Examining The Influence Of Social Media On Sustainable Destination Image: Exploring Age As A Moderating Factor

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ABSTRACT

Social networking is becoming a popular tool these days, especially in the case of the tourism industry. There has been a noticeable increase in the use of social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, because of the dynamic nature of technology. Numerous users are treating it to create blogs on these platforms and share photos while travelling. This becomes a medium of interaction with other users by sharing particulars of their interests and activities. From the perspective of the tourism industry, the stakeholders involved namely hoteliers, travel agents, and government are cherry-picking social media to connect with their guests and customers. The influence and opinion of people is of high significance, in case of travel, purchase, usage of service. Mammoth's dependency on social media for every prominent decision relating to travel has made social media and social networking sites an integral part of life.

Purpose: The current study aims to analyse the impact of social media on the travel decisions made by Generation Z. The current study attempts to investigate the effect of social media in shaping the perception of prospective travellers for the desired travel destinations. The Technology Acceptance Model has been used in the current study to develop a conceptual framework that will help understand the impact of social media on the travel decisions of the younger generation. The current study also aims to assess the role of age as a moderating factor for the formation of destination images among Generation Z.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A sample size of 420 respondents was used to meet the objective of examining the impact of social media on the creation of a sustainable destination image in a traveller's mind. To examine the relationship between the intention to use social media and destination image, a conceptual model has been framed with the help of the Technology Acceptance Model. The results of this study will be extremely important to online tourism marketers, as this will give them a better understanding of how the younger generation uses social networking sites. Also, the way social networking sites aid prospective travellers in the formation of a virtual destination impression. This will enable marketers to draft new or fine-tune their existing online marketing strategies.

Findings: The findings do not rely on any presumptions while confirming the theoretical model's robustness and strength. The main findings highlight that travellers' information sources including social media, have an impact on their motives for exploring a place. The travellers' motives have an impact on their cognitive image and travellers' motivations have an impact on their affective image.

Originality/ Value: This research encompasses various variables namely Perceived Costs, Perceived Enjoyment, and Perceived Ease of Use which also examine their impact on the intention to use social media for travel purposes. This study also envisages social networking sites as a source of information and takes into account the direct and moderating linkages between numerous variables namely motivations, information sources, and image dimensions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication between communities, organizations, and individuals has undergone pervasive changes due to the Internet, particularly social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). As a result, social media has become a powerful tool for travellers by serving as a channel for communication and expression. Through it, people can now share and also publish information by expounding their thoughts, experiences, and other ideas, in addition to searching for and obtaining information from a variety of traditional and regular sources (Dickey and Lewis, 2011).

The usage of communication technology is particularly important in the tourism business because persuading people to travel to a destination is the most difficult task, especially in the tourism industry. To do this, the destination's online and social media presence needs to be increased (Tham, A., Croy, G., & Mair, J.; 2013). Additionally, it's critical to acquire knowledge beyond the basics of promoting relevant areas on social media. It has been noted that social media can have an impact on people's decisions on sustainable travel destinations.

The fundamental factor that can shape tourists' opinions is the content that is made available to potential passengers. Furthermore, travel companies can examine and leverage the destination image more effectively with the help of social networking sites like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter which provide amazing platforms to share information (Li, R.; Suh, A., 2015). Quite a few studies have demonstrated the constructive effect of social media information generation sources on the creation of destination images by the usage of the internet, as well as their ability to boost customer satisfaction, loyalty, and intention toward a specific location.

Additionally, social media has an impact on making decisions related to destination while planning a trip. In the past, people utilized conservative techniques, such as friends, family, peers, advertising agents, and travel agencies to organize their travel needs. However, social media is increasingly regarded as an excellent and well-researched method of information amassing wherein the data on social media is updated frequently.

Travel agencies, tour operators and destination marketing companies use social media and websites to reach a large number of probable customers with useful information that they want to capture. The details could include the place, available products, and variety of services related to tourism (Shuang, Y, 2013). (Destination Management Organizations) DMOs have profited from the opportunities provided by utilizing the various digital platforms to enhance engagement with passengers and personalize travel-related information. DMOs may enhance client relations and influence how tourists view their location by utilizing social media and websites with multimedia features (Huertas, A., 2018).

Social media interaction can provide value and enhance visitors' impressions of a destination. Nevertheless, DMOs should use social media regularly to build a positive reputation with passengers. DMOs may also be in charge of developing or organizing the destination image. Using social media and sharing their factual details on these social networking sites, a variety of travel agencies and tour operators want to spark interest and draw in the general public. When customers use related material on social media, marketers get direct feedback. As a result, tour operators are better able to understand the needs and preferences of their customers and customers will be able to accept, comment on, change, distribute, or reject this content. The main reason for this is that travel agencies may use social media to get in touch with customers directly and sway their choices. Travellers can share their vacation experiences on social media platforms, allowing the creation and sharing of incredibly interactive and interesting Information. Travellers can produce interactive content on social media in the form of blogs, music, movies, and images.

Thanks to the social media connections, travellers are able to share massive volumes of data and information on social networking sites. Social networking sites per say have become the most popular means of communication for individuals to communicate with one another and also trust the information offered by others due to their creation of authentic database. Similar to this, social media now offer a learning platform and act as a treasure of learning opportunities due to technological advancements. In order to facilitate learning and spread knowledge, a variety of virtual learning platforms have been developed.

Furthermore, travellers have the option to share their travelogues on Trip Advisor, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Llodra-Riera, I.; M.P.; Jiménez-Zarco, Martínez-Ruiz; A.I., 2015). A destination's image is often created by information and content is generated by advertisers and visitors and this image serves two key behavioural functions. It influences decision-making regarding destination selection in the first place. Second, once the trip is over, decisions about post-travel enjoyment, sharing of experiences, and repeat travel are all influenced by the destination's image.

Previous studies have found that the perception of the destination has a major role in determining where tourists choose to travel. In a similar vein, tourists' intentions to return as well as the length of their stay and their travel schedules are influenced by the perception of the place. A person will only travel to a destination where they have a favourable and enjoyable mental impression. Studies have delved into how content from social media affects people's impressions of places. The quantifiable data available on social media platforms helps create impressions of destinations, and a variety of stakeholders, including travel firms, tour operators, tourist managers, and local government organizations, have a significant say in the database on these sites. To draw potential tourists to a specific location, these players start the process of creating images of the place. As a result, the way a visitor evaluates a location, different features and attributes shape their overall impression of it.

A traveller's decision to visit a specific location is impacted by several things, including blogs, social media networks, friends, family, and any travel documentaries produced by different specialists. According to a study on tourism, social media can enhance the effectiveness of marketing strategies and travel-related decision-making. (Gretzel, U., 2006) A range of content that is available on many platforms including blogs, online forums, and social networks like Instagram, YouTube, and Flickr has grown a lot in popularity when it comes to sustainable travel possibilities.

On most of these social media networks, individuals can share a variety of material, including posts, comments, opinions, and travelogues, all of which can be used as a resource for other users. Numerous academic studies have documented the ever-increasing importance of search engines in generating online traffic for travel-related content. Travellers' perceptions can be greatly influenced by search engines, which are now known as a "gateway" and the most potent and trustworthy source of information. Because of its practical importance for destination administration and marketing, Stepchenkova and Mills have identified destination image as the most important element in the tourist business.

The purpose of the current study is to identify the effects of variables like Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Enjoyment, and Perceived Cost on the intention to utilize social media for travel purposes. The present study also looks into how social media shapes potential passengers' perceptions of destinations in a sustainable way and attempts to evaluate the impact of age as a moderating factor. The goal of the research is to determine the effects of age in the creation of a destination's overall image. Perceived Cost, Perceived Enjoyment, and Perceived Ease of Use are the factors that are now used to achieve the necessary goal.

The first section of the paper lists all of the previously published material as well as the research that has been done thus far. The literature covers topics such as the core concepts of social media content, destination visuals (cognitive, affective, and overall images), age as a moderating variable, and the ultimate choice to visit sustainable places. The paper then goes on to construct a theoretical connection and the main factors' structure. In addition, the research methodology's specifications are given. The results of the study are then discussed collaboratively with implications for theory and practice. Finally, the study's conclusion earmarks the limitations and recommendations that can be put into practice.

Discussion

The main aim of the current study is to examine the impact of variables namely Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Costs, and Perceived Enjoyment on the intention to use social media for travel purposes. The current research aims to study the influence of social media on the formation of sustainable destination images in the minds of prospective travellers. The study also aims to explore the role of age as a moderator in the formation of sustainable destination images. The study wants to know whether age plays a vital role in the usage of social media and ultimately formation of sustainable destination images in the minds of tourists. To achieve the above-mentioned objectives survey was conducted from 420 respondents. To study the relationship between variables like Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Enjoyment, Perceived Costs, and intention to use social media for travel purposes Technology Acceptance Model has been used. With this study, it has been concluded that age and usage of social media move in the opposite direction. As people grow older the usage of social media reduces and hence it also reduces the frequency by which people can form sustainable destination images in their minds. It has been observed that Perceived Costs have an inverse relation to the intention to use social media for travel purposes. Variables namely Perceived Ease of Use, and Perceived Enjoyment have a positive and direct relationship with the intention to use social media for travel purposes.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Tourism

Taking the use of commercial services for recreation and relaxation from one place to another is referred to as tourism, which is a type of service activity. In addition, tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that refers to the travel of individuals for leisure, business, or professional reasons across locations. In terms of business and marketing, tourism is vital to the advancement of most nations. The tourism business has experienced a significant impact from the revolution in internet-based information and communication technology. In the context of "interactive tourism," travellers are increasingly using their smartphones to help with navigation and location discovery.

Tourism can be defined as a temporary and short-term movement of people to places which are outside of the place where they generally live and work. Tourism does not include only moving from one location to another but also inculcating various activities which are undertaken by travellers during their stay or vacation. There are numerous types of tourism which are taken by people namely adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, pilgrimage tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, wellness tourism, business tourism, sports tourism, leisure tourism, cruise tourism, and heritage tourism.

Social Media

Since social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram fulfil people's basic need for social connection, they have become an increasingly important networking and marketing tool for e-commerce enterprises. It provides a space where like-minded people may communicate, share ideas, and cultivate common values (Mariani, M.M.; Mura, M.; Di, M., 2018). Social involvement is an essential element of behavioural motivation. Stephen et al. (2010) have taken the reference of social interaction theory which states that the seller benefits most from having access to many users inside the social commerce network rather than from being centrally located within the network. It has been observed that these shifts in customer behaviour might also be influenced by the characteristics of the retail platform itself.

Consumer behaviour changes because of the clustering phenomenon, which affects members of a community based on the proximity of their friends as well as the traits and behaviour of those friends (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). Psychologists have determined that risk and trust are the most important characteristics since they affect consumers' intentions to buy in e-commerce settings. In the area of social interaction, where consumer perceptions and how they affect purchase intentions are still not fully understood as there is still a need to be thoroughly studied. In social commerce settings, where people generate a large amount of material, word-of-mouth advertising has proven to be an extremely effective marketing tactic.

Destination Image

People's thoughts, ideas, and opinions about a specific place or destination make up their destination image (Baloglu, S.; McCleary, K.W, 1999). It is a subjective concept since it is a complex amalgam of elements and goods that work together to create an overall impression. Numerous studies that have referred to the steps involved in constructing a target picture have supported the long-held idea that the concept of the destination image is subjective and hugely impacted by people's sentiments and beliefs.

It has been discovered that the intention of a traveller to travel to a destination is linked to the destination image, hence it becomes crucial to understand the procedure of formation of destination image. Image is defined as a set of meanings which is utilised to describe an object. Image can be defined as anything by which people describe, remember, and relate to anything. In the area of travel and tourism destination image can be described as a total of beliefs, ideas, impressions, and expectations that a traveller gets regarding a destination. It has been observed that destination image evolves at two levels. One at the organic level image and another at the induced level image. As per the study (Gunn, 1989) organic image is one that everyone receives from an extended continuum of non-touristic directed communication. The second level of the local tourism image known as the induced image is created by deliberate development, promotion, advertising, and media attention.

Travellers' attitudes and decision-making are known to be impacted by how they perceive their destination (Hsu, C.H.C.; Wolfe, K.; Kang, S.K., 2004). Pike's research findings indicate that the destination image has a significant impact on several elements. These include the length of stay, frequency of visits, desire to return, and level of awareness. Thus, it has been determined that the popularity of a place among tourists is largely determined by its image, which is largely determined by destination information marketing. It has long been noted that traditional tourism-related information sources have been enhanced by social media and websites based on the Internet.

In addition to helping users find pertinent information, social networking sites enable users to share their thoughts and experiences with a large number of other users who are also looking for relevant information. Preliminary findings indicate that in the majority of stances, a more cognitive destination image and objective is favoured. This component was assessed using the perceived attributes that matched the location with the emotional construct.

The emotive image reflects feelings that a visitor has about a specific place, reflecting their thoughts. Recent research indicates that images need to show visitors' recommendations for a location in addition to their actual visits or plans. Consequently, perceptions of destinations might be cognitive, emotive, or conative, depending on the information source, which is why the authorities now find it to be so crucial.

Two subjects that are currently receiving more attention in the tourism literature are social media and destination image. Recent studies have looked into the connection between these two areas. Kim et al.'s research, for instance, showed that the kind of information and material available on social media influences the "cognitive-affective-conative" method of destination image creation. Emotional and cognitive qualities, which are closely linked to emotional and cognitive images and are utilized in the construction of destination pictures, are the two categories of qualities found in social media material and information.

Cognitive Destination Image

According to research by Berry, L.L., Parasuraman, A., and Zeithaml (1988), a traveller's cognitive destination picture can be defined as elements such as different scenic views, the weather, cleanliness, hygiene, and other experiences that they can consistently recall. The thoughts and knowledge about the place are discussed in the cognitive destination image. The cognitive picture can be used to evaluate an individual's knowledge and opinions about the object, which impact their affective ratings. For example, social media video footage increases users' awareness of the place, which influences their future attitudes (Zeithaml, V.A.; Berry, L.L., 1985). Finally, users' emotive and cognitive impressions of their location may influence their actual behaviour once they are there.

As per the research conducted by (Beerli & Martin, 2004) cognitive destination image can be referred to as a person's knowledge and insights regarding a place. It is the assessment of the destination's perceived qualities. Stated differently cognitive destination is a package of individual's attribute perceptions (Echtner & Ritchir, 1993).

Affective Destination Image

An evocative image conveys the visitor's ideas and emotions about various facets of their destination (Wang, H.-Y, 2012). Several studies have demonstrated that to assess destination visualization, one needs to consider both affective factors, which depict the feelings connected to the destination, and cognitive factors, which impart the information and concepts related to the particular destination. The affective component activates the conative and comparable components (Young, K.; Kim, S.; Il, S.; Yang, S., 2017). According to Baloglu and McCleary, affect and cognition are one and that cognition has a major role in influencing affect as a whole.

Sustainable Destination Image

The ability to meet the requirements of the present generation without compromising the demands of future generations is the definition of sustainability. Sustainability emphasizes the necessity to use finite resources wisely to preserve them for use in meeting the requirements of future generations. This issue has drawn a lot of attention because of its high significance to the travel and tourism sector. The World Health Organization has made it clear that sustainable development and sustainable tourism go hand in hand. Three essential components—financial, ecological, and sociocultural—must be taken into account while developing sustainable tourism. In addition to satisfying the demands of stakeholders and passengers, this concept safeguards and advances prospects.

The idea of sustainable tourism has benefited from the findings of several studies. Numerous research works have added to the body of knowledge about how decisions are made in sustainable tourism. Studies reveal that social networking sites (SNS) have a big influence on how travellers act. However, there is still much to learn about topics like social media's effect on sustainable tourism. Therefore, the goal of this research is to investigate how travellers' use of social media may affect their selections, especially when it comes to selecting eco-friendly travel locations. This study closes this knowledge gap by using social media as a data source to understand how travellers form their opinions about destinations and assist them in selecting sustainable ones.

Development of Hypothesis and Research Question

Regarding the adoption of technology, TAM is highly recognized. According to a study by Venkatesh and Davis (2000), the research model with the biggest impact is TAM. The TAM Model is thought to be a suitable model to illustrate how people use and adopt new technologies, such as the use of big data tools, smartphones, artificial intelligence in medical education, and data sharing in the virtual market (Ooi, K. B., & Tan, G. W. H. 2016). This is based on a variety of findings.

Boufaris (2002), McKechnie, Winklhofer, & Ennew (2006), and Vijayasarathy (2004) state that the Technology Acceptance Model has been widely used to predict and analyse customers' intentions and behaviour when using online services.

The two key components that form the foundation of the Technology Acceptance Model were introduced by Davis (1989). The first is the technology's perceived usefulness, and the second is its perceived ease of use. These elements are thought to have a significant impact on whether or not a person intends to use and adopt new technology.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)

Perceived Ease of Use is the likelihood that utilizing a technology will be simple and painless.

PEU stands for perceived ease of use, and it refers to how easy it is for a user to utilize social media for travel. It determines whether utilizing social media necessitates more work from the user. Based on their PEU, social media users may be divided into two groups: those who are comfortable with technology and can quickly adapt to new features, make up the first group. They do not have to actively learn virtual reality skills. Utilizing social media is labour-intensive for the second type. They feel intimidated by social media's abundance of alternatives.

H1: Usage of social media is positively influenced by Perceived Ease of Use.

Perceived Enjoyment (PE)

According to (Pankaj Vishwakarma, Srabanti Mukherjee, and Biplab Datta, 2019), perceived enjoyment refers to how happy people feel using new technology. The flow theory, proposed by Csikszentmihalyi in 1977, aims to differentiate between people's emotional and cognitive aspects of behaviour. The definition of perceived enjoyment given by Davis et al. (1992, p. 1113) sheds light on the degree of satisfaction that enhances new technology users' experience.

H2: Perceived Enjoyment can influence the usage of social media for travel purposes positively.

Perceived Cost (PC)

According to Machogu and Okiko (2012), perceived cost is the cost of implementing new technology and is thought to be a barrier to innovation adoption. Perceived cost has a major impact on information system adoption (Mathieson, Peacock, & Chin, 2001). According to studies by Kim, Joo, and Park (2017) and Moriguchi & Andrade (2016), perceptions of cost have a significant impact on the adoption of new technologies.

In this study, perceived cost refers to the monetary expense that social media users have to bear. travellers who use social media to research tourist destinations are responsible for covering the subscription fees required to access mobile Internet services. Studies have indicated that the perceived value of any technology is negatively associated with its perceived usage costs.

H3: Perceived Costs inversely impact the intention to adopt social media for travel purposes.

Social media and its Contribution to the Formation of Sustainable Destination Image

This study's primary goal is to quantify the influence of social media on the development of positive perceptions of sustainable travel destinations among social media users and potential travellers. The idea of sustainability is relatively new these days, and travellers favour serene locations. The purpose of the study is to determine whether social media content is factual and useful in promoting a sustainable endpoint.

H4: Content available on social media has a positive impact on the formation of a sustainable destination image.

Age Acting as Moderator

Currently, no study has used age as a moderator when finding the impact of social media on the sustainable destination image. So, the present study envisages filling this gap by analysing the impact of social media on sustainable destination image and finding the effect of age on sustainable destination image when using social media.

Moderators observe conversations and the degree, to which the link between the independent and dependent variables varies in response to a third variable, or the moderator, is known as the moderation analysis.

H5: An increase in age leads to a negative impact on the usage of social media and the formation of sustainable destination Images.

Moderator variables can influence the direction or strength of the link between the independent and dependent variables, which is why they are also referred to as interactions or products. They either strengthen or weaken the link, or they shift its influence from strong to moderate and to non-existent. Moderators may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. Test scores, weight, age, IQ and other numerical characteristics are a few examples of quantitative modifiers. Qualitative moderators include things like ethnicity, gender, and education that have no numerical value. Since the moderator affects the relationship's degree, direction, and strength, it can also be adjusted to measure how much the relationship between the variables has changed. To ascertain if categorical or quantitative variables affect the link between independent and dependent variables, or whether the selected moderator and the projected changes have any validity, moderators are used in research.
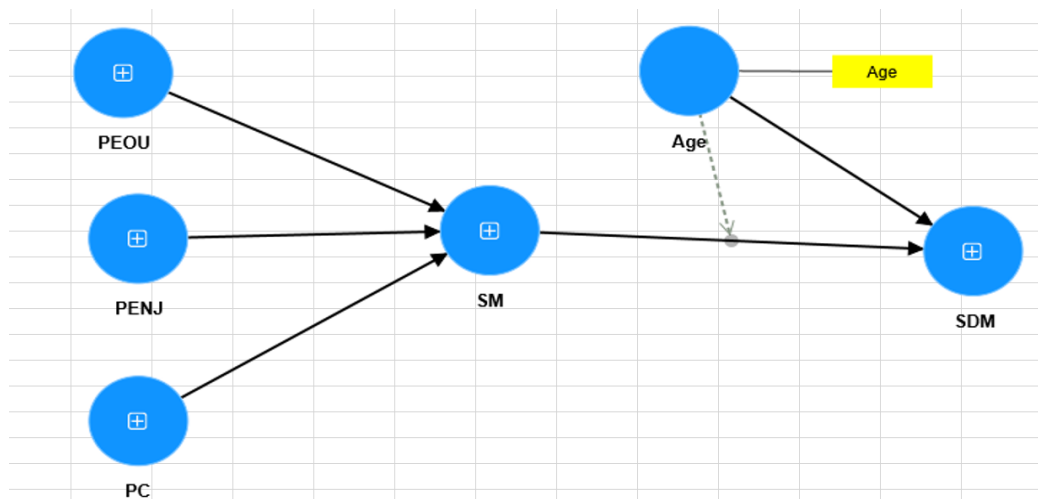

Figure 1 Conceptual Model

3. EMPIRICAL STUDY

Questionnaire and Measurements

The proposed conceptual model is shown in Figure 1 , it will be verified and tested. To collect relevant data, a questionnaire based on literature research was developed. To assure participants of the confidentiality of their answers and to give them a brief overview of the study's purpose, the questionnaire included an introduction. Respondents also got an email address in case they had any questions or concerns, along with an estimate of how long the questionnaire would take to complete. The responders were chosen from the NCR area. Screening questions were used to ensure that only individuals who had travelled for pleasure at least once in the preceding year were chosen.

For this study, those who regularly use social media and were aware of it were contacted. For the current study, data gathered from 420 respondents was analysed and results were drawn. The data was evaluated using model fit indices, and the study makes use of the Structural Equation Model proposed by (Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. 1988) to analyse the relationships between the variables.

The intended model has five constructs: the intention to utilize social media for sustainable destination (SM), perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived enjoyment (PENJ), perceived cost (PC), and sustainable destination image (SDM). The measurement tool was 7-point Likert scale with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 7 denoting strongly agree.

To improve the content validity, to suit the research setting, measurement questions, and variables were drawn from earlier studies. Considering the context of the study, the following items were employed: Venkatesh and Davis (1996) provided three responses on perceived ease of use; Ghani, Supnick, & Rooney (1991) provided four responses on perceived enjoyment; Luarn & Lin (2005) provided two responses on perceived cost; Lai, Kim, and Joo provided four responses on intention to use social media; and Joo and Mohaidin provided an adaptation of four responses on sustainable destination image.

Data Analysis and Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a statistical method that was applied as a measuring model to determine correlations between different variables. For each item, the factor loadings were found to be greater than 0.50. Therefore, every piece of information used in the study has significance (Hair, J. F., LDS Gabriel, M., Silva, D. D., & Braga, S. 2019). The metrics Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are used to quantify the correlation between the variables. The results are displayed in Figure 2. It displays each dependent and independent variable's route coefficient.
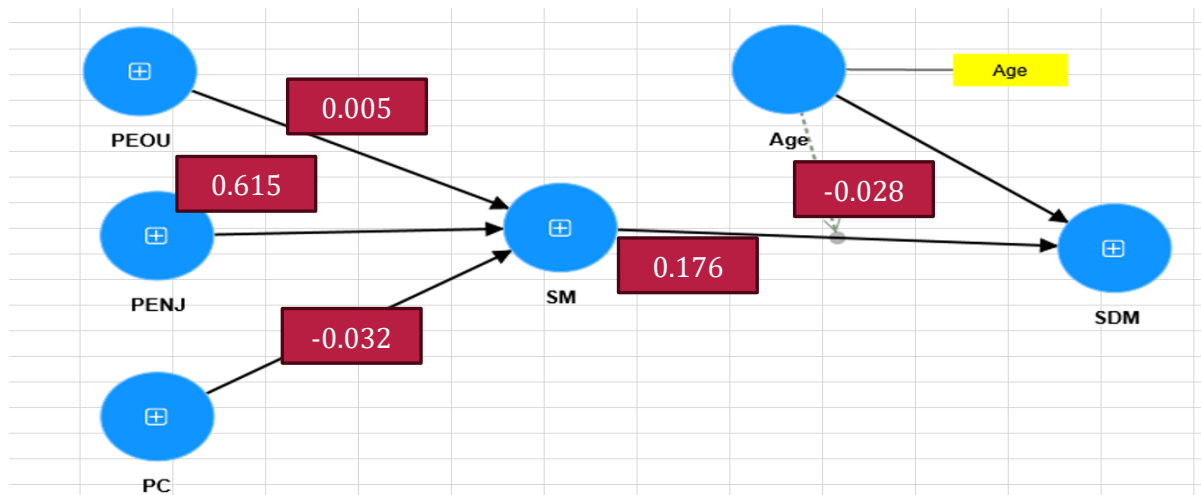

Figure 2: Results

Table 1: Construct Reliability and Validity - Results

Constructs	Items	AVE	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	PEOU1: Getting to learn social media will be extremely convenient for a layman. PEOU2: In my opinion, social media is a very easy technology. PEOU3: In my opinion, any person with basic or no knowledge of technology can use social media.	0.722	1.109	0.885
Perceived Enjoyment (PENJ)	PENJ1: Social media for experiencing a destination will be very enjoyable. PENJ2: Social media for experiencing a destination will be extremely fun. PENJ3: It will be extremely pleasant to experience a destination via social media. PENJ4: It will be very interesting and exciting to experience a destination by using social media.	0.724	0.911	0.913

Perceived Cost (PC)	PC1: Social media is an expensive technology. PC2: The application and usage of social media comes with financial constructs.	0.875	0.859	0.933
Intention to use social media for sustainable destination (SM)	SM1: Is the content present on the social networking sites relevant? SM2: Is the content available on social networking sites continuously updated from time to time? SM3: Social media is effective towards a sustainable destination. SM4: Social media content is accurate.	0.686	0.850	0.897
Sustainable Destination Image (SDM)	When does a destination can be termed as sustainable? SDM1: What does a sustainable destination mean when it's environmentally friendly? SDM2: The destination is considered sustainable when it is positive towards travelers. SDM3: If a destination is satisfactory to the community, then will it be considered sustainable? SDM4: Will you choose a site that is a sustainable destination?	0.512	0.725	0.805

Two-step data analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model, and the fit of structural model was used to test the hypotheses. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) has been used to develop the validity and reliability of the component. The whole measuring model's fitness has also been evaluated using CFA. The application of Structural Equation Modelling has been utilized to determine the causal relationship between different variables or constructs.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha – Results

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	PEOU1: Getting to learn social media will be extremely convenient for a layman. PEOU2: In my opinion, social media is a very easy technology. PEOU3: In my opinion, any person with basic or no knowledge of technology can use social media.	0.852
Perceived Enjoyment (PENJ)	PENJ1: Social media for experiencing a destination will be very enjoyable. PENJ2: Social media for experiencing a destination will be extremely fun. PENJ3: It will be extremely pleasant to experience a destination via social media.	0.876

	PENJ4: It will be very interesting and exciting to experience a destination by using social media.	
Perceived Cost (PC)	PC1: Social media is an expensive technology. PC2: The application and usage of social media comes with financial constructs.	0.857
Intention to use social media for sustainable destination (SM)	SM1: Is the content present on the social networking sites relevant? SM2: Is the content available on social networking sites continuously updated from time to time? SM3: Social media is effective towards a sustainable destination. SM4: Social media content is accurate.	0.846
Sustainable Destination Image (SDM)	When does a destination can be termed as sustainable? SDM1: What does a sustainable destination mean when it's environmentally friendly? SDM2: The destination is considered sustainable when it is positive towards travelers. SDM3: If a destination is satisfactory to the community, then will it be considered sustainable? SDM4: Will you choose a site that is a sustainable destination?	0.801

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to conduct an empirical investigation of the measurement model. The internal consistency of each construct is indicated by Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient values, which range from 0.801 to 0.876 in Tables 1 and 2. These tables have helped to determine that all the variables have a high degree of dependability because their values are higher than the recommended cut-off value of 0.7. The purpose of measuring composite construct dependability was to assess the multi-item scales. The results for the same have been seen to range from 0.725 to 1.109, satisfying the 0.60 minimum criteria. Furthermore, every average variance extracted (AVE) value, which ranged from 0.512 to 0.875, was greater than the suggested cut-off points of 0.50.

Table 3: Summary Results of Hypothesized Model Testing

Hypothesis	Path	P-Values	Result
H1	PEOU -> SM	0.043	Supported
H2	PENJ -> SM	0.000	Supported
H3	PC -> SM	0.022	Supported
H4	SM -> SDM	0.003	Supported
H5	Age x SM -> SDM	0.021	Supported
H5	Age -> SDM	0.042	Supported

The p-value is displayed in Table 3. It is assumed that a hypothesis will be accepted only when the p-value for the same is less than 0.05. The study concludes that there is a positive correlation between the perceived ease of use and the intention to use social media for sustainable destinations. The p-value for this correlation is less than 0.05, which means that H1 is accepted. In a similar vein, PENJ and the goal of utilizing social media for environmentally friendly travel destinations align, leading us to embrace H2. The results of this study show that there is an inverse relationship between perceived costs and intention to utilize social media. H3 has been approved consequently. The data studies show that social media positively influences the sustainable destination, which leads to the acceptance of H4. As per the results, it has been observed that the p-value of the age that has been used as a moderator is 0.042 which is lower than the value of 0.05 hence H5 is also accepted.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	Age	PC	PENJ	PEOU	SDM	SM	Age x SM
Age							
PC	0.105						
PENJ	0.169	0.145					
PEOU	0.045	0.127	0.121				
SDM	0.144	0.110	0.131	0.209			
SM	0.077	0.373	0.651	0.069	0.231		
Age x SM	0.077	0.082	0.062	0.040	0.091	0.167	

Table 4 shows showing Discriminant Validity of each variable. The discriminant Validity is established between two reflective constructs only when the HTMT value is below 0.90.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity: The Fornell – Larcker Criterion

	Age	PC	PENJ	PEOU	SDM	SM
Age	*1.000*					
PC	0.097	*0.936*				
PENJ	0.158	0.574	*0.851*			
PEOU	0.052	-0.102	-0.071	*0.850*		
SDM	0.115	0.003	0.099	0.159	*0.715*	
SM	0.069	0.320	0.596	-0.036	0.187	*0.828*

Table 5 shows the values representing Discriminant Validity: The Fornell – Larcker Criterion. The values that are bold and italic (Diagonal Values) represent the square root of AVE and on the other hand, off-diagonal values represent the correlations. The table indicates that all the reflective constructs are best loaded with themselves, as the square root of AVE is larger than correlations. Therefore, it is stated that discriminant (construct) holds.

4. CONCLUSION

Social Media has grown into an important source of information for understanding the sustainable process. Because social networking sites are largely used for the goal of selecting sustainable travel destinations, they are frequently effective at tackling sustainability challenges. For more than a decade, sustainable destination choice behaviour was considered the gold standard for efficiently managing travel locations.

This study presents a novel perspective on the influence of social media on the production of destination pictures and the selection of environmentally friendly vacation destinations. The results of this study indicate that when individuals are forming opinions about a destination, the information and material found on different social networking sites is thought to be the most important source of knowledge. The suggested research methodology has promise for augmenting and expanding our comprehension and investigation of tourism.

The findings will stimulate more investigation, which will assist researchers in identifying other factors that could affect travellers' decisions on sustainable tourism destinations. Furthermore, these discoveries will lead to social media marketing initiatives that are more successful. Furthermore, there are several ways to adjust the conceptual framework to better determine the intentions of visitors about their choice of location.

The present study has also provided age information. That is how age has an inverse relation with the usage of social media. The study presents that with an increase in age, the usage of social media reduces which in turn reduces the frequency in the formation of sustainable destination image.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The importance of social media content is growing, which has significant implications for how travel arrangements are made, including hotel, food, and transportation. At the national level, commercial and tourism organizations will find great value

in the practical application of the current study. When developing their advertising campaigns and updating their official websites, marketers in the tourism industry should seriously consider the information they post on social media.

To differentiate their destination and draw in potential clients, destination promoters need to handle their location as a "product" with great care. They need to figure out what factors influence how potential travellers view the locations. This study will encourage travel professionals to use destination information as a key tool to shape the opinions of potential customers. You can think of a tourist destination as a brand composed of both material and immaterial components. As a result, destination branding management calls for marketers to focus more on using information sources to assess and enhance the location's cognitive and emotive image.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study has some limitations that should be considered for future research. First, about the consideration of people thought about image formation on specific social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, etc.). Furthermore, we overlooked the impact of noteworthy social media posts—such as depictions, videos, storyboards, live streaming, and graphic presentations—that enthuse travellers to book eco-friendly accommodations.

It was just a one-time survey of the respondents. It is highly possible that future research can be done both before and after travel to assess travellers' satisfaction levels and determine the validity of data found on social networking sites. In the future researchers can take all generations namely Generation Z, X, and Z together to have a comparative analysis and to study the preferences of different people belonging to different age groups. Another prominent limitation of the current research that can be met in future research is to study the impact of travel bloggers and to test whether these travel bloggers have an impact on their loyal followers or they have an influence on every person who is exposed to their content. The current study included only variables like Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Cost, and Perceived Enjoyment future research can be conducted by incorporating more variables like Perceived Trust, Innovation, Attitude, Loyalty, and perceived service quality. In the future researchers can also conduct studies to measure the effect and implications of social media on destination marketing and their co-creation to add more value for the destination. Finally, aside from individual surveys, focus groups can be used by researchers to identify different aspects influencing the selection of sustainable travel locations.

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