

STUDY OF INSTAGRAM AS A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR PROMOTION OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM CONTENT

Maitrayee Shetye, D.Y. Patil University, Navi Mumbai
Rashmi Sreejit Nair, D.Y. Patil University, Navi Mumbai

ABSTRACT

Social media is considered to be one of the most popular medium used to reach out to a larger audience base; for promotion of products, conveying information; for many other purposes. These activities happen through various social media platforms. To name a few FACEBOOK, PINTEREST, INSTAGRAM, CANVA, GOOGLE ADS & many more. Amongst all of these INSTAGRAM is one of the most popular; effective; a trendy platform for promotion of; advertising of various products; services with over 1 billion active monthly users. Instagram depicts information in such a way that the platform's visual nature, combined with interactive features makes it an ideal medium for promotion or giving out information. There are various aspects promoted on Instagram like; FASHION, PRODUCTS, SERVICES relating to various fields. One of the most popular; trending aspect promoted on Instagram is Travel & Tourism. This very aspect has got a lot of audience engagement as well as is a lot of appreciation influencers has been promoting various travel destinations & related information to the audience at large with the use of Instagram as a promotional tool. Due to its easy interface & ease in handling the application & easy approach many people from the Travel & Tourism Industry, Influencers, along with Tourism Business owners use this application for Promotion, audience engagement, giving out information & many more things. The researchers has made an attempt to understand the usefulness of this application for by having a conversation & interaction with Influencers Travel & tourism business owners & stalwarts from the tourism tours & tourism Industry who manage & arrange tours for the people. For this the researchers has adopted qualitative method consisting of In-Depth Interview - (IDI) & Clark & Brauns model (Thematic frame work). The study brings out the importance of Instagram as a social media platform for audience engagement direct interaction & promotion of various tourism policy & tours of for people through INSTAGRAM.

Keywords: Instagram, Social Media, Travel and Tourism, Influencers, Instagram Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the medium used for conveying messages advertising, promotion as also creating an awareness about any particular product or service. The usage of social media can be traced back to the year 1997, which popularised the first social media site known as Sixdegrees.com. In depth use of social media grew with the promotion of digitalization flooding the market & among the customers consumers. There are many social media platforms which caters to. various marketing, promotional & other activities. Various people rely on in social media to find out about a particular place or destination 35% of travel influencers. decisions are based on the results of Instagram social media. A large number of millennials too depend on social media for taking certain decisions. There are many social media platforms which cater to

these benefits amongst them one of the most popular platforms is Instagram. It is a social media application which serves as a platform for various marketers, advertisers, brands etc to put forth their products and services in front of their target audience. One of the most common and popular aspect promoted on Instagram is Travel and tourism. It can be considered as the art of venturing beyond familiar and immersing in cultures. It's also considered to be an extraordinary realm that invites to explore different destinations. It is also regarded as exploring different destinations for pleasure & other purposes. This sector also includes sectors like TRANSPORTATION, ACCOMODATION, FOOD & BEVERAGE, and ENTERTAINMENT and so on. Also, there are a large amount of people who dedicate significant amount of time in conducting prior research before embarking on a journey to new travel destinations. Thus, social media has been playing a significant role. One of the best suited platforms for Travel & Tourism is social media Instagram. Instagram has been proving to be one of the most fruitful platforms which provide both the marketer as well as the viewer a platform through which they can interact virtually have engagement without any hassle (Gretzel, 2017).. Also, the fact that it creates a visual appeal for the people or the audience at large. Influencers also get to share their experiences at large.

It also helps them in promotion of local business. During the out – break of COVID – 19 it became a saviour for many families, industries and a lot of other people as they could put forth their product, services/business in front of the people, using various Social Media platforms and their promotional techniques. It has various promotional techniques; one of these techniques is promotions by Key Opinion Leaders KOLs. This research paper highlights how Instagram as a social media platform with its marketing tools especially through Key Opinion Leaders KOL`s creates awareness about sustainability. Clark and Brauns thematic frame work was adopted for the analysis purpose.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Instagram has rapidly evolved from a simple photo-sharing application to a robust marketing tool, especially for the travel and tourism industry. With over 1 billion active monthly users, Instagram's influence in shaping consumer behaviour and preferences cannot be overstated. The platform's visual nature, combined with its interactive features, makes it an ideal medium for promoting travel destinations, experiences, and services. This literature review delves into various studies and scholarly articles to understand the dynamics of Instagram as a promotional tool for the travel and tourism sector.

Instagram's Role in Travel and Tourism Promotion

1. A Pilot Study on Instagram as a Platform for Social Media Marketing (2020).

Bakhtiyar This research paper highlights the social media platform of Instagram becoming a very trendy and a lucrative platform for marketers & gaining immense popularity among consumers (Bakhtiyar, 2020). It has been also analysed that present social media marketing landscape along with making an attempt to access the consumer perception regarding the Instagram as a social media marketing platform.

2. A Study on the Mediating Effect of Fomo on Social Media (Instagram) Induced Travel Addiction and Risk-Taking Travel & Tourism Behavioural Intention In Youth (2021).

Mrudhusha Mohanan, Suraj Kushe Shekhar The research paper prominently speaks about the FOMO factor in youth due to excessive use of social media platform. They also speak about major missing out on the travel & tour. The research had included an online survey amongst 420 south Indian Students which resulted that ' Social Media Instagram had direct positive impact. The study also highlighted the spread of negative impact among young people. The limitations revealed that' there was a common bias in responses. The core focus of the research was only related to FOMO effect on social media in considerations with Instagram as a Social Media Platform. The research has not highlighted the Impact of Instagram as a tool for Tourism Marketing

3. Social Media Platform as a Mainstream News In Kerela: A Case Study On Instagram As A Social Media Platform (2020).

This research paper typically depicts Social Media becoming a more relevant platform for incessant communication it is also highlights views & see to very often discuss news. The study also examines the deep aspects INSTAGRAM as a rising platform for news promoting (Leung, et al., 2013). The study also analyses the consumption the users of Instagram as a news platform. However the research lacks in the aspects other aspects Tourism being one of the Major - one the most prominent & major one.

4. Instagram as a Social Media & His Role in the Tourism Promotion.

The research speaks about Instagram as a social media & its role in Tourism. The research shows a descriptive analysis. The research was an attempt to understand through online surveys. The results of the research lacks in clarity and the Instagram as a platform for promoting of the Tourism aspect.

5. Instagram: Is It A Social Media Solution To Promote Sustainable Tourism (2022).

The research highlights the phenomenon which shows the current realisation of Tourism promotion activities through social media (Indrayani & Nurjaleka, 2023). The focus of this research is only restricted to use of social media as a solution for promotion of sustainable tourism. The use of Instagram for other promotion of other activities as well.

6. Instagram Marketing: Good Social Media Platform for B2c Business.

This research paper depicts Instagram marketing which involves promotion of a brand. It basically portrays Instagram as marketing promotion tool. It showcases Instagram as a platform engagement, brand awareness & boosting sales & much more. This research only focuses on the Instagram as an application for promotion; in different ways & forms. Tourism as a part is not being considered.

7. Influencers Often Provide Firsthand Experiences And Reviews Of Travel Destinations, Adding Credibility To Their Promotions.

According to Lou and Yuan (2019), influencer marketing on Instagram leads to higher trust and engagement compared to brand-generated content. This is particularly important in the travel industry, where personal experiences and reviews heavily influence consumer decisions.

8. Influencers Play A Pivotal Role In Instagram's Ecosystem, Particularly In The Travel And Tourism Sector.

These individuals have a significant following and their endorsements can greatly impact consumer behaviour. Research by Abidin (2016) highlights the power of influencers in shaping travel trends and preferences. Influencers' authentic and relatable content resonates well with their followers, making them more effective than traditional advertising methods.

9. Instagram's Features Such As Stories, Reels, And Igtv Provide Travel Businesses With Diverse Formats To Present Their Content.

These features allow for creative storytelling, making it easier for businesses to connect with their audience on a deeper level. Studies by Sheldon and Bryant (2016) suggest that the interactive nature of these features enhances user engagement and retention, which are crucial for successful marketing campaigns.

10. Instagram's Visual-Centric Platform Allows Travel Businesses To Showcase Destinations Through High-Quality Images And Videos, Creating A Strong Emotional Appeal Among Potential Travelers.

According to Hu et al. (2014), the visual content on Instagram significantly influences users' perceptions and travel decisions. The platform's ability to evoke emotions through visuals is a critical factor in its effectiveness as a marketing tool for the travel industry.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand usage of Instagram as a tool for promotion of Travel & Tourism Content.
2. To examine the dependability of travel and tourism business owners, Influencers Industry experts on Instagram for marketing purposes.
3. To highlight the flexibility in Marketing of Travel & with the Aid of Modern Marketing method through Instagram.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the use of Instagram as a social media platform for promoting travel and tourism content. The research methodology is designed to address the gaps identified in the previous section and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies and effectiveness of Instagram marketing in the travel industry. The methodology encompasses the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and data analysis procedures.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the nuanced and complex dynamics of Instagram marketing within the travel and tourism sector. A qualitative approach is

chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding the subjective and contextual factors that influence the use of Instagram for travel promotion.

The Research Design Includes

1. In-Depth Interviews (Idis)

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry, including influencers, travel business owners, and industry experts. These interviews aim to gather detailed insights into their experiences and strategies related to Instagram marketing.

2. Thematic Analysis

Analysis of the interview data using Clark and Braun's thematic framework to identify key themes and patterns. This method allows for the systematic examination of qualitative data and the extraction of meaningful insights.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data collection methods include:

1. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a purposive sample of participants who are actively involved in Instagram marketing within the travel and tourism industry. The interview guide is designed to cover various aspects of Instagram marketing, including content creation, engagement strategies, influencer collaborations, and the use of Instagram's marketing tools.

2. Data Analysis

Review of existing literature, reports, and case studies on Instagram marketing and its impact on the travel and tourism industry. This secondary data helps contextualize the findings from the primary data collection and provides a broader understanding of the research topic.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The study employs purposive sampling to select participants who can provide rich and relevant insights into the research topic. The sampling criteria include:

1. Influencers

Travel influencers with a significant following and active engagement on Instagram. These influencers are selected based on their prominence and impact within the travel community.

2. Travel Business Owners

Owners and marketing managers of travel businesses, including travel agencies, tour operators, and accommodation providers, who utilize Instagram for promotional purposes.

3. Industry Experts

Experts and consultants in the travel and tourism industry with extensive knowledge of social media marketing strategies and trends.

The sample size for the interviews is determined based on the principle of data saturation, where additional interviews no longer yield new insights. This ensures that the sample size is sufficient to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives and experiences Figure 1.



FIGURE 1
DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data analysis procedures include:

1. Thematic Analysis

The interview transcripts are analysed using thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Clark and Braun. This involves familiarization with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

2. Coding

The interview data is systematically coded to identify key themes and patterns. Coding is conducted using qualitative data analysis software to ensure consistency and rigor.

3. Validation

The findings from the thematic analysis are validated through member checking, where participants review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. This enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

CLARKE AND BRAUN'S THEMATIC FRAMEWORK APPROACH

1. Improved Audience Engagement

Customer Engagement on Instagram is the interaction & connections between a brand & its followers on the platform which helps in increasing the brand's visibility. There are various forms through which audience engagement could be created for eg: Likes & comments, shares & saves, direct messages & mentions along with many more marketing techniques. In conversation with content creators, industrialists & travel business owners following points were highlighted.

a. Solution to Traditional Marketing

It acts as a solution to traditional marketing which was not too advanced so as to reach out to the target audience. Travel & Tourism being a very niche industry reaching out to a large number of people was not possible previously but with this social media platform of Instagram it has become much easier and swifter. Also, the difficult challenge of interaction with them was also made easy. Thus, Instagram has proved to be a boon for us.

b. More Interaction with Potential Customers

Instagram as a social media platform provides easy access to the content and also has an easy interface for any person to get used to the application. It also proves to be a social media platform to get connected to the audience through direct interaction with them. We are also able to solve our probable client's queries through very simple features of the Social Media Application. It is noteworthy to note that Instagram put forth's the content in a much better and audience friendly way through which we can directly reach out to target audience. Instagram Business accounts features are so beneficial to us that we can post each and every detail about our business on Instagram.

2. Enhanced Customer Visibility

It has been found that Instagram provides an easiness in connecting with the target audience for many people and business owners. Many are able to reach their audience from over the world. Instagram being one of the powerful content marketing; audience-building social media platform, it establishes strong online presence (Behsudi, 2020). This is essential for both businesses as well as individuals. Instagram is also invaluable social media tool to master. There are various ways through which one can be visible online, but Instagram presence is one of the most popular and noteworthy. for eg: Using specific hashtags in Instagram posts, Optimizing Captions with Target Keywords, Making use of Instagram & Advanced Settings & many more.

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were noted / highlighted.

1. For us, as regards the visibility factor, we are aided with following features of Instagram like photos, reels taking audience polls and much more. With the help of these advanced features which act as tools there are less chances that we may go out of trend or get less noticed.
2. Instagrams visibility aspect has benefited us as we can keep our audience updated & posted about our recent trips for our upcoming tours. We are also able to post our recent developments on Instagram through which our visibility aspect is maintained which in turn helps us to be noticed.
3. With the aid of Instagram as a social media platform the threat of being out of popularity is minimized & with aid of different features of Instagram we can market and put different advertising techniques for placing our strategies.

We were not able to reach many different places as our mediums for advertising & marketing were not so efficient and effective. But with the use of Instagram as an application we are better able to reach our target audience & also now we have approach to people from a larger perspective.

3. Substantial Growth In Sales

Instagram is considered to be one of the most popular & trending platforms. With over 1 billion active users every month, which clearly depicts the usage of it? Instagram is used by most of the marketers to promote & market about it. For this there are various Instagram features & marketing techniques such as Instagram business, Instagram shop features.

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were noted / highlighted (Xiang, et al., 2015).

We are able to generate a lot of enquires which we were able to convert them into leads. The major setback of COVID – 19 was also covered up by Instagram. We have seen a substantial growth in our sales figures after the introduction of our business on Instagram.

4. Cost Effective Platform

As a beginner one can excel in Instagram marketing just by posting videos, posts without any complicated hassle which does not require any huge investment; also by making use of Instagram's basic features for promotion, advertising & marketing which does not require any investment.

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were highlighted.

As Instagram allows one to post content for free, a lot of us can reach to a larger target audience in a very effective manner. As its basic advertising features are cost effective, we could reach our audience in a much better and efficient way (Li, X, et al., 2024).

At initial phase without any investment, Instagram as a social media platform helps to establish our presence in the market and reach out to our target audience along with getting noticed.

The impact of this platform is also such that years before we were not able to reach out to people in general and also giving ads and promoting it through any other medium would cost us some investment, but with the presence of social media and its applications like Instagram this hassle has completely ended for us.

5. Effective Platform for Conveying Quick Updates

Instagram has proved to be a boon for conveying quick and easy updates for its users. These updates could be related to any field, Instagram acts as a quick messenger for Influencers, business, brands etc to just give a quick update about any crucial information which needs to be given utmost importance.

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were highlighted.

Previously before Instagram & other social media applications it was very difficult to get people notified about our recent updates. The mediums for advertising & marketing were not so efficient & effective to convey any quick update (Bahou, et al., 2024). But with the use of Instagram as an application we are better able to give out these updates very effectively.

Instagram is considered to be one of the most Social media platform for its popularity & a platform which always keeps its audience engaged. With over 1 billion active users every month the trending nature of Instagram can be clearly seen. We were able to generate a lot of enquires which we were able to convert them into leads because of this very feature. The major setback of COVID-19 was also covered up by Instagram.

6. Running Out of Creative Content Ideas

One can excel in any kind of marketing with unusual ideas or by being in the continuous process of getting new marketing and advertising ideas. The same analogy can be applied here in case of Instagram marketing, though Instagram provides a plethora of its marketing features using the same in a different and in an effective manner is the task of the marketer or the content creator as people are always interested in upgrading and seeing new things every time. Thus, posting and keeping up with the new trends is very much important (Zeng, & Gerritsen, 2014).

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were highlighted.

For us as content creators we are in continuous need of giving our audience and followers something new or unique so as to grab their attention and be there in the trend. But due to some creative blockage we are unable to do the same. There is a constant urge for us to bring out something new and keeping up with the trend.

Sometimes during off season, it becomes difficult for us to put our content across as there is nothing new or innovative that we can keep posted with. In this phase it becomes difficult for us to keep things posted or give out any new information to our audience.

7. KEEPING UP WITH SOCIAL TREND

Instagram is a platform which provides access for posting content on Instagram for various people. A lot of brands, content creators and various other people can reach to a larger target audience in a very effective manner. There are various social trends which are being followed on various social media platform. But the main difficulty for any brand or a content creator is to keep up with those trends.

In conversation with content creators, industrialists; travel business owners following things point were highlighted.

We as content creators need to be in a constant process of getting new innovations and getting new trends. But this sometimes becomes challenging for us as focusing on any one

particular trend is not so easy. There are various difficulties that we need to face in the due course of time.

Before establishing the presence on any social media platform, it is important that one understands the same in a better and an efficient manner. If there is any discrepancy in the same it becomes difficult to be on that particular platform. Same is in the case of Instagram we do have a threat that if we are not following the trends on Instagram, we may lose hold over our audience there on Instagram.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite its numerous advantages, Instagram marketing is not without challenges. One of the primary concerns is the platform's algorithm, which constantly changes and affects content visibility. Moreover, the high level of competition on Instagram means that brands need to constantly innovate and adapt to stand out. This can be resource-intensive and may not always yield immediate results. The literature reviewed highlights the significant role Instagram plays in the promotion of travel and tourism. Its visual-centric nature, coupled with features that enhance engagement and interaction, makes it an ideal platform for travel businesses. Influencers and user-generated content further amplify its effectiveness, while data-driven strategies help optimize marketing efforts. However, the challenges posed by algorithm changes and high competition necessitate continuous innovation and adaptation.

In summary, Instagram offers immense potential for travel and tourism promotion, provided businesses leverage its features effectively and stay abreast of changing trends and algorithms. The following sections of this research will delve deeper into the research gaps, methodology, data analysis, and provide concrete recommendations based on the findings.

FUTURE RESEARCH

With the continuous evolution of Instagram's features, such as the integration of AI-driven algorithms, augmented reality filters, and shopping capabilities, future studies could examine how these innovations impact user engagement and the effectiveness of destination marketing. Additionally, research could investigate the role of micro-influencers and how they contribute to promoting niche or unexplored destinations compared to macro-influencers.

Another area worth exploring is the growing importance of sustainability in travel content, analysing how Instagram is being used to promote eco-friendly travel practices and whether it influences travellers' decisions toward more responsible tourism. Finally, examining the long-term effects of Instagram campaigns on travellers' actual destination choices and how trends in user-generated content evolve could offer valuable perspectives for tourism stakeholders looking to adapt to the shifting digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

Instagram has emerged as a vital platform for the promotion of travel and tourism content, primarily due to its visually appealing format, wide reach, and interactive capabilities. The platform's focus on images and videos aligns perfectly with the needs of the tourism industry, allowing destinations to be showcased in a way that inspires potential travelers. Additionally, the influence of travel bloggers and influencers on Instagram has played a significant role in shaping consumer behavior, with their authentic and personal experiences resonating strongly with audiences. Features like Stories, Reels, and user-generated content add a

layer of engagement and authenticity, allowing users to connect emotionally with destinations. The effective use of hashtags and geotags enhances the discoverability of locations, especially those that are lesser-known or unexplored. Furthermore, Instagram's advertising tools allow for targeted marketing, ensuring that travel brands and destinations reach the right audiences with minimal effort. Overall, Instagram's ability to combine visual storytelling with interactive and authentic content makes it a powerful and effective platform for promoting travel and tourism, particularly in today's digitally-driven landscape.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the extensive research on social media marketing, particularly focusing on platforms like Instagram, there are still several unexplored areas within the context of travel and tourism promotion. The rapid evolution of social media technologies and user behaviour continuously creates new dynamics that need further investigation. This section identifies the existing gaps in the literature and highlights the areas that require more in-depth research to fully understand Instagram's impact and potential in the travel and tourism industry.

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