



Exploring the Reliability of Social Media for Travel Recommendations: A Study in the Context of Chandigarh

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Abstract. Social media has revolutionized the travel industry, becoming an increasingly important aspect of the sector. It has influenced our behavior in every part of our life, including the way we chose and consume travel content. Tourism is one of the world's most active economic sectors, and social media is a substantial component of it.

The rise of social media has disrupted conventional techniques for building a trustworthy brand. The age of brochures and billboards in the tourist business has come to an end. Today, the usage of social networking sites may be the most important factor impacting the tourist business. Tourists, in particular, benefit from social media since it enables them to share their most memorable travel experiences with a large number of people.

This research paper will explore the reliability of social media and how it is utilized to make travel choices in the travel process. There has been a change in how travelers undertake their pre-trip research. They not only do almost all of their preparation online, but they also often seek solutions to their queries on social media. Since travel has always been a popular pastime, the arrival of technology has resulted in a paradigm change in communication and trip planning practices, both of which have been beneficial. Previously, passengers depended on information supplied by their relatives, friends, and travel companies, which assisted them along the route by making ideas for locations to visit. With the growth of the Internet, communication has changed away from face-to-face interaction and towards online communication. Visitors may access a range of information and images to help them prepare for their travels on their own terms.

Keywords: Social media, Tourism, Sustainable tourism, Social media marketing, Vlogging

1 Introduction

Social networking is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the travel business, and it is seen as a new trend in the sector [1]. Social media has influenced our behaviour in every part of our life, including the way we purchase and consume food and drinks. Businesses have benefited greatly from technical improvements, notably in the creation of innovative marketing methods [2]. There is no doubt that tourism is one of the world's most active economic sectors, as well as a substantial component of all social media activity. Today, the usage of social networking sites may be the most important factor impacting the tourist business [3]. Tourists, in particular, benefit from social media since it enables them to share their most memorable travel experiences with a large number of people. The rise of social media has disrupted conventional techniques to building a trustworthy brand. The age of brochures and billboards in the tourist business has come to an end. Social networking has experienced phenomenal growth in both popularity and usage [4]. People's professional and social connections, in addition to their ability to express themselves and exchange ideas, are all undergoing transformations due to social networking. This also applies to the manner in which organisations, products, and commodities communicate with one another and their respective audiences [5]. Additionally, in recent times, social media platforms have become a significant tool for enhancing public knowledge and understanding of clients. The impact of social media on the travel and tourism industry has been widely acknowledged to be significant, primarily because of the perception of vacation trips and tourist products: transactions are deemed detrimental, and as a result, data-intensive decision-making processes have been established [6].

2. Review of Literature

Visitors have an expectation for a personalised experience, as well as intelligent [7], imaginative, and entertaining communication and messages. One of the expectations that visitors hold is the following. Furthermore, this should encompass sentiments of empathy in addition to others. They value both the desire to participate in the production of tourist goods and the desire to have faith in the products they purchase. There is a potential for social media to aid locations in sustaining their competitive advantage through the facilitation of compelling content distribution, the adoption of innovative strategies, and the encouragement and stimulation of collaborative discourse [8].

A research indicates that a considerable number of individuals are willing to undertake extraordinary measures in order to obtain the perfect Instagram image [9]. It is imperative that settings convey not only their aesthetic appeal but also the peril that awaits those who disregard boundaries and signals. It is imperative that influencers exhibit responsible conduct and accept responsibility for their actions.

Despite the fact that the people we follow on social media may have a significant impact on our emotions and behaviour, it remains impossible to precisely predict the actions and thoughts of a consumer, according to the findings of [10]. Customers now incorporate social media platforms into their daily lives; they have evolved into an indispensable component.

According to a study [11], a significant number of individuals hold unreasonably high

expectations for their trip as a result of the manipulated and staged nature of the majority of photographs uploaded to the internet. These individuals believe that their actual experience will be identical to the images they saw online, despite the fact that this is incredibly improbable.

The importance of Search Engine optimization (SEO) in the context of tourist websites [12]. The results of an examination carried out on the websites of 400 regional tourism organizations in Greece were disclosed. Search engine optimization is a critical element in the tourism industry, as it assists search engines in discerning the subject matter of a website and identifying its potential value to visitors, as stated in the study. In addition, the research underscored the importance of categorizing tourism websites, suggesting that a larger number of such sites could benefit from enhancements.

Social media has become an influential and revolutionary force in the sphere of modern communication and information distribution, impacting numerous aspects of individuals' lives. By considering social media usage as a crucial variable in the current research, this study aims to gain a deeper comprehension of the intricate relationship between digital platforms and travel decision-making [13]. Social media, characterized by its wide-ranging platforms and interactive functionalities, has seamlessly integrated itself into the daily lives of users belonging to various demographic groups. Analyzing the extent and patterns of social media engagement offers a nuanced perspective on the ways in which these digital interactions shape and influence travel preferences, decisions, and conduct. This variable encompasses the diverse methods through which individuals engage with, share, and ingest travel-related content [14]. It provides invaluable insights into the changing dynamics of travel decisions in the era of digital technology. Social media has profoundly altered how travelers plan, experience, and share their journeys. With the advent of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, travelers now have access to a vast multitude of resources. They can access travel information in real-time, read reviews and recommendations, and interact with other travelers. This convenience has enabled travelers to make more informed decisions, customize their itineraries, and uncover off-the-beaten-path treasures [15].

Social media has revolutionized destination marketing by allowing tourism agencies, hotels, and tour operators to interact with their target audience in novel and effective ways [16]. Through compelling visual content, interactive campaigns, and user-generated content, destinations can directly showcase their unique attractions and experiences to prospective tourists. Influencer marketing has also gained popularity, in which influential social media users with large followings promote specific destinations, thereby generating chatter and driving tourism [17].

3. Research Gap

Nevertheless, the researcher identified the subsequent deficiencies in the current body of literature: A significant portion of the research employs the micro method, which centres on a particular category of social media platform, such as application-based networking channels or websites that facilitate travel reviews. The predominant body of contemporary research centres on the initial phase of decision making, which is the quest for information through a particular networking or review platform. One of the primary goals of this study is to evaluate the reliability of social media on individuals

who are excited about travelling. To that end, this paper will investigate how travellers in Chandigarh engage with social media at all phases of the trip decision-making process.

4. Objective:

1. To explore the use of social media in the tourist business.
2. To investigate the benefits and drawbacks of social media in the tourist business.

5. Methodology

Considering that the major target audience for this study are Chandigarh residents who use social media to pick a destination and compare travel possibilities, this questionnaire looks to be an appropriate tool for obtaining data. To obtain information, open-ended, specific, and closed-ended questions, as well as probing inquiries, were used. A sample size of 200 respondents who meet the aforementioned criteria were considered for this research. The research was limited to the city of Chandigarh since this study aims to investigate the effect and influence of social media on those who want to travel or travelled in the past to determine the Social media platform, Social media usage pattern and reliability of social media on their travel decisions.

6. Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1. Daily usage of Internet

Internet Usage (Daily)	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour	24	12
2 to 3 hours	32	16
3 to 5 hours	48	24
5 to 8 hours	64	32
Above 8 hours	32	16
Total	200	100

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents in Chandigarh are active internet users, as all respondents fall into one of the specified usage categories. The highest percentage of respondents (32%) reported spending 5 to 8 hours on the internet daily, indicating a significant portion of the population is highly engaged with online activities. Another substantial group (24%) spends 3 to 5 hours online daily, showing a consistent level of moderate internet usage. Respondents spending 2 to 3 hours (16%) and above 8 hours (16%) daily represent a sizable portion as well, reflecting diverse usage patterns. The high percentage of individuals spending 5 to 8 hours on the internet suggests a substantial portion of the population has a significant online presence, which may include active engagement with social media platforms. Users spending 3 to 5 hours and above 8 hours are also likely to be active on various online platforms, contributing to a digital-savvy population.

Table 2. Daily usage of social media

Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percent
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(Daily)		
Less than 1 hour	48	24
2 to 3 hours	84	42
3 to 5 hours	48	24
5 to 8 hours	20	10
Total	200	100

Table 2. shows that the majority of respondents (42%) reported spending 2 to 3 hours on social media daily, making it the most common usage category. A significant portion (24%) spends less than 1 hour and another 24% spends 3 to 5 hours on social media daily, demonstrating a varied but consistent level of engagement. A smaller percentage (10%) spends 5 to 8 hours on social media daily, indicating that a portion of the population has a higher level of social media involvement.

Table 3. The information available on social media regarding a tourist destination is more reliable as compared to other sources of information.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	6
Disagree	40	20
Neutral	48	24
Agree	92	46
Strongly Agree	8	4
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows that a combined 20% of respondents either strongly disagree (6%) or disagree (20%) with the statement, indicating skepticism or lack of trust in the reliability of information on social media about tourist destinations. A significant portion of respondents (24%) holds a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty or an absence of strong opinions on the reliability of information on social media for tourist destinations. A substantial percentage of respondents either agree (46%) or strongly agree (4%) with the statement, indicating a positive perception of the reliability of information available on social media about tourist destinations.

Table 4. Social media is more convenient way of finding information about the holiday travel.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	6
Disagree	36	18
Neutral	40	20
Agree	88	44
Strongly Agree	24	12
Total	200	100

Table 4 indicated that a total of 18% of respondents disagreed (18%) or strongly disagreed (6%) with the statement, suggesting that some people in Chandigarh do not think social media is a useful source of information while planning a vacation. Twenty percent of respondents take a neutral view, indicating that they are unsure or do not have strong feelings about how convenient it is to use social media to get information about vacation travel. With regard to social media as a handy source of information about vacation destinations, a sizable portion of respondents (44%) or strongly agree (12%) with the statement.

Table 5. The information posted by user's family, friends, and peers on social media influences their travel choices.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	20	10
Disagree	24	12
Neutral	42	26
Agree	64	32
Strongly Agree	40	20
Total	200	100

The table provides information that a combined 14.28% of respondents either strongly disagree (8.16%) or disagree (6.12%) with the statement, indicating a portion of the population in Chandigarh does not feel that information on social media generates the idea of traveling for them. A significant portion of respondents (30.61%) holds a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty or an absence of strong opinions on whether information on social media generates the idea of traveling. A substantial percentage of respondents either agree (34.69%) or strongly agree (20.41%) with the statement, indicating that a majority perceives that information available on social media about a particular destination does generate the idea of traveling.

Table 6. Users keep up with current travel trends by following several travel influencers on social media.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	36	18
Disagree	28	14
Neutral	48	24
Agree	64	32
Strongly Agree	24	12
Total	200	100

Table 5 shows that a combined 32% of respondents either strongly disagree (18%) or disagree (14%) with the statement, indicating a portion of the population in Chandigarh does not rely on travel influencers on social media to keep up with current travel trends. A significant portion of respondents (24%) holds a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty or an absence of strong opinions on whether following travel influencers on social media helps them keep up with travel trends. A substantial percentage of respondents either agree (32%) or strongly agree (12%) with the statement, indicating that a majority perceives that following travel influencers on social media is a helpful

way to stay informed about current travel trends.

Table 7. Bargains, deals, travel, stay discounts or giveaways posted on social media by travel services providers generate an idea of travelling.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12
Disagree	20	10
Neutral	72	36
Agree	48	24
Strongly Agree	36	18
Total	200	100

Table 7 indicated that 22% of respondents either strongly disagree (12%) or disagree (10%) with the statement, indicating a portion of the population in Chandigarh does not feel that discounts and promotions on social media by travel service providers generate the idea of traveling for them. A significant portion of respondents (36%) holds a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty or an absence of strong opinions on whether such discounts and promotions generate the idea of traveling. A substantial percentage of respondents either agree (24%) or strongly agree (18%) with the statement, indicating that a majority perceives that bargains, deals, and discounts on social media by travel service providers can influence and generate the idea of traveling.

Table 8. Respondents follow the reviews and ratings provided by travel influencers on social media.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	16	8
Disagree	44	22
Neutral	56	28
Agree	52	26
Strongly Agree	32	16
Total	200	100

A large fraction of responses (28%) are 'Neutral', demonstrating that many individuals are neither pro nor against social media for travel. The 42% 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies show that many people trust social media. The 30% 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' replies suggest that many respondents do not trust social media for travel advice. The data demonstrates polarisation, with approximately equal percentages in 'Disagree' and 'Agree'. This shows respondents' perspectives differ.

Table 9. Respondents specifically seek for travel information on social media using hashtags.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	24	12
Disagree	32	16

Neutral	56	28
Agree	48	24
Strongly Agree	40	20
Total	200	100

The biggest amount of replies (28%), 'Neutral', suggests that many respondents are undecided about hashtagging travel information on social media. The total 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies are 44%, demonstrating that many respondents like utilising social media hashtags for travel information. 28% of respondents ('Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree') do not favour social media hashtags for travel information. The 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies indicate that many respondents found hashtags for travel information useful or handy.

Table 10. Respondents follow the posts of their family, friends, and peers on social media for my travel choices.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12.24	6.12
Disagree	32.66	16.33
Neutral	61.22	30.61
Agree	57.14	28.57
Strongly Agree	36.74	18.37
Total	200	100

Most respondents (30.61%) are 'Neutral', suggesting that they neither agree nor disapprove with following family, friends, and peers' trip postings. The total 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies are 47.94%, demonstrating that many respondents value following close friends' social media postings for trip selections. The 22.45% 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' replies show that some respondents don't like utilising family, friend, and peer trip postings. The 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies show that many respondents trust and depend on their relatives, friends, and peers' social media trip postings. A large proportion of respondents are indifferent, suggesting that social ties may influence travel plans.

Table 11. Social media provides a one stop solution for all the requirement to decide for travel over other alternatives.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	32	16
Disagree	36	18
Neutral	52	26
Agree	44	22
Strongly Agree	36	18
Total	200	100

The biggest amount of replies (26%), 'Neutral', suggests that many respondents neither agree nor disagree that social media may make all travel choices. The 40% 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies show that many respondents think social media can solve travel problems. The 34% 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' replies show that others do not see social media as a one-stop solution for travel selections. 'Neutral' replies indicate that respondents are not sure that social media is the best option for all travel needs, but they do not reject it either.

Table 12 Feedback of other tourists are easily available for the particular destination on social media which may not be accessible in case of other alternative.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	14
Disagree	32	16
Neutral	56	28
Agree	40	20
Strongly Agree	44	22
Total	200	100

Most respondents (28%) were 'Neutral', implying that many neither agree nor disagree with the premise that visitors may readily provide criticism on particular sites on social media. The total 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies are 42%, demonstrating that many respondents trust social media for tourist input. Thirty percent of respondents 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' that social media makes visitor comments for particular places simple to get. Both 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' replies show that many respondents found social media useful for getting tourist input, indicating it may be better than other options.

Table 13. It is easy to get multiple contacts for the persons / agencies providing services related to travel through social media.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	14
Disagree	32	16
Neutral	56	28
Agree	40	20
Strongly Agree	44	22
Total	200	100

The majority of replies (26.53%) were 'Neutral', demonstrating that many respondents neither agree nor disagree that social media makes it simple to find travel service providers. The total 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' answers are 47.94%, demonstrating that many respondents found it simple to make several social media interactions. A minority of respondents (26.53%) disagree that social media is simple to build various interactions

Table 14. Product knowledge, price comparison, real time experiences helpful for itinerary preparation are available on social media.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12	6
Disagree	36	18
Neutral	44	22
Agree	60	30
Strongly Agree	48	24
Total	200	100

The biggest proportion of replies (30%) believe that social media gives essential itinerary planning information, including product knowledge, price comparison, and real-time experiences. The total 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' answers are 54%, demonstrating that many respondents find social media valuable for travel information. A minority of 24% disagree that social media provides useful itinerary information.

Table 15. Social media has significant and positive usage pattern at different stages of travel

<i>Regression Statistics</i>						
Multiple R	0.959033					
R Square	0.919744					
Adjusted R Square	0.918516					
Standard Error	0.355406					
Observations	200					
ANOVA						
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>	
Regression	3	2837226	94.5742	748.7276	4.7E-107	
Residual	196	24.75739	0.126313			
Total	199	308.48				
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	-0.4081	0.085505	-4.77281	3.55E-06	-0.57673	-0.23947
Reliability on social media	0.467853	0.076527	6.113529	5.17E-09	0.31693	0.618776

1. Social media is more convenient way of finding information about the holiday travel.	0.208721	0.086241	2.420198	0.016424	0.038641	0.378801
2. The information posted by users family, friends, and peers on social media influences their travel choices.	0.409358	0.06195	6.607919	3.59E-10	0.287185	0.531531

The regression model appears statistically significant based on the low p-values in the ANOVA table. Each coefficient represents the estimated change in the dependent variable for a one-unit change in the corresponding independent variable, holding other variables constant. All three independent variables (Reliability on Social Media, Convenience of Social Media, Influence of Social Connections) have statistically significant coefficients, indicating they are associated with changes in the dependent variable. It can be said that the variables included are significant predictors of the dependent variable, and their coefficients provide insights into the strength and direction of these associations.

7. Key findings

From the regression analysis, several key findings can be inferred about the impact of social media usage on travel decisions in Chandigarh city:

The coefficient for "Reliability on Social Media" is 0.467853 with a very low p-value. This indicates a strong positive impact. As reliability on social media increases, there is a significant positive effect on travel decisions. This suggests that individuals who find social media more reliable are more likely to be influenced in their travel choices.

Social media is a more convenient way of finding information about holiday travel" also has a positive impact, though less pronounced than reliability. The coefficient is 0.208721, and the p- value is 0.016424. This suggests that as individuals perceive social media as a more convenient source of travel information, it has a positive effect on their travel decisions.

The information posted by my family, friends, and peers on social media influences my travel choices" has a substantial impact. With a coefficient of 0.409358 and a very low p-value (3.59E- 10), this indicates a strong positive association. The influence of social connections on social media significantly impacts travel decisions in Chandigarh.

The overall model is statistically significant, as indicated by the ANOVA table with a very low p-value ($4.7E-107$). This suggests that the combination of the included variables effectively explains the variance in travel decisions in Chandigarh.

The R-squared value is 0.919744, indicating that approximately 91.97% of the variance in travel decisions can be explained by the independent variables in the model. This high R-squared value suggests that the model provides a good fit to the data.

The intercept is statistically significant with a coefficient of -0.4081 and a low p-value. The negative intercept suggests that even when social media factors are zero, there is still an impact on travel decisions.

8. Conclusion

The reliability of information on social media plays a crucial role in influencing travel decisions in Chandigarh. Efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of travel-related content on social media platforms may have a positive impact.

The influence of social connections on social media is significant. Collaborations with influencers or strategies that leverage social connections can be effective in shaping travel decisions.

Perceived convenience in finding travel information on social media also has a positive impact. Simplifying the accessibility and presentation of travel-related content on social media platforms may enhance their influence.

The overall model, combining these factors, is highly useful in predicting and understanding travel decisions in Chandigarh. However, further research and validation may be needed to generalize these findings to different populations or contexts.

These findings collectively suggest that social media, particularly in terms of reliability, convenience, and social connections, significantly influences travel decisions in Chandigarh city. Recognizing the potential influence wielded by individuals who actively share travel content, businesses and destinations can explore collaborative opportunities with content creators to leverage their impact in promoting tourism and travel experiences.

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