondents (71.7%) who were influenced by travel influencers' content to change or adapt their travel plans.**
6. Among the respondents who provided their occupation, those working in salaried positions (68.1%) were more likely to be influenced by travel influencers' content, followed by individuals in business or self-employment (22.9%).

**Overall, the findings suggest that travel influencers' content has a moderate impact on travel plans, with a significant proportion of respondents being influenced by their content. Marketers can consider collaborating with relevant travel influencers to reach and engage their target audience effectively.**

4.3.5 Question 20,21 and 22 were aimed at asking if friends as an influencer , made effect on the travel plans of the influencers and also the researcher tried to understand if they felt



that the trip was worth it in order to understand buyer remorse post purchase . The researcher explored into age wise responses as well .

To conduct a statistical analysis of the findings, we will analyse the data provided on whether individuals made travel plans based on their friends' experiences. Here is a summary of the responses by age group:

Based on this data, we can calculate the percentages of individuals who made travel plans based on their friends' experiences within each age group:

**Table 12 : Age wise break up of respondents taking travel based on friends' recommendation**

Age Group	Percentage Making Travel Plans Based on Friends' Experiences	Percentage Not Making Travel Plans Based on Friends' Experiences
18-29 years	50%	50%
29-35 years	50%	50%
35-45 years	48.3%	51.7%
45-55 years	43.8%	56.2%
55 years and above	33.3%	66.7%

This analysis provides insights into the relationship between age group and the influence of friends on travel decisions. It suggests that younger individuals (18-29 years) and individuals in the 29-35 years age group are more likely to be influenced by their friends' experiences when making travel plans. On the other hand, the influence of friends seems to decline with age, with a lower percentage of individuals in the 45-55 years and 55 years and above age groups making travel plans based on their friends' experiences.

To determine which age group felt it was worth the trip and which age group did not feel it was worth the recommendation, we can analyse the data provided. Here is a breakdown of the findings by age group:

**Table 13 : Analysis on travel worth based on recommendations by friends**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Made Travel Plans</b>	<b>Felt Worth Recommendation (%)</b>	<b>Did Not Feel Worth Recommendation (%)</b>
18-29 years	5	3	33.3%	66.7%
29-35 years	9	5	40.0%	60.0%
35-45 years	39	14	57.1%	42.9%
45-55 years	38	14	50.0%	50.0%
55 years and above	18	3	66.7%	33.3%

Based on the analysis of the table, can extract the following insights:

1. Age Group Influence: The age group that showed the highest percentage of respondents making travel plans based on their friends' experiences is the 35-45 years group with 35.9%. This suggests that targeting this age group and leveraging the power of peer recommendations can be an effective marketing strategy.

2. Mixed Perception: Among those who made travel plans based on their friends' experiences, the perception of whether it was worth the recommendation varies across age groups. While the 55 years and above group had the highest percentage (66.7%) feeling it was worth the recommendation, the 29-35 years group had the lowest percentage (40.0%). This indicates that the impact of friend recommendations may be stronger for older individuals.

3. Diverse Responses: It's important to note that there are respondents in each age group who did not feel the travel plans were worth the recommendation. This suggests that individual preferences and experiences can play a significant role, even within the same age group. Digital marketers should consider targeting personalized messaging and experiences to cater to these diverse responses.

4. Focus on Age Group 35-45: Given that the 35-45 years age group had the highest percentage of respondents making travel plans based on friends' experiences and a relatively balanced perception of worth, digital marketers should prioritize targeting this age group with tailored marketing campaigns that highlight positive travel experiences and encourage word-of-mouth recommendations.

5. Further Research: The analysis provides initial insights, but it would be beneficial for digital marketers to conduct further research to understand the specific motivations and factors influencing travel decisions within each age group. This can help refine marketing strategies and develop more targeted and effective campaigns.

**Overall, the analysis highlights the importance of leveraging peer recommendations, especially within the 35-45 years age group, while also recognizing the need for personalized approaches and further research to better understand individual preferences and motivations .**

Question 4.3.6 Based on the question 23,24 we tried to understand impact of peers on travel decision making and its varied responses .

Here is a summary of the understanding of the data with the percentage of various responses:

**Table 14 : Impact of peers on travel decisions making and its varied responses**

	<b>Made Travel Plans</b>	<b>Perceived Worth</b>
Overall	74.3%	73.7%
Age Group: 18-29 years	66.7%	66.7%
Age Group: 29-35 years	70.0%	60.0%
Age Group: 35-45 years	81.4%	79.3%
Age Group: 45-55 years	70.2%	68.9%
Age Group: 55 years and above	68.4%	68.4%

This table provides the percentage breakdown of individuals who made travel plans based on colleague recommendations and their perceived worth of the recommendations.

It also presents the breakdown by age groups, showing the percentage of individuals in each age group who made travel plans and perceived the recommendations as worth it.

Based on this data, we can observe that a significant portion of respondents have made travel plans based on their colleague's recommendations, with approximately 74.3% stating they have done so. Similarly, 73.7% of respondents perceived these recommendations as worth considering.

Among different age groups, individuals in the 35-45 years age range had the highest percentage of making travel plans based on colleague recommendations (81.4%). However, the perceived worth of the recommendation was relatively consistent across age groups, ranging from 66.7% to 79.3%.

This information provides insights into the influence of colleagues on travel decisions and suggests that targeting specific age groups, particularly the 35-45 years age range, could be an effective strategy for destination marketing companies and travel aggregators when considering colleague recommendations.

Based on all findings on reactions and travel recommendations here is the overall summary of findings for the specific research question 2 .

**Table 15 : Age group wise study on recommendation preference by all influencers**

<b>Age Group:</b>			
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Travel by Recommendation from Social Media Influencer</b>	<b>Travel by Recommendation from Friend</b>	<b>Travel by Recommendation from Colleague</b>
18-29 years	16.7%	33.3%	16.7%
29-35 years	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%
35-45 years	11.5%	38.5%	47.7%
45-55 years	4.5%	36.4%	59.1%
55 years and above	2.4%	36.6%	61.0%

<b>Travel by Recommendation done by Social Media Influencer:</b>	
	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	11.9%
No	88.1%

<b>Travel by Recommendation done by Friend:</b>	
	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	40.4%
No	59.6%

<b>Travel by Recommendation done by Colleague:</b>	
	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	56.9%
No	43.1%

**From the above data, we can infer the following:**

1. Influence of Social Media Influencers: Only 11.9% of respondents made travel decisions based on recommendations from social media influencers, indicating that this source of recommendation has a relatively low impact on travel behaviour.

2. Influence of Friends: 40.4% of respondents made travel decisions based on recommendations from friends, showing that personal recommendations from friends play a significant role in influencing travel choices.

3. Influence of Colleagues: A higher percentage, 56.9%, of respondents made travel decisions based on recommendations from colleagues, suggesting that professional networks and colleagues have a strong influence on travel choices.

4. Age Group Differences: The data shows variations in travel behavior based on age groups:

- Younger individuals (18-29 years) were more influenced by recommendations from friends and social media influencers.
- The age group of 29-35 years showed a higher reliance on recommendations from colleagues.

- The age group of 35-45 years had the highest percentage of travel decisions influenced by colleagues.

- The older age groups (45 years and above) showed a higher reliance on recommendations from colleagues, indicating a greater level of trust in professional networks.

Overall, personal networks, such as friends and colleagues, play a significant role in influencing travel decisions. While social media influencers have a relatively lower impact, their influence increases among younger age groups. These findings highlight the importance of word-of-mouth recommendations and professional networks in shaping travel behaviour.

- **Research Question 3 :If image of the travel brand and destination overrides the positive or negative impact of the influencer in final decision-making process?**

Question 4.3.7 Based on the question 18 where the researcher tried to find out how much of an emotion does a social media / travel influencer executes when they promote destination / hotel / airline etc , overall, the data suggests a mixed sentiment regarding trust in travel influencers among the respondents. There is a range of opinions, including trust, uncertainty, skepticism, and the need for personal verification. The age and current city variables also provide insights into the demographic distribution of the respondents. This corresponds to the fact that most of the responses earlier mentioned have evoked lesser support in favor of social media influencer and their promoted contents.

**Table 16 : Analysis of trust in travel influencers**

<b>Trust in Travel Influencers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	29.3%
No	28.2%
Not sure	38.7%
Maybe not	1.4%
Not always	1.4%
Can't say	0.7%
Needs checking/authentication	0.7%
Few tell the truth	0.7%
I do not follow them, so I don't know	1.4%
Not necessarily	0.7%

Additionally, the age group wise behavior also shows that 2 particular set of respondents , 18-29 and 45-55 have faith on the social media influencer content promotion of destination , hotel or airline .

**Table 17 : Analysis age group wise on trust in travel influencers**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Trust in Travel Influencers</b>
18-29 years	25.0%
29-35 years	11.1%
35-45 years	19.1%
45-55 years	36.4%
55 years and above	7.6%

Please note that the percentages are calculated based on the provided data, and the categories "Not sure," "Maybe not," "Not always," "Can't say," "Needs checking/authentication," "Few tell the truth," and "I do not follow them, so I don't know" have been excluded from this table.

**Table 18 : City wise break up trust in travel influencers**

City	Trust in Travel Influencers
Delhi	29.4%
Mumbai	19.4%
Other	13.6%
Bangalore	15.2%
Gurgaon	6.7%
Chandigarh	5.2%
Kolkata	13.1%
Guwahati	1.5%
Chennai	5.2%
Hyderabad	7.6%
Pune	3.0%

Additionally cities too show various level of trust for influencers where Delhi , Mumbai , Bangalore shows higher level of trust as compared with other cities.

Question 4.3.8 Based on a specific question leading to question number 16 and it's results , the researcher then looked at if the respondents have ever adjusted their budgets based on travel influencer's content and we get the following observations . The results were then matched with the age group .

**Table 19 : Budget Adjustment done for travel analysis age group wise**

Age Group	Adjusted Budget (%)	Did Not Adjust Budget (%)
18-29 years	6%	94%
29-35 years	10%	90%
35-45 years	23%	77%
45-55 years	12%	88%
55+ years	15%	85%

From the above table, we can infer the following that out of the 109 respondents:



- **57 respondents (approximately 52%) have never increased or decreased their travel budget based on recommendations from social media influencers they like.**
- **52 respondents (approximately 48%) have increased or decreased their travel budget based on recommendations from social media influencers they like.**

1. Adjusted Budget: The percentage of respondents who adjusted their travel budget based on social media influencer recommendations varies across different age groups. The highest percentage of respondents who adjusted their budget is in the 29-35 years age group (10%), followed by the 55+ years age group (15%). The lowest percentage is in the 18-29 years age group (6%).

2. Did Not Adjust Budget: The majority of respondents in all age groups did not adjust their travel budget based on social media influencer recommendations. The highest percentage of respondents who did not adjust their budget is in the 18-29 years age group (94%), followed by the 55+ years age group (85%). The lowest percentage is in the 29-35 years age group (90%).

3. Age Group Influence: The 35-45 years age group has the highest percentage of respondents who adjusted their budget (23%), suggesting that individuals in this age group may be more influenced by social media influencers when it comes to making travel budget adjustments.

Overall, while there are respondents across various age groups who adjusted their travel budget based on social media influencer recommendations, the majority of respondents did not make such adjustments. It indicates that social media influencers may not have a significant impact on travel budget decisions for most individuals in the surveyed group.

**Question 4.3.9 Based on a specific question leading to question number 18 and its results , the researcher then looked at what are the factors that was needed for a social media content creator to appear trust worthy ( Question 16 ) . Open ended responses were expected and they are being looked into as well .**

1. Authenticity and Nature of Information Given: The majority of respondents (approximately 64.2 %) indicated that they trust social media influencers based on the

authenticity and nature of the information they provide. This suggests that transparency, honesty, and reliable content play a significant role in building trust.

2. Digital Appeal of Content: A smaller percentage of respondents (approximately 14.7%) mentioned that they trust influencers if their content is visually appealing, regardless of the number of followers they have. This implies that the aesthetics and quality of the content can influence trust to some extent.

3. Recommendations from Friends: A few respondents (approximately 4%) mentioned that they trust influencers who have been recommended by their friends. Word-of-mouth referrals can be influential in establishing trust.

**4. Followers Count: A small portion of respondents (approximately 3%) mentioned that they trust influencers who have a high number of followers, indicating that follower count can contribute to perceived credibility.**

5. Other Factors: Some respondents mentioned factors such as comments, exploring hidden gems recommended by locals, and not following or trusting social media influencers.

**Overall, the data suggests that authenticity, the nature of information, and the visual appeal of content are crucial factors that influence trust in social media influencers. Building trust through genuine, reliable, and transparent content is essential for digital marketers working with tourism brands to establish credibility and connect with their target audience. Hence its important to "Building Trust in Travel: Authentic Experiences and Genuine Recommendations Take Center Stage" , details of which has been explained in Chapter 5 of Discussion and Recommendations**

**Question 4.4.0 Question 25 was asked by the researcher to unearth the mental firmness , at least on comment and response stage by the responses on if there can be an element of influence leading a travel plan that's is firm has led to a few observations . Based on the provided information that 60.6% of respondents say their travel plans cannot be influenced, while 39.4% say they can be influenced by external factors or influences, the following inferences can be made:**

1. Strong Decision-making: The majority of respondents (60.6%) have a firm stance on their travel plans and are not easily swayed by external factors. This suggests that they have a clear vision and are confident in their decision-making process when it comes to travel.

2. Openness to Influence: Despite the significant percentage of respondents with a firm travel plan, a considerable portion (39.4%) acknowledges that their travel plans can be influenced. This indicates that they are open to considering external factors or influences that may impact their travel decisions.

3. Individual Variations: The data highlights the diversity of preferences and decision-making tendencies among respondents. While a majority have a strong determination regarding their travel plans, a significant minority is receptive to external input. This emphasizes the importance of recognizing individual differences and tailoring marketing strategies accordingly.

4. **Importance of Targeting:** Understanding the mindset and preferences of both groups is crucial for effective marketing. For the majority who cannot be influenced, marketers should focus on providing value, authenticity, and aligning with their preferences. For the minority open to influence, marketers can emphasize the unique selling points, benefits, and persuasive factors to capture their attention and influence their decision-making process.

5. Tailored Approach: To cater to both groups, it is essential to adopt a balanced approach. While respecting the independence of the majority with firm travel plans, providing relevant and compelling information can help the minority make informed decisions while still feeling in control.

**In summary, the data suggests that a significant percentage of respondents have a strong determination regarding their travel plans, while a notable minority remains open to external influences. Understanding these dynamics allows marketers to develop targeted strategies that appeal to both groups and cater to their unique preferences and decision-making processes. Specific recommendation under the title “ Driving Success**

**in Digital Marketing for Travel and Destination Brands: Innovative Strategies to Maximize Audience Engagement and Brand Impact" has been suggested for the same .**

**Question 4.4.1** The final question that asked the respondents to rank their level of trust across three chosen influencer: Social Media Influencer , Friends and Peers. While the overall data shows huge leaning towards friends ( 81.7 %) followed by social media influencer with (11%) and peers with (7.3 %) , the researcher did further analysis to understand age wise preference and responses .

**Table 20 : Age group wise study on trust level on various influencers**

Age Group	Trust Level	Percentage
45-55 years	Friends	89%
	Social Media Influencer	7%
	<b>Peers</b>	<b>3%</b>
35-45 years	Friends	91%
	Social Media Influencer	5%
	<b>Peers</b>	<b>4%</b>
29-35 years	Friends	89%
	Social Media Influencer	7%
	<b>Peers</b>	<b>4%</b>
18-29 years	Friends	83%
	Social Media Influencer	12%
	<b>Peers</b>	<b>5%</b>
55 years and above	Friends	88%
	Social Media Influencer	9%
	Peers	3%

From the table, we can draw the following inferences:

1. Friends have the highest level of trust across all age groups: Friends are the most trusted source of information and influence when it comes to making travel decisions. This indicates that personal recommendations and word-of-mouth play a significant role in shaping travel choices, regardless of age.

2. Trust in social media influencers varies with age: The trust level in social media influencers is relatively higher in the 18-29 years age group compared to other age groups.

Younger individuals tend to be more receptive to influencer content and recommendations when making travel decisions.

3. Peers have a relatively lower level of trust: Peers, which can include colleagues, acquaintances, or individuals in similar social circles, have a lower level of trust compared to friends and social media influencers. Their influence on travel decisions is not as significant as the other two sources.

4. Trust in friends remains consistently high across age groups: Irrespective of the age group, friends continue to be the most trusted source when it comes to travel decisions. This emphasizes the importance of personal connections and recommendations in influencing travel choices.

**Overall, the data suggests that personal networks, such as friends, have a strong influence on travel decision-making. Social media influencers play a more prominent role among younger age groups, while trust in peers is relatively lower. These insights can inform marketing strategies to target specific age groups and leverage the power of trusted networks for effective brand messaging and promotion. Based on the above , the researcher has suggested few specific recommendations on "Exploring the Evolving Landscape of Digital Marketing Strategies in the Travel Industry: Insights and Innovations for Effective Brand Engagement".**

## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

#### **5.1 Discussions**

Based on the results generated, the discussion that is aimed for better insights for digital marketers of travel brands to influence friends – the most influential community is here as follows:

##### **1. Travel Aggregators like Make My Trip:**

- Referral Programs: Implement a referral program where existing customers can refer their friends to the platform. Offer incentives such as discounts, exclusive deals, or loyalty points for successful referrals. This encourages customers to actively recommend the platform to their friends.

- User-generated Content Contests: Run contests or campaigns that encourage customers to share their travel experiences on social media using branded hashtags or by tagging the aggregator's account. Showcase the best user-generated content on the website and social media platforms, highlighting the power of recommendations from friends.

- Personalized Recommendations: Utilize customer data and browsing history to provide personalized recommendations to customers based on their preferences. Implement algorithms that analyze customer behavior and patterns to suggest tailored travel options that align with their interests. This can create a sense of trust and convenience, leading to increased recommendations.

##### **2. Airline Companies:**

- Social Media Engagement: Encourage customers to share their flight experiences on social media platforms by creating branded hashtags or running social media campaigns. Monitor and engage with customer posts, providing personalized responses and offering exclusive perks or discounts for future flights. This builds a community around the brand and amplifies positive word-of-mouth.

- Influencer Collaborations: Partner with travel influencers who have a strong following of friends and peer groups. Collaborate on sponsored content, travel reviews,

or influencer-led experiences that highlight the unique features and benefits of flying with the airline. This can generate organic recommendations from the influencer's audience.

- Loyalty Programs: Enhance loyalty programs by introducing a friend referral component. Offer rewards or bonus points to existing customers who refer their friends to join the loyalty program. This not only incentivizes referrals but also strengthens the bond between the brand and its customers.

### **3. Destination Marketing Organizations:**

- User-generated Content Campaigns: Launch campaigns that encourage travelers to share their experiences in the destination on social media using specific hashtags or by tagging the destination's official accounts. Curate and showcase the best user-generated content on the destination's website and social media channels, emphasizing the influence of friends in choosing the destination.

- Local Ambassador Programs: Recruit locals or passionate travelers who have a strong network of friends to become brand ambassadors for the destination. Provide them with exclusive experiences, content creation opportunities, and incentives to share their love for the destination with their friends and peers.

- Collaborative Influencer Partnerships: Collaborate with travel influencers who have a wide reach and a strong connection with their audience. Create sponsored content, vlogs, or social media takeovers that highlight the destination's unique offerings and encourage viewers to plan trips with their friends. These influencers can serve as trusted sources of information and recommendations.

- Government aided DMOs suggestions – The Government of India aided State Tourism board need to take help of local if not national brand icons to help promote tourism .

By adopting these unique digital marketing strategies, travel aggregators, airline companies, and destination marketing organizations can tap into the power of friends' influence and encourage their customers to actively recommend their brands.

## 5.2 Suggestions

Following are the list of specific suggestions based on the results , observations .

**Suggestion 1 "Effective Social Media and Google Ad Strategies for Destination Marketing : Digital marketers should leverage YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram for engaging content, target different age groups, explore emerging platforms like WhatsApp and Snapchat, and utilize Google Ads, Google My Business, and Google Hotel Ads to improve SEO rankings and attract potential travelers during the decision-making process. "**

Based on the results derived from the prominence of Youtube as potent research medium for travellers as established in Chapter 4.3, digital marketers of destination brands can look into following approaches :

1. Focus on YouTube: Since YouTube is widely used by all age groups, it presents a valuable opportunity for tourism brands to leverage video content and engage with their target audience. Marketers should consider creating high-quality and engaging videos showcasing their destinations, attractions, and experiences.

2. Utilize Facebook and Instagram: Facebook and Instagram are popular platforms across age groups, making them effective channels for promoting tourism brands. Marketers should develop visually appealing content, such as stunning photographs and captivating stories, to showcase the unique offerings of their destinations and engage with potential travelers.

3. Leverage Instagram's Appeal to Younger Audiences: Instagram has a strong presence among the 18-29 years age group. Marketers should tailor their content to suit the platform, focusing on visually appealing images, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations to attract and engage younger travelers.

4. Consider Twitter for Real-Time Updates: Although Twitter has a lower usage rate compared to other platforms, it still has a substantial user base. Tourism brands can utilize Twitter to share real-time updates, news, and timely offers. Using relevant hashtags



and engaging in conversations with travelers can help boost brand visibility and engagement.

5. Target LinkedIn for Business Travelers: LinkedIn is primarily used by professionals, making it a suitable platform for targeting business travelers. Tourism brands can create engaging content highlighting corporate travel packages, conference facilities, and networking opportunities at their destinations.

6. Explore Emerging Platforms: While WhatsApp and Snapchat have lower usage rates, they should not be entirely ignored. Marketers can consider incorporating these platforms for targeted campaigns, promotions, or personalized customer interactions.

7. Customize Content for Different Age Groups: Marketers should tailor their messaging, visuals, and content strategies to resonate with specific age groups. Understanding the preferences and habits of each age group can help in creating relevant and compelling content that drives engagement and conversions.

8. Emphasize Multi-Platform Integration: As many respondents use a combination of social media applications, marketers should ensure a cohesive presence across multiple platforms. Integrated marketing campaigns that maintain consistent messaging and branding across different social media channels can reinforce brand visibility and recognition.

9. Incorporate User-Generated Content (UGC): Encouraging travelers to share their experiences, reviews, and photos on social media can provide valuable UGC that serves as authentic social proof. Marketers should actively engage with users, repost UGC, and run contests or campaigns that incentivize sharing content related to their brand.

10. Monitor and Respond to Social Media Conversations: Monitoring social media channels for mentions, reviews, and queries is crucial. Timely responses, addressing concerns, and engaging with travelers can enhance brand reputation and customer satisfaction.

By leveraging these insights, digital marketers of a tourism brand can develop a comprehensive social media strategy that effectively reaches and engages their target audience, ultimately driving awareness, consideration, and conversions for their

destinations and services. Studies by (Kumar, 2021) suggests and supports that advancements in communication have shifted marketing to the relationship era, with digital marketing playing a pivotal role in the hospitality and tourism industries. Consumers, as co-creators of digital content, influence others through shared experiences on digital platforms. Firms adopt a digital marketing mix, including social media, SEO, content, influencer, and affiliate marketing, to target niche markets. Dynamic content and media selection are crucial for digital marketers in this industry.

**Suggestion 2 : "Harnessing the Influence: Tools and Strategies for Digital Marketers in the Tourism Industry: This research thesis highlights the impact of travel influencers' content on travel plans and provides recommendations for digital marketers in tourism companies, destination marketing organizations, and travel aggregators. The suggested tools and strategies include collaborating with travel influencers, leveraging social media platforms, implementing user-generated content campaigns, optimizing website and content for search engines, and utilizing data analytics and insights. By adopting these approaches, marketers can effectively engage with their target audience, enhance brand visibility, and attract potential travelers."**

Based on the findings that travel influencers' content has an impact on travel plans, digital marketers of tourism companies, destination marketing organizations, and travel aggregators should adopt the following tools and strategies:

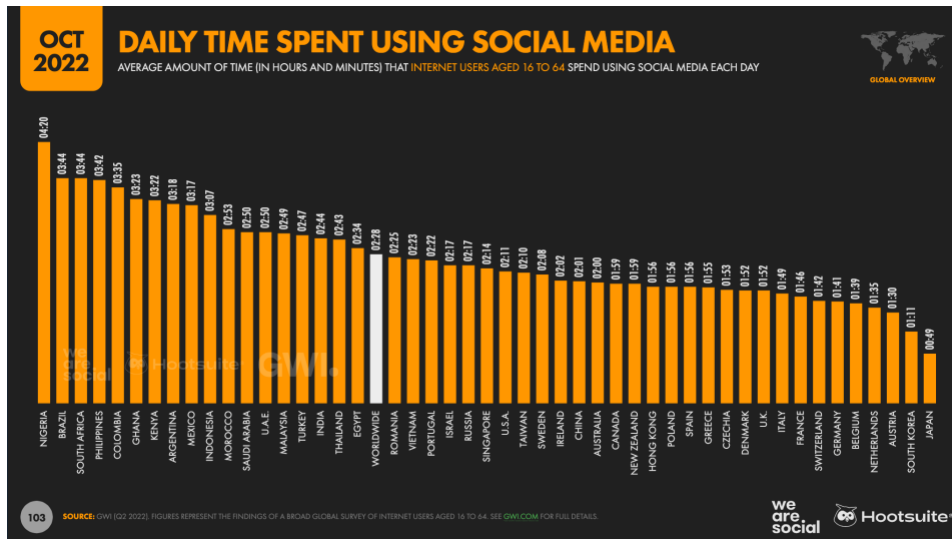
1. Collaborate with Travel Influencers: Engage with travel influencers who have a significant following and a strong influence on their audience. By partnering with them, marketers can leverage their reach and credibility to promote destinations, attractions, and experiences. This can be done through sponsored content, influencer takeovers, or brand collaborations.

According to a survey conducted by Influencer Marketing Hub in 2021, 63% of marketers plan to increase their influencer marketing budgets, indicating the growing trend and effectiveness of working with influencers (Key Influencer Marketing Statistics to Drive Your Strategy in 2023, no date)

2. Utilize Social Media Platforms: Leverage popular social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to showcase visually appealing and engaging content but with major focus on Google centric platform like You tube . Create destination-specific campaigns, behind-the-scenes footage, user-generated content, and immersive experiences to capture the attention of travelers. As per reports (YouTube Statistics 2023 [Users by Country + Demographics], no date) the following need to be taken note for digital marketers on You Tube :

- India has the highest number of YouTube users in 2023, estimated at 467 million.
- YouTube is the second-largest search engine in India.
- In 2023, YouTube Premium and YouTube Music together have more than 80 million subscribers in India. Over 9.2% of YouTube traffic comes from India. YouTube accounts for around 25% of mobile traffic in India. Music, entertainment, and education are the most frequently watched genres on YouTube in India.
- YouTube Shorts generates more than 30 billion views per day in India. The most popular languages used on YouTube in India are English and Hindi. About 62% of YouTube users in India access the platform daily.

These statistics highlight the significant presence and influence of YouTube in India, making it a valuable platform for digital marketers to reach and engage with a large audience in the country. And as per the data site Hoot Suite. as far as social media usage per day is concerned , India ranks 16<sup>th</sup> in the world as per the report (160+ Social Media Statistics Marketers Need in 2023, no date)



**Figure 57 : Daily Social Media time spend globally and India ranking as per Oct 2022 Hoot Suite Reports**

3. Implement User-Generated Content (UGC) Campaigns: Encourage travelers to share their experiences using branded hashtags, contests, and challenges. Repost and share high-quality user-generated content to showcase authentic travel experiences and generate social proof.

4. Optimize Website and Content for Search Engines: Invest in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies to improve visibility on search engine result pages (SERPs) and increase organic traffic. Conduct keyword research, optimize meta tags and descriptions, create high-quality and informative content, and improve website performance for better search engine rankings.

5. Leverage Data Analytics and Insights: Utilize tools such as Google Analytics, social media analytics, and customer feedback to gather data and insights on user behavior, preferences, and engagement. Analyze trends, identify patterns, and make data-driven decisions to optimize marketing campaigns and strategies.

According to a report by McKinsey, (Data-driven organizations are 23 times more likely to acquire customers, six times as likely to retain customers, and 19 times as likely to be profitable as a result. - Data Ideology, no date) data-driven organizations are 23 times more likely to acquire customers, six times more likely to retain customers, and 19 times

more likely to be profitable. This highlights the significance of leveraging data analytics for effective marketing strategies.

By adopting these tools and strategies, digital marketers in the tourism industry can tap into the influence of travel influencers, leverage social media platforms, generate user-generated content, improve search engine visibility, and make data-driven decisions to enhance their marketing efforts and attract potential travelers.

**Suggestion 3 : “The Impact of Travel Influencers on Travel Plans: Insights on the Influence of Marital Status and Occupational Background and how to leverage the married and salaried class : Based on the researchers finding as explained in previous chapter that " Married individuals comprised the majority of respondents (71.7%) who were influenced by travel influencers' content to change or adapt their travel plans " and "Among the respondents who provided their occupation, those working in salaried positions (68.1%) were more likely to be influenced by travel influencers' content, followed by individuals in business or self-employment (22.9%) . hence few of the specific suggestions for digital marketers for destination marketing, airlines or travel aggregators making use of social media influencers. “**

Based on the finding that married individuals and those working in salaried positions are more likely to be influenced by travel influencers' content, digital and social media marketers can adopt the following five unique ways to get more favorable traction for their brands using social media influencers:

1. Partner with Influencers who resonate with the target audience: Identify influencers who have a significant following among the married demographic and professionals in salaried positions. Collaborate with influencers who align with your brand values and have a genuine connection with their audience. This ensures that the content shared by influencers resonates well with the target audience and has a higher likelihood of influencing their travel plans.

2. Focus on Authenticity and Real Experiences: Encourage influencers to share authentic travel experiences and provide genuine recommendations. Married individuals and professionals value trustworthy and reliable information when making travel decisions.

By emphasizing real experiences, influencers can establish credibility and build trust with their followers, increasing the likelihood of their content influencing travel plans.

3. Create Engaging and Personalized Content: Work with influencers to create engaging and personalized content that speaks directly to the target audience. This could include customized itineraries, tips, and recommendations tailored to the needs and preferences of married individuals and professionals. Personalized content creates a sense of connection and relevance, making it more likely to impact travel decisions.

4. Leverage Influencers across Multiple Platforms: Utilize influencers across various social media platforms to maximize brand exposure and reach. Consider partnering with influencers who have a strong presence on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, as these platforms are popular among the target audience. By diversifying the influencer strategy across multiple platforms, marketers can effectively capture the attention of married individuals and professionals in different online spaces.

5. Track and Measure Impact: Implement robust tracking and measurement tools to assess the impact of influencer campaigns on travel decisions. Analyze engagement metrics, website traffic, and conversion rates to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer collaborations. By monitoring the results, marketers can refine their strategies and make data-driven decisions for future influencer campaigns.

By adopting these unique strategies, digital and social media marketers can leverage the influence of social media influencers to gain more favorable traction for their brands among married individuals and professionals, ultimately driving increased engagement and conversions for their travel offerings.

**Suggestion 4 : "Targeted Marketing Strategies for Destination Marketing Companies and Travel Aggregators: Captivating the 35-45 Age Group Based on Friends' Experiences. Based on the findings that the 35-45 age group is more likely to make travel plans based on their friends' experiences and have mixed opinions on whether the trip was worth the recommendation, destination marketing companies and travel aggregators can adopt various marketing strategies to effectively target this age group “**

Here are some recommendations:

1. Targeted Social Media Campaigns: Develop targeted social media campaigns that showcase real travel experiences of individuals within the 35-45 age group. Use platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to share user-generated content and testimonials that highlight the positive aspects of the destination or travel experience. This can help build trust and influence the decision-making process.

2. Influencer Partnerships: Collaborate with relevant travel influencers who belong to the 35-45 age group or have a strong influence on this demographic. Engage them to create content, share their travel experiences, and provide recommendations. This can help generate interest and credibility among potential travelers within this age group.

3. Personalized Recommendations: Utilize customer data and preferences to offer personalized recommendations and tailored travel experiences to individuals in the 35-45 age group. Leverage technologies like AI and machine learning to analyze their past travel behavior, preferences, and demographics to provide customized travel options that align with their interests.

4. Reviews and Testimonials: Highlight positive reviews and testimonials from travelers within the 35-45 age group who have had a satisfying experience with the destination or travel aggregator. Display these testimonials on your website, social media channels, and marketing materials to showcase the value and quality of the travel experiences offered.

5. Family-Friendly Offerings: Recognize that the 35-45 age group often consists of individuals who are raising families or have children. Develop family-friendly travel packages, activities, and amenities that cater to their needs. Emphasize the safety, convenience, and suitability of the destination for family vacations.

6. Content Marketing: Create informative and engaging content that addresses the specific interests and concerns of the 35-45 age group. This can include articles, blog posts, videos, and guides that provide valuable information about the destination, local attractions, travel tips, and family-friendly activities. Position yourself as a trusted source of information to build credibility and attract this demographic.

7. Loyalty Programs and Exclusive Offers: Implement loyalty programs or exclusive offers specifically targeted at the 35-45 age group. Provide incentives such as discounts, upgrades, or special perks for repeat customers or those who refer friends and family. This can encourage loyalty and word-of-mouth referrals within this demographic.

By adopting these marketing strategies, destination marketing companies and travel aggregators can effectively engage the 35-45 age group, leverage the influence of friends' experiences, and address their unique needs and preferences.

**Suggestion 5 : Building Trust in Travel: Authentic Experiences and Genuine Recommendations Take Center Stage: As a digital marketer for tourism brands, there are several strategies you can consider in response to the low level of trust on social media content creators.”**

1. Influencer Selection: Be more diligent in selecting influencers to collaborate with. Look for influencers who have a genuine connection to the travel industry, demonstrate expertise, and have an authentic and engaged audience. Prioritize those who are known for providing valuable and unbiased content.

2. Transparency and Authenticity: Encourage influencers to be transparent about any sponsorships or partnerships they have. Disclose when content is sponsored or promotional in nature. This transparency helps build trust with the audience and ensures that the content is perceived as genuine and unbiased.

3. User-Generated Content: Focus on promoting user-generated content from real travelers. Encourage your audience to share their travel experiences and reviews. This approach can be more relatable and trustworthy to potential travelers, as it comes from fellow travelers rather than paid influencers.

4. Collaborate with Micro-Influencers: Consider collaborating with micro-influencers who have a smaller but highly engaged and loyal following. Micro-influencers are often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy compared to macro-influencers or celebrities. Their recommendations can carry more weight with their dedicated audience.



5. Authentic Experiences and Reviews: Highlight genuine and unbiased reviews from real travelers on your website and social media platforms. Encourage customers to share their experiences and feedback and respond to their reviews in a timely and helpful manner. This shows that you value customer opinions and are committed to providing authentic experiences.

6. Influencer Partnerships with Purpose: Instead of solely focusing on promoting products or services, collaborate with influencers on meaningful and purpose-driven campaigns. This could involve supporting local communities, sustainable tourism initiatives, or promoting responsible travel practices. By aligning with influencers who share these values, you can appeal to conscious travelers and build trust through shared values.

7. Diversify Marketing Channels: Explore other marketing channels beyond social media influencers. Invest in content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, partnerships with reputable travel publications, and targeted advertising to reach and engage potential travelers.

By implementing these strategies, you can work towards building trust and credibility for your tourism brand in the digital space, even in the face of low trust in social media content creators. Remember to consistently monitor and evaluate the impact of your marketing efforts to make data-driven decisions and refine your strategies over time.

**Suggestion 6 : "Driving Success in Digital Marketing for Travel and Destination Brands: Innovative Strategies to Maximize Audience Engagement and Brand Impact : As a digital marketer of a travel or destination brand, here are three key strategies one can adopt or innovate to make the most of the population. “:**

1. User-Generated Content and Influencer Partnerships: Leverage the power of user-generated content (UGC) and influencer partnerships to build trust and authenticity. Encourage travelers to share their experiences, reviews, and photos on social media platforms using branded hashtags or by running contests and campaigns. Showcase UGC on the website, social media channels, and marketing campaigns to inspire and engage

potential travelers. Collaborate with trusted influencers who align with the brand values and have an engaged audience to amplify reach and credibility.

2. Immersive Visual and Video Content: Invest in visually compelling and immersive content, including high-quality photos and videos, to showcase the unique experiences and attractions of the travel or destination brand. Use virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) technologies to provide virtual tours or interactive experiences that allow potential travelers to explore the destination. Share captivating stories through visual storytelling to evoke emotions and create a desire to visit. Utilize platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to distribute video content and engage with a broader audience.

### **Suggestion 7 : "Exploring the Evolving Landscape of Digital Marketing Strategies in the Travel Industry: Insights and Innovations for Effective Brand Engagement"**

Here are some more suggestions for travel brands in the realm of digital marketing:

1. Influencer Takeovers: Collaborate with influencers to do "takeovers" of your social media accounts. Allow them to create and share content directly with your audience, providing a fresh perspective and generating excitement. This can increase engagement and attract new followers.

2. Social Media Advertising: Utilize targeted social media advertising campaigns to reach specific demographics and interest groups. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn offer robust targeting options that can help you reach potential travelers who align with your target audience.

3. Interactive Itineraries: Create interactive itineraries on your website or mobile app that allow users to customize their travel plans. Incorporate features such as drag-and-drop activities, real-time pricing, and personalized recommendations based on their preferences. This interactive approach enhances user engagement and encourages exploration.

4. Influencer Events and Familiarization (FAM) Trips: Organize exclusive events or FAM trips for influencers and content creators. This provides them with firsthand

experiences of your destination or brand, allowing them to create authentic and compelling content that resonates with their audience.

5. **Social Media Stories and Live Videos:** Leverage the ephemeral nature of social media stories and live videos to provide real-time updates, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and interactive Q&A sessions. This creates a sense of urgency and FOMO (fear of missing out) among your audience, driving engagement and interest.

6. **Gamification:** Incorporate gamification elements into your digital marketing efforts. Create travel-related quizzes, challenges, or interactive games that incentivize participation and offer rewards such as discounts, upgrades, or exclusive experiences. This fosters a sense of fun and adventure while promoting your brand.

7. **Collaborations with Local Influencers:** Partner with local influencers and content creators from the destinations you promote. They have authentic knowledge and insights that can resonate with travelers looking for local experiences. Collaborative content can showcase hidden gems and unique aspects of the destination.

8. **Mobile-Friendly Experiences:** Optimize your website and digital assets for mobile devices. Ensure that the user experience is seamless across different screen sizes and platforms. Mobile bookings and research are on the rise, so it's crucial to provide a smooth and intuitive mobile experience.

9. **Influencer Affiliate Programs:** Develop affiliate programs with influencers where they earn commissions for driving bookings or sales through their unique referral links. This incentivizes influencers to actively promote your brand and drives conversions.

10. **Customer Reviews and Testimonials:** Highlight positive customer reviews and testimonials on your website, social media platforms, and marketing materials. Authentic feedback from satisfied travelers can build trust and credibility, influencing potential customers to choose your brand.

**Add On Suggestion: Sustainable and Responsible Tourism: Promote sustainable and responsible tourism practices as a key aspect of the brand identity. Highlight initiatives that focus on environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community development. Educate travellers on the importance of responsible**

**travel and offer tips and resources for sustainable practices. By positioning the brand as socially and environmentally responsible, conscious travellers who value sustainability and ethical travel choices can be appealed to.**

**5.3 Exclusion : Although the researcher has spoken in detail about global travel trends , the research has not included a more detailed approach on the same as the geographical limitation of the chosen area of study limits the same .**

These suggestions can help travel brands enhance their digital marketing strategies, engage with their target audience, and ultimately drive bookings and customer loyalty.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary of the study : ‘The Role of Social Media Influencers, Friends, and Peers in Travel Decisions: A Study on Purchase Intention‘**

#### Introduction:

In today's digital era, social media has become a powerful platform for influencing consumer behavior, including travel decisions. This research study aimed to investigate the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in influencing travel decisions for family and solo travelers. The study focused on determining the highest impact among these sources and its effect on purchase intention. By employing a qualitative approach and a triangulation method, the research aimed to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of travel decision-making in the context of social media and personal networks.

#### Literature Review:

The literature review formed the foundation of the research, exploring existing studies and theories related to social media influencers, friends, peers, and their impact on consumer behavior. It revealed that social media influencers have gained significant

popularity and credibility in the travel industry due to their ability to create engaging and authentic content. Friends, on the other hand, have always played a crucial role in influencing travel decisions through personal recommendations and shared experiences. Peers, including colleagues and acquaintances, also have an impact on travel decisions through social influence and shared interests.

#### Research Methodology:

To gather comprehensive insights, the research employed a triangulation approach, incorporating multiple data collection methods. Firstly, a linked survey was conducted, aligning with the research objectives and the reviewed literature. The survey aimed to assess the preferences and behaviors of respondents regarding the influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers on their travel decisions. The survey responses from 109 participants provided quantitative data for analysis.

To further explore the intricacies and nuances of travel decision-making, one-on-one video interviews were conducted with a selected pool of 15 respondents. These interviews delved deeper into the experiences, motivations, and decision-making processes of individuals, allowing for a qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the linked surveys.

#### Findings and Analysis:

The data collected from the linked surveys and one-on-one interviews provided valuable insights into the factors that contribute to purchase intention. The research identified various factors such as trust, authenticity, relevance, personalization, and alignment of values that played a significant role in the influence of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions.

#### Implications and Recommendations:

The study's findings have implications for digital and social media marketers in the travel industry. It highlights the importance of building strong relationships with friends and leveraging their influence through referral programs, loyalty initiatives, and personalized recommendations. Additionally, collaborating with social media influencers who align with the brand values can be an effective strategy for attracting and engaging

travelers. Marketers should focus on creating authentic, visually appealing, and informative content that resonates with the target audience.

Furthermore, it is recommended that marketers develop strategies to tap into the potential of peers as influencers by fostering community engagement and facilitating peer-to-peer recommendations. This can be achieved through interactive platforms, user-generated content campaigns, and targeted social media initiatives.

The research study successfully examined the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decisions and their impact on purchase intention. The findings highlight the dominance of friends in influencing travel choices, followed by social media influencers and peers. By understanding the dynamics of influence from these sources, digital and social media marketers can develop effective strategies to engage travelers and enhance their purchase intention. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field and provides valuable insights for industry professionals and future researchers interested in understanding the complex relationship between social media, personal networks, and travel decision-making.

Suggestion 1: "Effective Strategies for Destination Marketing on Social Media and Google Ads"

- Focus on YouTube: Leverage YouTube's wide user base to create high-quality videos showcasing destinations, attractions, and experiences.
- Utilize Facebook and Instagram: Develop visually appealing content like stunning photos and captivating stories to engage potential travelers across all age groups.
- Leverage Instagram for Younger Audiences: Tailor content on Instagram to suit younger audiences, focusing on visually appealing images, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations.
- Consider Twitter for Real-Time Updates: Use Twitter to share real-time updates, news, and timely offers. Engage with travelers through relevant hashtags and conversations.

- Target LinkedIn for Business Travelers: Highlight corporate travel packages, conference facilities, and networking opportunities on LinkedIn.
- Explore Emerging Platforms: Incorporate platforms like WhatsApp and Snapchat for targeted campaigns, promotions, and personalized customer interactions.
- Customize Content for Different Age Groups: Tailor messaging, visuals, and strategies to resonate with specific age groups.
- Emphasize Multi-Platform Integration: Maintain a cohesive presence across multiple platforms to reinforce brand visibility and recognition.
- Incorporate User-Generated Content (UGC): Encourage travelers to share their experiences, repost UGC, and run contests to incentivize content sharing.
- Monitor and Respond to Social Media Conversations: Timely responses, addressing concerns, and engaging with travelers enhance brand reputation and customer satisfaction.

Suggestion 2: "Strategies to Harness Travel Influencers' Impact in the Tourism Industry"

- Collaborate with Travel Influencers: Partner with influencers who have a significant following and a strong influence on their audience.
- Utilize Social Media Platforms: Leverage popular platforms like Instagram and YouTube to showcase visually appealing and engaging content.
- Implement User-Generated Content (UGC) Campaigns: Encourage travelers to share their experiences using branded hashtags, contests, and challenges.
- Optimize Website and Content for Search Engines: Invest in SEO strategies to improve visibility on search engine result pages.
- Leverage Data Analytics and Insights: Utilize tools like Google Analytics and social media analytics to gather data and insights on user behavior.

Suggestion 3: "Targeting Married and Salaried Individuals in Destination Marketing"

- Partner with Influencers: Collaborate with influencers who resonate with the married demographic and professionals in salaried positions.
- Focus on Authenticity and Real Experiences: Encourage influencers to share authentic travel experiences and provide genuine recommendations.

- Create Engaging and Personalized Content: Tailor content to the needs and preferences of married individuals and professionals.

Suggestion 4: "Targeted Marketing Strategies for the 35-45 Age Group"

- Targeted Social Media Campaigns: Develop campaigns showcasing real travel experiences of individuals in the 35-45 age group.
- Influencer Partnerships: Collaborate with influencers who belong to or have influence over this age group.
- Personalized Recommendations: Offer personalized recommendations and tailored travel experiences.
- Reviews and Testimonials: Highlight positive reviews and testimonials from travelers within this age group.
- Family-Friendly Offerings: Develop family-friendly travel packages, activities, and amenities.
- Content Marketing: Create informative and engaging content addressing the interests and concerns of this age group.
- Loyalty Programs and Exclusive Offers: Implement loyalty programs or exclusive offers targeted at this age group.

Suggestion 5: "Building Trust in Travel through Authentic Experiences and Genuine Recommendations"

- Influencer Selection: Be diligent in selecting influencers who have a genuine connection to the travel industry and provide unbiased content.
- Transparency and Authenticity: Encourage influencers to disclose sponsorships or partnerships.
- User-Generated Content: Focus on promoting UGC from real travelers.
- Collaborate with Micro-Influencers: Collaborate with micro-influencers who have a smaller but engaged following.
- Authentic Experiences and Reviews: Highlight genuine and unbiased reviews from real travelers.



- Influencer Partnerships with Purpose: Collaborate with influencers on purpose-driven campaigns.
- Diversify Marketing Channels: Explore other marketing channels beyond social media influencers.

Suggestion 6: "Innovative Strategies to Maximize Audience Engagement and Brand Impact"

- User-Generated Content and Influencer Partnerships: Leverage UGC and influencer partnerships to build trust and authenticity.
- Immersive Visual and Video Content: Invest in visually compelling and immersive content.

Suggestion 7: "Exploring Innovative Digital Marketing Strategies in the Travel Industry"

- Influencer Takeovers: Allow influencers to create and share content directly with your audience.
- Social Media Advertising: Utilize targeted social media advertising campaigns.
- Interactive Itineraries: Create interactive itineraries on your website or app.
- Influencer Events and Familiarization Trips: Organize exclusive events or FAM trips for influencers.
- Social Media Stories and Live Videos: Utilize stories and live videos for real-time updates.
- Gamification: Incorporate gamification elements into your marketing efforts.
- Collaborations with Local Influencers: Partner with local influencers to showcase unique aspects of destinations.
- Mobile-Friendly Experiences: Optimize your website and digital assets for mobile devices.
- Influencer Affiliate Programs: Develop affiliate programs with influencers.
- Customer Reviews and Testimonials: Highlight positive reviews and testimonials.

## 6.2 Implications

The research study on the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decisions has several implications for digital and social media marketers in the travel industry. These implications are based on the findings and insights obtained from the study. Some of the key implications are:

1. Leveraging the Power of Friends:

The research findings highlight the significant impact of friends on travel decisions. Marketers should recognize the influence of personal recommendations and shared experiences among friends and develop strategies to tap into this influential network. This can be achieved through referral programs, loyalty initiatives, and personalized recommendations, aiming to encourage travelers to share their positive experiences with their friends.

2. Collaborating with Social Media Influencers:

Social media influencers have emerged as influential figures in the travel industry. Marketers should identify and collaborate with relevant influencers who align with their brand values and target audience. By leveraging the reach, credibility, and expertise of influencers, marketers can effectively promote their destinations, attractions, and experiences. This collaboration can involve sponsored content, influencer takeovers, or brand collaborations to engage and attract travelers.

3. Creating Authentic and Visually Appealing Content:

The study emphasizes the importance of creating authentic, visually appealing, and informative content that resonates with the target audience. Marketers should focus on storytelling, visually captivating imagery, and expert recommendations to engage travelers and influence their decision-making process. By providing valuable and authentic content, marketers can build trust and credibility with their audience, enhancing their purchase intention.

4. Fostering Community Engagement:

The research highlights the potential of peers as influencers in travel decisions. Marketers should create platforms and initiatives that foster community engagement and facilitate peer-to-peer recommendations. This can be achieved through interactive platforms, user-

generated content campaigns, and targeted social media initiatives. By encouraging travelers to share their experiences and recommendations within their peer groups, marketers can amplify their brand reach and influence.

#### 5. Personalization and Relevance:

The findings suggest that personalization and relevance play a significant role in influencing travel decisions. Marketers should tailor their content and offerings to the preferences and interests of their target audience. This can be done by utilizing data analytics and insights to understand customer behavior and preferences, allowing marketers to deliver personalized and relevant experiences. By understanding and catering to the unique needs of travelers, marketers can increase their purchase intention.

Overall, the implications of this research study highlight the importance of building strong relationships with friends, collaborating with social media influencers, creating authentic content, fostering community engagement, and delivering personalized experiences. By adopting these strategies, digital and social media marketers in the travel industry can effectively engage travelers and enhance their purchase intention.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

While the existing research provides valuable insights into the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decisions, there is still room for further exploration, specifically in the Asian context. Here are some recommendations for future research in this area:

1. **Cultural Influences on Travel Decision-Making:** Investigate how cultural factors influence the impact of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions in different Asian countries. Explore how cultural values, norms, and traditions shape travel preferences and the extent to which individuals rely on influencers, friends, or peers for travel recommendations.

2. **Local Influencers and Micro-Influencers:** Explore the effectiveness of local influencers and micro-influencers in the Asian travel market. Investigate their influence on travel decisions, their credibility, and the level of engagement they generate compared to

international influencers. Understand how their content resonates with the local audience and the potential for collaborations with local influencers.

3. Social Media Platforms and Usage Patterns: Examine the usage patterns and preferences for social media platforms in different Asian countries concerning travel decision-making. Explore which platforms are most popular among travelers and how they engage with influencer content. Investigate the role of emerging platforms specific to the Asian market and their impact on travel decisions.

4. Multi-Channel Influence: Investigate how individuals navigate and process information from multiple sources, including social media influencers, friends, peers, and other online and offline channels. Explore how individuals integrate information from various channels to form their travel decisions and the relative influence of each source.

5. Cross-Cultural Comparison: Conduct cross-cultural studies to compare the impact of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions across different Asian countries. Explore similarities and differences in travel decision-making processes, the role of social networks, and the factors influencing purchase intention in diverse cultural contexts.

6. Emerging Trends and Technologies: Explore the influence of emerging trends and technologies, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence, on travel decision-making in the Asian context. Investigate how these technologies are used by influencers, friends, and peers to shape travel preferences and enhance the travel experience.

7. Long-Term Effects and Loyalty: Investigate the long-term effects of social media influencers, friends, and peers on brand loyalty and repeat visitation in the Asian travel market. Examine the relationship between initial influence and sustained engagement, as well as the factors that contribute to loyalty in this context.

8. Measurement and Metrics: Develop robust measurement frameworks and metrics to assess the impact of social media influencers, friends, and peers on travel decisions in the Asian context. Explore innovative methodologies, including social

network analysis and sentiment analysis, to quantify the influence and effectiveness of different sources on travel decision-making.

By conducting further research in these areas, scholars can deepen their understanding of the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decisions in the Asian context. This will contribute to the development of more targeted and effective marketing strategies for the travel industry in this region.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

**Based on the research findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:**

1. Friends have the highest impact on travel decisions among family and solo travelers, followed by social media influencers and peers. This suggests that personal relationships and recommendations from friends hold significant influence over travel choices.

2. The qualitative and triangulation approach used in the study allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the topic, incorporating literature review, survey data, and video interviews. This multi-method approach enhances the validity and reliability of the research findings.

3. The study highlights the importance of considering cultural factors when examining the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decisions. Cultural norms and values may shape individuals' reliance on different sources and the extent to which they are influenced by them.

4. Recommendations for future research include exploring cultural influences on travel decision-making, examining the effectiveness of local influencers and micro-influencers, understanding social media platform preferences and usage patterns, investigating multi-channel influence, conducting cross-cultural comparisons, studying emerging trends and technologies, and measuring long-term effects and loyalty.

5. The implications of the research findings for the travel industry suggest that marketers should consider the significant influence of friends in shaping travel decisions. Developing strategies to encourage positive word-of-mouth and leveraging personal connections can be effective in influencing travel choices.

6. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the role of social media influencers, friends, and peers in travel decision-making, particularly in an Asian context. It provides valuable insights for practitioners and researchers in understanding consumer behavior and developing targeted marketing approaches.

Overall, the research underscores the importance of personal relationships and social connections in influencing travel decisions. Recognizing the impact of friends, social media influencers, and peers can help marketers and travel industry professionals tailor their strategies to effectively engage and influence potential travelers

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **A.1 Demographic Questions**

Gender Question

I am a \*

Male

Female

Others

Age Question

Your age group \*


- 18-29 years
- 29-35 years
- 35-45 years
- 45-55 years
- 55 years and above

Income Question

My income bracket \*

1. INR 7.5 lakhs to 15th lakhs per annum
2. INR 15 lakhs and above per annum
3. Won't like disclose

**Working status question**

Your current occupation 

---

1. Working/ Salaried
2. Business / self employed
3. Professional ( Doctor / Lawyer/ Consultant )
4. Retired
5. Student
6. Home Maker
7. Add option

### Location Question

Your current City \*

- Delhi
- Mumbai
- Kolkata
- Chennai
- Bangalore
- Hyderabad
- Chandigarh
- Guwahati
- Pune
- Gurgaon
- Other

### Marital status Question



Your current marital status \*

1. Married
2. Unmarried
3. Divorced
4. Won't like to comment

### Travel Behaviour Question – General

Have you travelled once for holidays in last 4 years ( 2017-2021 ) ? \*

- Yes
- No

Where have you been for the period (2017-2021) ?

- India
- Abroad
- Both

### Travel Behaviour Question – Social Media Influencer effect

Do these travel influencers content made you change or adapt your travel plans ? \*

Yes

No

Have your ever increased or decreased your travel budget on basis of recommendations by social media influencer that you like ? \*

Yes

No

Have you ever travelled to a particular destination solely based on the travel influencer's recommendations ? \*

Yes

No

## TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR QUESTION – FRIEND EFFECT

Have you ever made a travel plan just because your friend has gone to a particular destination and you don't want to miss the fun that he /she seemed to have ? \*

Yes

No

If yes , where did you travel ? \*

Short answer text  
.....

Post coming back from the trip , did you feel it was worth the effort ? \*

Yes

No

### TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR QUESTION – PEER EFFECT

Again- would you / have you ever travelled to a destination / hotel / resort , solely based on your office colleague / business counterpart's recommendations ? \*

Yes

No

Did you feel it was worth the recommendation ? \*

Yes

No

### TRAVEL TRUST QUESTION

I believe travel influencers are saying truth when they promote a hotel / destination/ airline \*

- Yes
- No
- Notsure
- Other...

Which factor makes you trust a social media influencer ? \*

- If he has more than 1 million followers
- If the content is digitally pleasing , no matter how many followers he/she has
- Influencer recommended by a friend
- Authenticity and nature of information given
- Other...

Among 3, I trust (choose one ) while making a travel destination / hotel / airline / resort decision \*

1. Social Media Influencer
2. Friends
3. Peers

## SOCIAL MEDIA HABIT QUESTIONS

Do you use Social Media in your daily life ? \*

- Yes - daily
- Once a week
- Not so regularly
- Not at all

How many social media applications do you use in your daily life ? \*

- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Other...

Before making a travel plan do you refer to social media platforms for research ? ( 5 being highest use and 1 being least ) \*

- |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Which of these applications you refer before making a travel destination decision ? \*

- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Facebook
- TripAdvisor
- Google Search
- Other...

Which of these travel influencers do you follow ? \*

- Travelling Desi
- Mountain Trekker
- Flying Beast
- Travelling Mondays
- Tanya Khanijow
- Other

Who is your favourite Travel / Social Media Influencer whom you follow regularly ? \*

Short answer text

.....

Do you share your post holiday pictures / videos in any of these platforms ? \*

Instagram

Facebook

YouTube

Twitter

Pinterest

I do not share them at all

Other...

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



#### Interview Consent Form

Research project title: The role of Social Media Influencers, Friends, Peers on travel decisions for Family and Solo travellers in relation to highest impact among them that affect purchase intention.

Research investigator: Partha Pratim Chakraborty

Research Participants name: Mr Prakash Kumta

The interview will take 30 mins. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Partha Pratim Chakraborty as research investigator
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Partha Pratim Chakraborty and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that



are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed

- the actual recording will be kept in record of Partha Pratim Chakraborty

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