The Role of Social Media In Tourism Marketing in Kerala

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ARTICLEINFO

ABSTRACT

Social networking is a system that allows internet users all over the world to connect, interact, and exchange ideas, viewpoints, knowledge, and connections. Businesses' marketing strategies have altered in the age of social media, from putting products out to encouraging people to buy stuff in their stores, in order to develop a more engaging and mutually beneficial connection. Because of the increased competition among business enterprises, most businesses find traditional marketing strategies ineffective in reaching out to their clients. Which results in their intervention in every place where clients can be found. This scenario has forced companies to use digital or virtual media to undertake marketing efforts. In recent years, hotel services have used social media for goals such as successful advertising, reaching more clients, and establishing brand loyalty in the tourism business. The primary goal of this article is to develop a workable link between social media and tourism marketing. According to the findings of the literature, social media is radically altering how visitors and travellers seek for, read, trust, and rationalise information about tourism suppliers and destinations. The literature study, however, may not be exhaustive because the use of Social Media is continually evolving.

Kerala Tourism has a global presence and with its clear strategy for growth and marketing activities, it has gained a lot of tourists from all over the world. Kerala is well-known for its religious and cultural legacy. The beautiful place known as 'God's own country' has a lot to offer in terms of cultural events, festivals, and rituals that take place throughout the year, making this city an awe-inspiring region not only for its residents but also for visitors who visit this land of divinity, inspiration, and spirituality on a regular basis to experience Kerala's amazing culture and traditions. Social media marketing is also used by different agencies of the Government to promote the tourism sector in Kerala. Covid 19 adversely affected the

entire tourism industry of the state and the country. The state like Kerala which depends largely on income from Tourism sector has been severely affected by the pandemic. This study to find out the role of social media in tourism marketing in Kerala. It is based on secondary data and information collected from different journals, magazines, periodicals, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years, a lot has changed in the world of social media. The growth of social networks has sped up changes around the world. Everyone uses social media for some reason, from the media to big businesses to regular people. Blogs and social media are where most discussions take place. The status of a brand can be affected by what people say about it on social networks. This is why brands need to keep an eye on social media. So, social media can be both good and bad, but it has an effect on both. Social media have become the most popular way to reach and talk to a huge number of people at once. People, businesses, and celebrities have all used their influence to grow social networks as a way to advertise. A social media platform that works well can be a powerful way to get information to the people who need it. One should do a better job of getting a lot of people to follow them so they can engage with and spread a message. It's important because it tells users important things about the services they can use.

Information and communication technologies are used a lot in the tourism system for marketing, sales, and building management relationships with customers. When a tourist is making his or her final decision about where to go, the most important information comes from online word of mouth (eWOM). Authors who write about tourism market segmentation know that the number of tourists who use digital media is growing. Modern technologies make a new customised tourist offer based on what the tourists say they want. Modern tourists have been more active than ever since the sophisticated Web 2.0 technology came out. This technology has had a big impact on how people decide where to travel and how they plan their trips. Many survey results show that about half of people are likely to download travel apps when they are looking for places to go on vacation before they actually go.

Social media is a great way to find out how tourists feel, and the fact that they are buying more and telling other people about it shows that this is true. Building a successful service-based brand in tourism means that each should have a unique value proposition based on the customer experience.

Because tourist services aren't always reliable, a traveller should get all the information they need to make the right decision about their trip. Modern tourists are more likely to trust what other travellers say on social media than what marketers say.

As people get better at expressing themselves on social media, they can have a bigger impact on other people by sharing their own thoughts and experiences. Social media is good for marketing communications because it is cheap and doesn't have any bias.

These days, both technology and social media change very quickly. Social media is one area that is growing very quickly. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are all very popular and have a big impact on the world. However, Facebook is the best of the three. Since these websites are so popular, they have a big impact on the Travel and Tourism industry. The travel and tourism agencies can easily spread the word about their deals and where to go on vacation.

When people are looking for a new place to travel, they usually get suggestions from friends or family, but most of the time they get ideas from social ads. Social media sites make it easy for travellers to share photos and videos from their trips. They can check in at multiple places and write online reviews of the places they visit. People post more pictures on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube after a trip.

Social media is having a very good effect on the travel and tourism industry. Friends and family now spread the word about beautiful places, which gives tourism agencies more clients because these places are getting free advertising.

Blogging is the new thing to do in today's world. A blog is a more personal website. A lot of people have a blog about travelling. From the hotel they stayed at to the travel agency they used, these blogs give a clear picture of each place. Again, this is free advertising that helps travel and tourism businesses a lot.

Social Media and its impact on Travel and Tourism sector

With today's technology, there is an app for almost everything, especially for hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and museums. A lot of different surveys showed that a significant amount of people uses apps for travel information and to have a better knowledge about a certain place. They may ask a friend, a forum, a family member, or look through different travelling and tourism apps. Owing to these different apps and because of social media, more and more people will find out about a different location. They can read some reviews about the place, or read some blog posts.

Reviews

Another thing that is very popular today is writing reviews. A lot of people write reviews about the place they went to. You can find reviews about locations, the hotel, activities, restaurants and a lot more. A study showed that over 74% of travellers write reviews because they want to share with other people the travelling experience they had. Also 98% find Trip Advisor reviews to be the most accurate and the most helpful. 53% of travellers, will not book a hotel that doesn't have any review. Written reviews are in fact very popular and very influential. A lot of people decide where to go simply by reading reviews online. If a person wrote a review about a bad experience, a lot of people will not want to go to that place or they can reconsider that destination. Over 70% of global consumers say that online reviews are the second most trusted form of advertising.

Facebook

Another very influential website on travellers is Facebook. Facebook is particularly great because you can find pages about a destination, or a hotel. There you can find pictures of that destination, people commenting about the destination and pictures of other people at the destination. Another thing that you can find on Facebook is pictures of your friend's vacation. Some people get influential when they see their friends' pictures in a certain location and see how much fun they have.

52% of Facebook users said that their travelling plans were affected by a friend's picture of their trips. Overall, social media is very influential when it comes to travelling and tourism. It influences in a positive way and is a good thing. Now, people find more information about the destinations they want to go to

and have a higher chance of having a good time because they know what to expect.

Rationale of the study

Tourism is a crucial component of the National Development Plan in many nations due to its capacity to stimulate economic expansion and provide employment. There must be continual efforts to promote the tourism industry if it is to remain competitive and continue to contribute to the common good. It is predicted that this study will increase knowledge of social media's role in promoting tourism, hence facilitating the decision-making process of marketers and highlighting opportunities in Kerala's tourism industry that must be properly explored. As the use of Social Media tools continues to grow and evolve, we must develop a better understanding of the vital role of Social Media in a traveler's travel decisions and a working relationship model to assist tourism officials in determining the most effective approaches to Social Media marketing for promoting their tourism products and destinations. The necessity to comprehend the impact of social media on boosting tourism-related economic activities in Kerala was the impetus for this research.

Objectives of the Study

➢ To understand the full extent of the role of social media in the tourism industry.
➢ To understand the impact of the social media on the tourism industry.
➢ To understand the increase in revenues of the tourism industry.
➢ To understand the levels of services that can be offered because of the social media.
➢ The analysis of the factors of the perceived value of customers through using the social networking process for destination travels.

Methodology of the Study

In this study, Convenience sampling was used. Ernakulum is district in Kerala is selected for the study because it is termed as commercial capital of Kerala. In this four Arts and Science colleges were selected and distributed 25 questionnaires from each college and finally got returned 87 filled questionnaires.
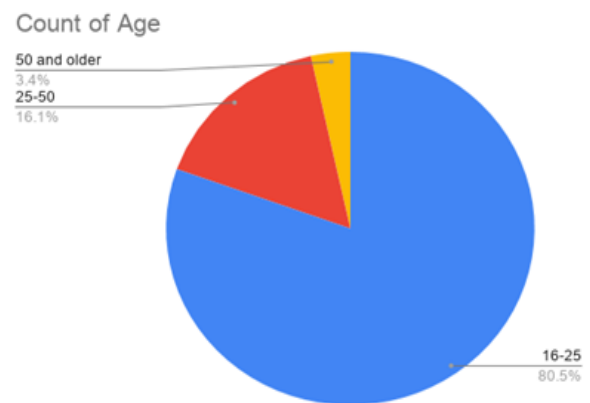
Population - Kerala
Sample size - 87
Sampling method - Convenience sampling
Data collection method - Questionnaire
Tool for analysis - Percentage Method

Data Analysis
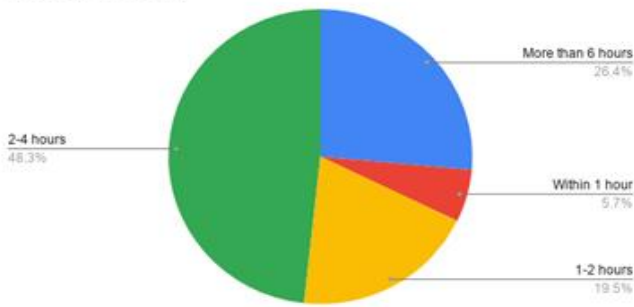
1. Age of the Respondents

Interpretation

From the data collected, we can reach a conclusion that 80.5 percent respondents belong to the age group between 16-25, 16.1 percent respondents belong to the age group between 25-50 and the rest 3.4 percent respondents belong to the age group of 50 and above.

2. Time Spend On Social Media Network Every Day

Count of Average amount of time spend on social media network every day

Interpretation

The above data indicates that out of the 87 samples surveyed, 48.3 percent of respondents use social media up to 2-4 hours, 26.4 percent respondents use more than 6 hours, 19.5 percent respondents use up to 1-2 hours and the rest 5.7 percent respondents use social media within 1 hour.

1. Social Media Network You Often Use
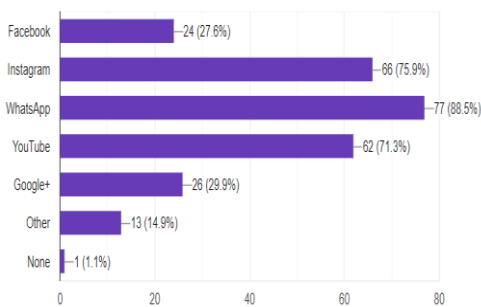
Interpretation

The data plotted on the graph reveals that 88.5 percent respondents often use WhatsApp, 75.9 percent respondents use Instagram more often, 71.3 percent respondents use YouTube,29.9 percent respondents use Google, 27.6 percent and 14.9 percent respondents use Facebook and other mediums of social networking sites and the rest 1.1 percent respondents doesn't use any social media network.

2. Purpose of use of social media
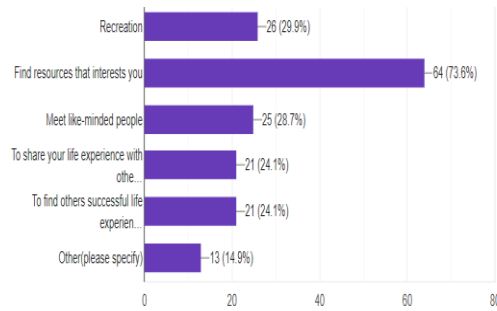
Interpretation

The above graph shows that from the respondents who sampled in the survey are found that about 73.6 percent respondents use social media for finding resources that interest them, 29.9 percent respondents use social media for recreation and the rest with 28.7 percent, 24.1 percent and 14.9 percent respectively.

3. Time Usage Of Social Media

Count of How many times have you used social media to collect travel information?
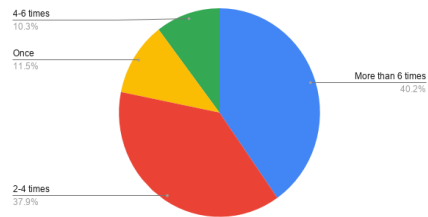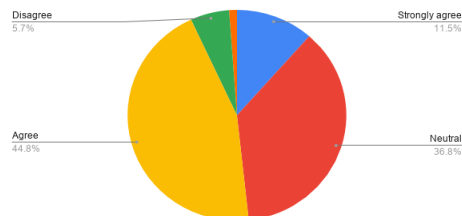
Interpretation

Out of 84 samples surveyed 40.2 percent respondents used social media more than 6 times to collect travel information, 37.9 percent respondents have used 2-4 times and the rest with 11.5 percent and Out of the 84 samples surveyed, 40.2 percent of the respondents have 10.3 percent respectively.

4. Details of Local Travel Agencies Through Social Media

Count of I usually get the details of local travel agencies through social media

Interpretation

The data plotted on the diagram reveals that 44.8 percent respondents agrees that they usually get the details of travel agencies through social media, 36.8

Percent respondents is in neutral with the statement and the rest with 11.5 percent who strongly agrees and 5.7 percent respondents disagree.

5. Travel Policy Through Social Media

Count of I usually follow the travel policy through social media
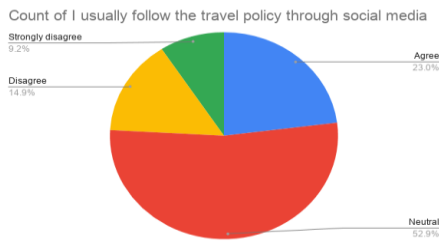
Interpretation

On the travel plans of the respondents; 9.2 percent and 56.3 percent of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that social media helped improve their travel plans. 21.8 percent is neutral on whether social media improves their travel plans. On the other hand, whereas 10.3 percent of these respondents were indecisive on the issue, and the rest of these respondents had varying levels of disagreement that social media improved their travel plans. Importantly, the study did not ask the respondents regarding how social media improved or did not improve their travel plans.

6. Social Media Helps Improve Travel Plans

Count of Social media platforms help improve travel plans
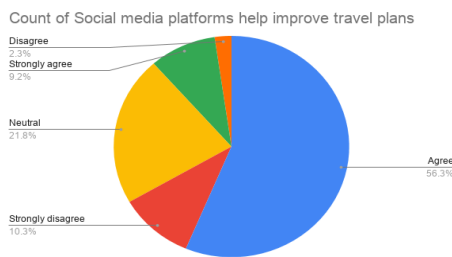
Interpretation

It is observed that 56.3 percent respondents agrees that social media platforms helps to improve travel plans, 21.8 percent respondents is neutral, 10.3 percent respondents strongly disagree, only 9.2 percent respondents strongly agrees that travel plans can be improved with the help of social media and the balance 2.3 percent respondents disagree.

7. Reluctant To Seek Travel Information

Count of Are you reluctant to seek for travel information from social media platforms?
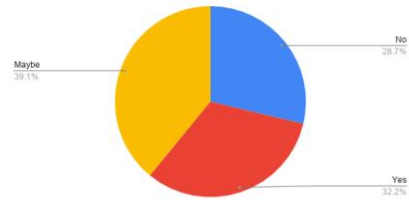
Interpretation

The results from the question above shows that 39.1 percent respondents are partially agreeing to the statement that they are reluctant to seek travel information from social media, 32.2 percent respondents opted for yes and the rest 28.7 percent respondents opted for no.
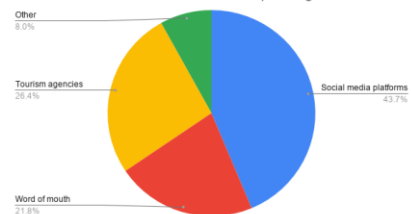
8. Social Media Platforms Are Dependable
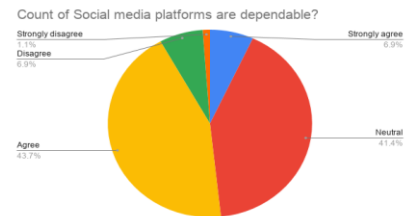
Count of Social media platforms are dependable?

Interpretation

Out of 87 samples surveyed, 43.7% of respondents agrees that social media platforms are dependable, 41.4% of respondents are in neutral, 6.9% of respondents strongly agrees, 6.9% of respondents disagrees and the balance percent of respondents strongly disagrees

9. Source Of Travel Research And Planning Information

Count of Source of travel research and planning information

Interpretation

Out of 87 samples surveyed, 43.7% of respondents agrees that social media platforms are dependable, 41.4% of respondents are in neutral, 6.9% of respondents strongly agrees, 6.9% of respondents

disagrees and the balance percent of respondents strongly disagrees

12. Influence Of Social Media On Travel Decisions

Count of Influence of social media platforms on travel decisions
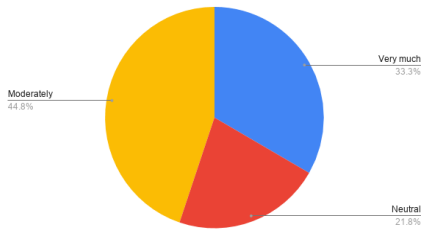
Interpretation

On the above graph out of 87 samples surveyed, 44.8% of respondents says that social media platforms on travel decisions influenced moderately, 33.3% of respondents are very much influenced on social media platforms on travel decisions and 21.8% of respondents are neutrally influenced on social media platforms on travel decisions

13. Importance Of Review

Count of Importance of reviews related to travel industry in social media network

Count of Importance of reviews related to travel industry in social media network
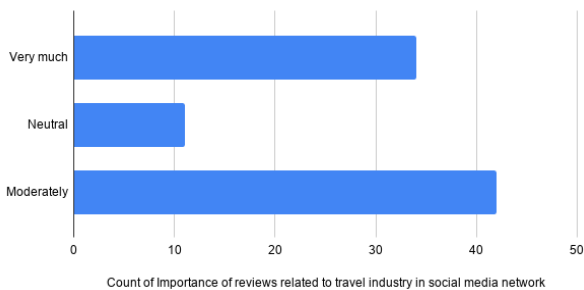
Interpretation

The above graph represents 34 percent respondents shows very much importance of reviews related to travel industry in social media network, 11 percent respondents are in neutral and the rest 42 percent respondents agrees moderately.

14. Source Of Destination Review In Social Media
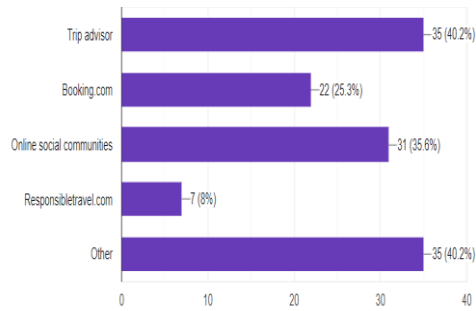
Interpretation

Out of the 87 samples surveyed 40.2 percent respondents use trip advisor as the source for destination review in social media, 40.2 percent respondents use other sources, 35.6 percent respondents use online social communities and the rest 25.3 percent and 8 percent respondents use booking.com and responsibletravel.com respectively.
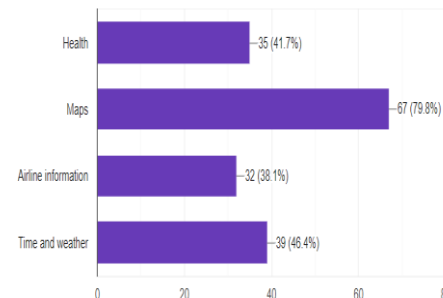
15. Is Social Media Travel Information Trustworthy
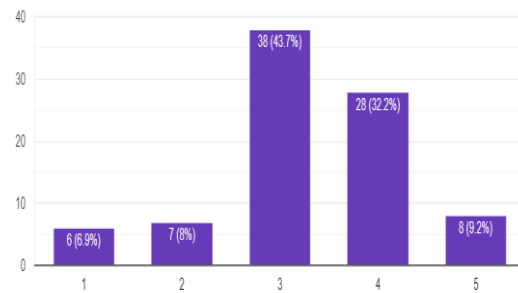
Interpretation

The above graph represents 43.7% respondents go for 3rd rank, 32.2 % respondents go for 4th rank, 9.2 % respondents go for 5th rank, 8 % respondents go for 2nd rank and 6.9 % respondents go for 1st rank.

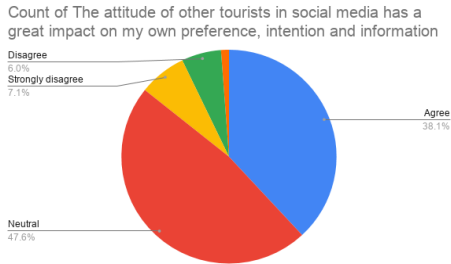## 16. Information In Social Media Channel

Interpretation

The graph represents 79.8 percent respondents use maps, 46.4 percent respondents use social media to get time and weather information, 41.7 percent respondents search for health related information,

and the balance 38.1 percent respondents use social media to get airline information.

17. Attitude Of Tourists

Count of The attitude of other tourists in social media has a great impact on my own preference, intention and information

Interpretation

The above diagram shows 47.6 percent respondents are in neutral opinion on the attitude of other tourists in social media has a great impact on their own preference, intentions and information, 38.1 percent respondents agrees to the statement and 7 strongly disagree and disagree to the statement respectively.

18. Social Media Influences

Count of Social media influences how long I travel and stay
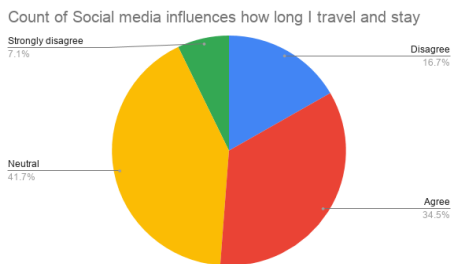
Interpretation

Social media platforms influence others; out of the 87 samples surveyed, 41.7 percent respondents are in neutral, 34.5 percent respondents agrees that social media platforms influence how long the tourist travel and stay, 16.7 percent respondents disagree to this statement and the balance percent of respondents strongly disagree.

19. Travel Experience And Travel Information

Count of There is a certain difference between the travel experience and travel information provided by social media
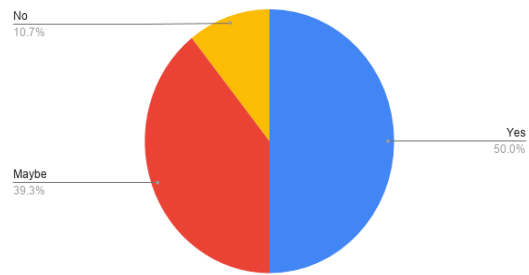
Interpretation

Out of the 87 samples surveyed 50 percent respondents agrees that there is a certain difference between the travel experience and the travel information provided by social media, about 39.3 percent respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement and the rest 10.7 percent respondents disagree.

Findings

- The majority of the tourists were adults and teenagers.
- The major purpose of using social media was for finding information that interests them.
- Social media helps improve travel plan.
- There is a moderate influence of social media on travel decisions.
- Trip advisor and other sources are commonly used for destination review in social media.
- Majority of the social media travel information is trustworty.

II. Suggestions

This study suggests that tourism destinations establish a trustworthy brand image not only on their actual premises, but also on social media platforms. In this sense, these locations must continuously enhance their products and/or services. Likewise, they must consistently interact social media users in order to cultivate a positive reputation among these people. As

a result, both existing and potential tourists will share positive material about these destinations, enhancing their reputation on the market as preferred vacation spots.

Similarly, there is a requirement for the destinations to establish a relationship with their target customers by establishing a platform in which these destinations and their target consumers view one other as equals. This will make it easier for places to distribute their content with their intended audience. In addition, establishing such a partnership will enable these destinations to identify their strengths and limitations, thereby offering opportunities for improvement. In addition, these places will be able to respond to complaints from previously-visited customers, allowing them to retain a positive brand image on social media.

Finally, there are a number of topics that require additional research. To begin with, additional research must be conducted to determine the relationship between age/gender and the use of social media as essential sources of information when consumers undertake travel research and planning. This will assist the destinations in creating relevant content for various consumer demographics. In addition, a study is required to assess the type of information people seek when conducting vacation research and planning. This will aid in enhancing the destinations' ability to provide content that suits the needs of these consumers even before they travel to their preferred destinations.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the tourism sector is one of the world's largest and heavily uses social media to promote its participants' brands and reach its target consumers. In line with this, the internet and social media platforms have created an atmosphere where social media users provide equally essential content about the destinations they have visited, unlike in the past when tourist corporations were the sole source of travel information. This means tourism locations no longer control public domain content about their products and services' quality and price. From this perspective, this study found several aspects affecting visitors' use of social media for vacation research and preparation.

First, social media improves travel planning for its users, according to the study. In particular, social media networks gave users crucial information and data to assist them choose places. Optimization of destinations to find the greatest combinations for tourists at affordable pricing is also included. Since these platforms were straightforward to use, social media users found it easier to search for content and share content about different destinations. Importantly, the study found several factors that increase these individuals' use of social media sites for travel information. Dependability, reliability, honesty, sincerity, and trustworthiness are among these platforms' qualities. With this in mind, this study provided several recommendations on social media's role in tourism.

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