

Social Media's Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

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ABSTRACT

Social media are web-based communication platforms that let users communicate and exchange information with one another. It is an online communication network that facilitates online engagement, content sharing, community feedback, and collaboration. This study mainly explores how vital social media is in influencing the tourists' choice of destination. The study aims to assess tourists' social media engagement, factors affecting reliance on it for travel planning, its impact on destination choice, the correlation between social media reliance and destination choice, and propose a framework for social media's influence on destination selection. A quantitative correlational research method was used in this study. Further, the research is a population study where all the respondents were tourism management students of Saint Mary's University. As for the data collection method, the researchers used survey questionnaires. The results revealed that Facebook is the most popular social media network, and most respondents said they used TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram for more than five hours each, while tourists spent less than 1 hour on Pinterest. Additionally, most of the respondents rely on social media to provide them with information about new travel locations. Images of popular tourist sites shared on social media platforms indicate the amount to which social media influences their destination selections. As a result, the two variables had a significant relationship, implying that tourists' extensive reliance on social media for travel-related information also has a significant impact on the destinations tourists choose. Moreover, as illustrated in the framework created by the researchers, the social media that the respondents utilized, their reliance on social media for travel information, and social media's influence on decision-making are all interrelated to travel planning.

Keywords: Decision-making, reliance, tourism, travel planning, vital social media

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Social media are web-based communication platforms that let users communicate and exchange information with one another. It is an online communication network that facilitates online engagement, content sharing, community feedback, and collaboration. The usage of social media in daily activities is expanding. Its capacity to instantly communicate images and videos, thoughts, events, and more has made it more and more popular in recent years. Social media users can connect with others, form professional networks, meet new people, and join groups based on common interests. There has been a tremendous rise in the use of social media as a source of information. Individuals use social media to look for information in order to assess, consider, and decide (Paul et al., 2019).

Netizens mostly use social networking sites for free services, including internet research, social networking, task completion, and professional connections. However, a lot of people believe that these benefits come with certain disadvantages. Social media has come under fire due to problems including identity theft, fake accounts, and cyber harassment. Nonetheless, social media continues to be widely used due to its many advantages and capabilities. In particular, by creating a friendly and entertaining atmosphere, they help people acquire more important social skills, provide users with useful information to help them study and expand their knowledge, and, most importantly, encourage the establishment of meaningful connections. As of April 2023, 5.18 billion people used the internet worldwide, accounting for 64.6% of the global population, according to

Petrosyan (2023). Using this figure, 4.8 billion individuals, or 59.9% of the global populace, utilize social media (Petrosyan, 2023).

Based on the Data Reportal 2023, Facebook ranked no. 1 among the globe's most utilized social media networks in April 2023 with 2.989 billion active users every month; YouTube reached 2.491 billion active users every month; Instagram had 1.628 billion users; TikTok has reached 1.218 billion active users every month; Snapchat's monthly active users total 750 million; Twitter boasts over 556 million active monthly users globally, while Pinterest has 465 million monthly active users, ranking it fourth among the most "active" social media networks globally. Overall, these social media sites are well-known for their use, such as posting videos and pictures, hashtags, etc., which helps to locate particular topics and analyze the many contents and issues that are related to them in addition to other quantitative data, including likes and retweets, which show the influence of the topic. Thus, social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have taken over the tourism sector just like they have any other industry. Though each of these channels has its audience, one of the most common topics on all of them is travel.

Furthermore, the study by Keutelian and Keutelian (2024) analyzed nearly 2 billion engagements across various platforms. It revealed that the best times to post on social media are generally from Tuesday through Thursday between 9 am and 2 pm. These times align with periods when users are more likely to be active online, seeking information and interacting with content related to their interests, including travel. For instance, on Facebook, there are many users during mid-morning on weekdays. At the same time, TikTok has peak engagement on weekdays, particularly on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4 to 6 pm and mid-mornings from 9 to 11 am on Wednesdays and Thursdays (Keutelian & Keutalian, 2024).

According to GWI's Social Media Trends Report, Facebook still retains its rank as the most widely utilized social media in the Philippines in 2022, at least from 2021 to 2022. Meta advertising resources also reported Facebook had 83.85 million Filipino users in the first quarter of 2022. Filipinos spend 40 hours and 46 minutes every month on TikTok, 1.5 times more than they do on Facebook (26 hours and 54 minutes). This reveals that although Facebook's monthly usage and social media preference in the Philippines shows a different story, real-world time spent using social media apps shows a different story. Furthermore, Filipinos spend 14 hours and 3 minutes on Facebook Messenger, which is a popular communication tool among Filipinos, with 92.1% using it regularly. These social media apps dominate Filipinos' social media time, leaving other platforms far behind (Howe, 2024). According to Facebook's April 2023 advertising audience data, the global number of male users of Facebook is 56.8%, while 43.2% are females.

Furthermore, young people from developing nations were among the most active Facebook users worldwide, accounting for 22.6% of Facebook's total ad audience aged 18 to 24 (Data Reportal, (n.d.)). There are various reasons why Facebook is still widely used in the Philippines. First, it enables people to communicate with friends and relatives who live far apart. Second, it offers convenient access to news and entertainment. Third, it is one of the few venues where people can freely discuss their personal stories and experiences. Fourth, it provides an environment in which people can freely express themselves. Fifth, it provides numerous accessible functions, such as live streaming, photo sharing, and messaging. Finally, the potential reach of free data streaming makes it an excellent source of economic opportunities. Furthermore, one of the reasons individuals are not abandoning Facebook instead of using other social media platforms is that Facebook's Free Data program in the Philippines improved platform accessibility significantly. As such, it remains a preferred platform for disseminating knowledge to the general population (Philippines, 2024).

With its short format of uploaded videos, TikTok is a well-known social networking application that many tourists like. They use the trending content of TikTok to create viral videos about the places of their trips, their meals, and their spontaneous interactions with people around the world. It offers high-quality tourist information, makes it readable for individuals, and, in the same way, can also help make potential tourists interested, making them better and faster to get the information they need. It is also a significant factor in travel intentions and decisions, such as destination and accommodation selections, travel route formulation, and product purchases. TikTok is essential as it can turn locations into "red spots on the Internet" due to its massive user base and the popularity of self-produced tourism short videos (Li, 2021, pp. 176-186) Individuals are motivated to dedicate a more prolonged period to TikTok and always look for new videos to watch on this

application because TikTok provides a limitless amount of content, the majority of which is brief and entertaining (Ainsworth, 2024).

Additionally, Chan (2024) stated that TikTok has nearly caught up with Facebook and Instagram. It has already exceeded X (formerly Twitter) as the most popular social media network among Filipinos aged 16 to 64, with 67.9%, despite its recent launch as an application. Furthermore, TikTok ads reach 65.3 % Filipino female users compared to 34.7% Filipino male users. On the other hand, Facebook is a critical player in this ecosystem, providing a platform for interaction, fun, news, open discussion, and even commerce.

Known for its visual attractiveness, Instagram is most frequently used by tourists to upload photos and short videos showing scenic landscapes, iconic landmarks, and culturally significant experiences. Maike Ovens from the Social Media Academy for Travel Tourism believes that Instagram undoubtedly serves as a source of inspiration for vacationers (Martiny, 2023). By offering a predominately visual platform, the platform plays up one's need to come up with and stage the travel exploits in a wishful way. The rise of Instagram has led to the emergence of "Instagrammable" destinations, places renowned for their aesthetic appeal and photo opportunities. (Author, 2023). Instagram has been widely used among Filipinos, especially for social media marketing, which is why it ranks among the top three most popular social media networks in the Philippines. This social media platform regularly attracts a significant number of users because it is well-known for its visually appealing and entertaining content (Eight Media Online Solutions Inc., 2023). In January 2024, 72.5% of online users among the ages of 16 and 64 used Instagram, and the active users spent an average of 3 hours and 41 minutes on Instagram (Howe, 2024). Instagram and Facebook are similar because, first, both platforms allow for video and photo sharing. Also, because both of them allow for internet interactions, they will be able to see posts and engage with their family, friends, social media influencers, and celebrities (Motoc, 2022).

As a platform for longer-form videos, YouTube gives tourists the opportunity to make a whole repository of travel vlogs, which incorporates narration of their travel itineraries, accommodation reviews, and immersive experiences. The monetary incentives offered by YouTube also draw the attention of travel influencers who want to earn money from their content (Leung et al., 2013).

Additionally, Khan (2024) argued that Pinterest is utilized to assist its users in improving their marketing strategies; thus, 61% of all Pinterest users stated they visit Pinterest prior to commencing a new project, which includes directions on how to complete a task, DIY projects, and product recommendations. Moreover, Statista reports that fashion and lifestyle tourists spend less than an hour on Pinterest. Nevertheless, only 5% reported using the platform for more than an hour. Furthermore, over 42% of monthly active users of Pinterest are Gen Z, which implies that Pinterest's audience is getting younger by the day. Women account for most of the total users of Pinterest, with 69.5%, compared to 22.4% for men.

Reliability is essential for Internet marketing as well as for success in the travel and hospitality industries (Choi et al., 2018). All social media users benefit from the sensitive and vital role that social media platforms play in effectively marketing and promoting travel. These platforms can also give consumers trustworthy information about the tourist attractions and destinations they wish to see, empowering them to make well-informed travel plans. Additionally, social media platforms have a direct influence on tourists' final judgments, meaning that social media platforms have a significant influence on their choices (Gebreel & Shuayb, 2022).

In addition, people's behavior before a trip is influenced by the content they are exposed to in the social media era (Su, et al., 2021). Furthermore, tourists are highly motivated to look for various shared experiences on social media in order to lessen their uncertainties (Oliveira, et al., 2020). Breaking into the daily routine is made possible by tourism activities (Xu & Zhang, 2021). After the COVID-19 pandemic, target visitors looking to fill their free time with travel destinations, activities, and inspiration have found that social media is the go-to source for opinions and inspiration (Leelawat, et al., 2022).

Social media is a crucial educational tool for future visitors nowadays, according to Dalipe et al. (2019). Individuals depend on what they observe, consume, or view the internet about new tourist destinations—or simply the places they want to visit—because everything can be discovered on the internet. Most of the respondents have common motivations and purposes for traveling, which could originate from personal

preferences or the opportunity to travel for benefit. Furthermore, they concluded that social media is a helpful platform for information and decision-making when it comes to organizing a trip, in addition to being a tool for communication. Social media may help prospective tourists by providing information on what to pack, bring, remember, and watch out for when traveling. Any experienced person or frequent visitor can nearly locate all of these. Online travel agencies will undoubtedly profit from the powerful influence that social media content has on prospective tourists' decision-making stages, as it links their motivation for visiting to push and pull considerations.

Although Facebook is primarily a platform for friends and family to get together, people are starting to use it to create mini e-versions of their travel journals, complete with photos and captions. Tourists often use Facebook to share detailed stories, updates, and reflections on their travels with friends and family (Christou, 2016b). Furthermore, Facebook is the most prevalent platform for social media promotion of tourist destinations, with 57% of individuals surveyed, and the most widely used platform for tourists looking for travel destinations, according to a study by Balangit et al. (2023). This generation is equally receptive to social media, as evidenced by Tjoe's (2024) research, wherein Facebook has influenced or encouraged the travel decisions of 51% of millennials. Additionally, he asserts that the significance of social media in the tourism industry is evident when one considers how much individuals like sharing and narrating their travel experiences on the internet.

Moreover, the use of various social media platforms for promotions assists tourists in choosing a travel destination because tourists depend on social media to find anything that attracts people. A tourism destination can gain recognition and popularity through social media promotion because promoting a tourist site on social media will increase its visitor count. This means that if a tourist location is promoted on social media, more people will go there. An attraction can gain recognition and popularity by using social media marketing. According to the study of Dalimocon et al. (2022), the majority of their respondents expressed favorable comments on Facebook, which is a channel or provider of data for finding or choosing a tourism destination to visit. They argued that tourists use Facebook to find information about a specific location quickly. They argued that tourists use Facebook to access information about a specific location easily. Nonetheless, in order to get the most benefits from this medium, individuals must verify every information they receive or make additional use of it. Therefore, social media, especially Facebook, has proven to be an exceptional platform for marketing efforts.

Additionally, engaging in conversation with one's target audience also allows one to gauge their level of interest, get their attention, and eventually exert influence. However, being offline on social media reduces one's market-influencing potential. Social media is a vital instrument in the marketing of travel-related goods and services. The experiences that other people share with you might help make products seem more real. Electronic word of mouth is used in social media conversations, and it is beneficial for promoting travel (Badilla, 2021). Furthermore, individuals can stimulate others in their network by posting information, images, videos, and other materials about their travel experiences on social media.

Since social media is a broad picture of how quickly communication is changing in today's world, it is an excellent tool for expanding your network and interacting with other prospective guests. The advocates come to the conclusion that the hotel's social media pages reach a variety of individuals and communities through posting content, funding sponsored posts that promote the hotel's promotional positions, and participating in the feedback and reviews left by previous visitors (Alarcon et al., 2022). In the same way as Cruz-Lansangan (2020) stated, internet users can modify and contribute to the form and content of the data they receive because interactive marketing, also known as internet marketing, permits their users to have a back-and-forth flow of information.

The efficacy of tourist marketing and promotion among all media users depends on using social media platforms. Social media networks can also give users reliable and accurate information about their travel, which helps them make proper decisions about their goals and the tourism sites they are considering traveling to or visiting. The fact that these platforms were user-friendly and allowed users to share and publish their opinions on websites they frequently visited set them apart from other platforms, according to users who also observed that they were available to end users. In addition, according to Gebreel and Shuayb (2022), this will

enable tourism locations to efficiently and effectively communicate, market, and promote their content to their clientele. Berhanu and Raj (2020) argue that visitors, particularly the younger generation, are more prone to using the digital ecosystem and trust and rely on travel information sources on social media. The decision-making process while selecting a destination is influenced by the use, communication, and information found in social networks, which stem from the community's utility (Tanković, Bilić, and Sohor 2022). People are affected by positive comments about travel destinations, which they have observed through social media.

Moreover, hotels, restaurants, and the food and beverages served by such particular businesses shared and posted on social media positively influence them (Vanlalhriati & Singh, 2019). Furthermore, Paul et al. (2019) explained that there are two ways in which social media might influence tourists' decisions on where they should travel. In order for tourists to make informed decisions, they should research the destination's lodging, routes, safety and security, risk, issues, and transportation. Digital word-of-mouth via social media may force tourists to make thoughtful decisions. People are affected by positive comments about travel destinations, which they have observed through social media. Moreover, hotels, restaurants, and the food and beverages served by such particular businesses shared and posted on social media positively influence them.

According to Zorlu and Candan (2023), in connection with the destinations that tourists visit via social media applications, Social Media Influencers have a considerable impact on their decision in choosing a destination. They claim that because social media is so widely used and has such sales-oriented impacts on consumer choices, it has progressively evolved into a tool for promoting travel. Because of this, practically all travel agencies and destination management organizations (DMOs) have started using social media or social media influencers (SMIs) to draw in new tourists. For instance, Daniel Mark Carabban posted a sea of clouds in Nueva Vizcaya, specifically in Binuangan, Dupax del Norte, where you can see a spectacular view of clouds surrounding the mountains. It attracted a large crowd because it is such a rare sight that appears only after a heavy downpour in the afternoon or at night. As a result of being a trend in social media, locals maintain the cleanliness of the place and establish businesses (Julio, 2019). Another is Rafael Garcia, also known as Raf Adventure. He is a traveler, content creator, and video maker who captures the majestic places he has been to in 1-minute videos. His amazing shots and captions on the site have helped him gain more than 150K followers on the TikTok platform. Raf Adventure showcases the beauty of the world one video at a time. One of his most viewed contents was the Kawasan Canyoneering in Badian, Cebu, which gained 7.6M views and 58.5K likes. Most of the comments ask for the exact location of the attraction, which shows that the viewers are interested in visiting the place.

Additionally, research by Keke (2019) demonstrates that social media significantly and favorably influences the objective. Their respondents stated that they use social media to choose their tourist destinations and when they want to plan their next trip. Additionally, Avcı and Bilgili (2020) found that SMIs are helpful to prospective visitors while they are making travel plans. They concluded that potential visitors' intentions to choose the appropriate place are positively impacted by the closeness, allure, and inventiveness of SMIs that endorse a destination.

Nonetheless, the study by Khadka and Khadka (2023) suggested that not all social media content is reliable and stressed the need to understand the traits of social media trust as well as the ways in which destination management organizations (DMOs) can establish credibility to enhance promotions of the destinations. Social media is becoming more important for promotion and marketing tourism. Additionally, trust serves as a bridge in the relationship between travel goals, self-congruity, and the quality of social media information. However, the tourists' prior knowledge negatively modifies the relationship between information quality and self-congruity (Wang & Yang, 2022). The study by Arreza (2021) discovered no significant relationship between the impact of social media on travel decisions and the characteristics of the tourist generation.

De Las Heras Pedrosa et al.'s (2020) study showed that identifying all the stakeholders and shaping the generation strategy by combining and adding value can improve the results achieved because of social media.

Furthermore, the present study contributes to attaining 17 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically in Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8) and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG9). The study has implications for full and productive employment, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and fair

labor conditions for those working in the industry and at local destinations. It increases economic growth and helps not only the tourism professionals but also the local community because it encourages tourists to visit the destination and avail of their products and services. For instance, when a destination is effectively and efficiently marketed through the use of social media, the business people in that destination will have tourists, and the tourism professionals, like tour guides, will have jobs. It also shows an enormous growth in the tourism industry with the help of medium to high technology involvement, which is the use of social media. Since they will use social media to sell their goods, services, and locations, it will lessen waste pollution and the environmental impact of their operations. This study was a notable effort in promoting efficient and effective marketing through social media. This study was also beneficial to the respondents because it served as new knowledge to the academy, the local government, hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs, and the community on creating an effective and trustworthy marketing strategy using social media. Academe and local government incorporated the study into the book to widen the perspectives of future tourism and hospitality professionals on how to efficiently and actually sell their products and services. Hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs and the local community utilized our study to create their marketing strategies to make their businesses thrive. Moreover, it served as a future reference for researchers on the subject of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination.

Social Media's Influence on Tourist's Choice of Destination

The Internet has had a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality sector because it facilitates the fast advancement of information technology and the distribution of information. Social media has unexpectedly contributed significantly to this expansion. Modern tourists' travel decisions are mainly driven by information provided by third parties, recommendations from friends and family, online recommendations, and feedback. According to another study, the utilization of social networks and their incorporation into integrated marketing strategies is becoming increasingly significant as people spend greater amounts of time interacting via social media platforms. According to the study, sharing positive experiences has a favorable impact on destination choice, whereas sharing unpleasant experiences might negatively impact the choice of destination. (Chaffey, 2024; Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019; Hanaysha & Momani, 2021).

The findings of Sultan et al. (2019) show that shared experience passively influences attitudes and subjective norms. Additionally, they discovered that posting real-time photos of travel experiences on social media lessens unfavorable opinions of the destination brand. The results may be applied by destination organization management (DMO) to improve their social media usage for tourist promotion. Also, according to the study of Agyapong and Yuan (2022), behavioral intentions have a positive and substantial impact on decision-making in tourism destinations. In contrast, social media has a strong direct influence. Also, according to the study of Agyapong and Yuan (2022), behavioral intentions have a positive and substantial impact on decision-making in tourism destinations. In contrast, social media has a strong direct influence. Furthermore, when tourists are satisfied, it can heighten their tourist destination's decision when utilizing social media.

According to the study conducted by Tuclea et al. (2020) on trust in social media for tourism information, those who have trust in social media tend to find it useful when planning to travel. Additionally, the research by Munar and Jacobsen (2013) looked into the trustworthiness of different social media platforms and other Internet-based information and suggested that people's beliefs towards receiving tourism-related data through this channel increased their desire for communication as well as social media engagement, which is more useful throughout the travel planning process, the greater the attention they pay to social media.

Moreover, Yoo and Choi (2021) also pointed out that information shared by tourists is more trustworthy than that given by travel businesses. To be specific, UGC has become reliable among visitors who use it extensively to decide where to go and make necessary arrangements for their trip. According to them, what people post on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter about their journey experiences through blogs or review pages is believed to be truer than details availed by companies offering holiday packages. This confidence in user-generated content positively influences travel intention and self-congruity. Wang and Yan (2022b) argue that trust mediates the association between social media information quality and travel intentions.

In addition, it implies that social media enables tourists to gain more knowledge about products and services, weigh their options, and make decisions. It demonstrates that, despite drawbacks, using social media has more advantages than disadvantages (Gupta, 2019).

Tourists' social media engagement has impacted the perception of the place through cognitive and dynamic visualization. Rasul et al. (2020) discovered that other regional countries except Asia Pacific countries have yet to utilize social media platforms fully. On the other hand, various Asia-Pacific (APAC) countries utilize social media to market tourist spots, expanding their expertise and practice in this area.

Social media has been shown to favor tourism and offers several advantages that are still developing, enhancing, and growing the profit margins of various tourism businesses (Simona, 2020). Tourists' use of social media has an impact on their choice of tourist destination, and their opinions shift as they read comments and check posts. It has been determined that respondents' monthly income, occupation, and choice of social media platform all relate to how long they spend on social media discussing travel (Jorge-Acain, 2022).

Dalipe et al. (2019) argued that social media is not only a communication vehicle. However, it can also be a significant factor for tourists because it is a helpful platform that can give information and contribute to decision-making in planning a trip. The majority of their responders begin with awareness, the initial stage of decision-making. Furthermore, the second level is a factor that people consider when calculating the cost of their vacation. The final level is intent, which displays their trip itinerary.

Level of Social Media Engagement of the Tourists

Tourists can now communicate their ideas and opinions with more significant influence and effectiveness through social media (Akhtar et al., 2023). In order to keep records of their encounters and experiences with locals and tourist destinations, visitors these days often use digital devices to post photos, travelogues, and reviews to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Because online reviews are typically brief, the key points that users want to highlight are reflected in them. Tourism is currently one of the industries that has been most adversely affected by the use and development of digital technologies (Safaa, Oruezabala, & Bidan, 2021).

Social media has also completely transformed the travel experience, including all aspects of travel. These platforms allow passengers to do their homework on places, offer suggestions for traveling, and organize their itineraries based on experiences from other users before they leave. Tourists can share current-time photos, videos, and experiences with others on the internet via social media, which turns them into virtual companions and fosters a sense of immediacy and connection. Following their trip, tourists utilize social media to reminisce, update their experiences, and encourage others to discover new places. By allowing users to write comments and reviews, these platforms have also helped to create groups of enthusiastic tourists who share information and insights. These groups are crucial in maintaining the reputations of tourist attractions and services (Idbenssi et al., 2023).

According to Liu et al. (2019), four social media functions have been discovered, with two influencing tourists' decisions directly and the other two indirectly. Social media has a passive function in vacation location decisions, acting both as a need generator and a supporter. First, by presenting places to tourists, social media urges tourists to add them to their 'bucket list' for consideration in the future. Second, social media may inform them of destinations they have already placed on their 'bucket list,' reinforcing their interest in travel. These indirect effects emerge when individuals engage with social media on a daily basis.

On the other hand, social media has a direct impact on travel decisions within the location. These roles on social media are known as guides and approvers. Individuals intentionally utilize social media to research and gather information prior to or during a trip; hence, social media serves as a guide. Traditional travel guides are replaced by modern and cellular information technology, such as social media, which are more complex and include web 2.0 elements, for example, location-based recommendations and services.

Furthermore, social media was discovered to fulfill the role of the final approver. This function occurs prior to decision-making, and it is presented as information technologies emerge. In contrast, traditional information sources are insufficient and cannot fulfill the same function in making travel choices based on scheduling, ad hoc availability, and realism. The approver function was introduced primarily as an outcome of social networking sites' assessment capabilities (Liu et al., 2019).

In addition, Tham et al. (2020) stated that existing social media engagement is widespread among tourists. Tourists like these rely on social media, and their trust in making use of it is to choose destinations and, as a result of their experience, use it for various purchasing choices. As an outcome, the previous research found that there is a strong correlation between high social media involvement and an increased chance for social media to impact tourists' choice of destinations.

As for social media's real-time updates, it provides tourists with information about the most recent events or situations. Thus, they can use this information to plan their future travel accordingly, such as being kept informed about current events, local discoveries, and new trends (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Liking, commenting, sharing, and direct messaging are some of the ways people communicate information. Through these, they can maintain mutual relationships, seek advice, and enter ongoing dialogues that make their trip planning more productive (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Thus, social media platforms are platforms that let you take a virtual tour of a place by means of striking pictures and videos. This is because tourists often see the beautiful landscapes, attractions, and shared experiences of others, which inspires them to go there (McCabe, 2019). On the other hand, spectacular photos and personal travel stories posted on social media by tourists also produce a sense of desire. However, this does not mean that the narrative of the power of influencer marketing on social media will be able to fully replace the authenticity of a traveler's journey (Hossain & Prybutok, 2019).

Contributing Factors to the Increased Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists

Tourism products have distinct qualities that render advertising and promotion difficult, unlike consumer goods that can be purchased off the shelf. Tourism products are immaterial and cannot be examined or tested before purchase compared to consumer products (Badilla, 2021). Because of the intangible, inseparable, variable, and perishable nature of services, their uncertainty and perceived risk are considered very high and demand significant knowledge during the decision-making phase (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015). Tourists seek information from multiple web sources to mitigate risks involved with tourism decision-making (Chung & Buhalis, 2008). Further, Gursoy and Kaurav (2022) discovered that numerous tourists learn about the experiences of those who have previously traveled to lessen the likelihood of encountering any risk or danger on their travels as a result of the data presented and delivered in various traditional and non-traditional settings that influence how tourists choose tourist destinations and make decisions.

Furthermore, considering that people utilize social media websites, tourist attractions ought to embrace social media in order to advertise more detailed travel plans (Tham et al., 2020). Now, consumers search for travel-related information instead of relying solely on travel agents to book and arrange everything. In addition, Sabanaeva (2017) discovered that a substantial number of travel consumers rely on social media to get information that helps them plan their trips. According to this study, anything posted on social media timelines can be easily understood by people in general, providing users with vital information and data to assist them in making critical judgments about the destinations they intend to visit. Furthermore, the study observed that consumers thought social networking platforms were simple to use. However, it was not only easier to find content but also for users to exchange content from several sources.

Furthermore, Rideout and Watkins (2019) said that Millennials are the "always on" generation because 86 percent of them utilize social media every day. This reality has profound implications for their social relationships, media consumption, informal learning, and civic participation. Nur'afifah and Prihantoro (2021) argued that the highest percentage of the millennial generation respondents' data is 18-25 years old. This data

is logical since the millennials enjoy vacations, as the 2019 IDN Research Institute on Indonesia Millennial Report showcases. This report stated that 4 out of 10 millennials travel abroad or domestic annually.

Social media is an essential decision-making tool for modern tourists. From discovering inspiration and ideas to validating decisions through social interactions, digital platforms have radically changed the way people plan and execute their trips. Tourists rely on social media for acceptable information and real-world experiences from other users, which have a significant impact on their travel selections (Perez, 2024).

In the tourism sector, they should pay attention to market segmentation, precisely age, because every generation has different travel needs; therefore, it is a potential market segment in the tourism industry. One of the significant factors for tourists in choosing a tourist destination is age because young people are more knowledgeable about tourist attractions, active in searching for information about recently developed tourist attractions, and have more extensive relationships (Nur'afifah & Prihantoro, 2021).

Tourists primarily pursue cheap online marketing, which is based on the one-hand decision of cost-effectiveness. Tourists might view options with references to the prices and field cheaper ones posted by others. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube are familiar places for people to post about their experiences, and they are thus a great way to get information. Typically, these are posts that have been sponsored by hotels or airlines and promotions from also tour operators. This kind of service really helps a person compare prices, give him/her convenient opportunities to track market prices and check out travel deals and discounts that may be offered through various partners. For example, tourism operators may collaborate on social media to offer competitive pricing, which can significantly affect destination decisions (Keelson et al., 2024).

Moreover, tourists often use social media to get information about the climate and weather of their tourist spots. The real-time weather updates and predictions on social media can impact tourists' decisions, especially when deciding on the time to visit or the choice of weather-sensitive activities. For instance, platforms like Twitter and Facebook are efficient instruments for passing on weather updates, specifically during natural disasters or extreme weather events. Tourists usually join local authorities or meteorological services on Twitter to get updates on the weather from their destinations. In addition, an analysis of climate- and weather-related comments on tourist attractions in China found that related weather data was a significant determining factor for tourists and their choices of attractions (Tao et al., 2021).

Furthermore, celebrities and influencers are indeed the most prominent parts of the tourist industry in the promotion of the places as these individuals get paid or share their travels through their social media, and it is of the utmost consequence in tourist ventures. They have a vital role in the introduction of the new destination to people who might exist in all parts of the world. As a matter of fact, many fans are eagerly looking to follow in their footsteps on their next vacation. As they continue to increase their exposure, influencers act as the engine to creatively manage and combine user-generated content and audience involvement to publicize travel campaigns that draw the attention of large audiences, eventually boosting engagement on social media platforms.

Moreover, social media users are compelled to share the news and get involved in discussions and possibilities, both of which have a positive impact on society (Staff, 2024). Further, the trust that followers have in social media influencers is a very crucial factor in influencer and tourism marketing. Influencers alter tourists' behavior in the travel industry by establishing a sense of trust with their audience (Pop et al., 2021).

Other factors that impact tourists' reliance on social media as a source of tourism data are, first, tourist contentment, where the positive experiences shared by tourists, such as satisfaction with accommodations, attractions, and overall trip enjoyment, can form the views of potential tourists and their decisions. The study by Wang and Yan (2022) found that the standard and scope of the information found on social media are positively linked to travel information, with reliability acting as the mediator. Second, the image of the destination is formed through user-generated content, which can be in the form of photographs, videos, and reviews. A positively framed comment can be a spokesperson for the tourism destination, which in turn can

either attract or shy tourists away. Rural tourism-related information on social media will likely be shaped to make up a more significant part of the perception of the destination image.

Furthermore, it can be understood as the most critical determinant of travel intention (Bingxian et al., 2021). Third, the availability of information wherein social media platforms such as Facebook TikTok and travel-specific platforms like TripAdvisor and Travel blogs offer a wealth of information. The information contained on social media platforms about the places is very detailed. Thus, tourists who want to know more are open to guidebooks and official websites, including tips, itineraries, and local insights. For instance, one can seek advice itineraries and understand the unknowns of places through the real stories shared on social media. This user-generated content provides authentic perspectives and real-time updates that traditional travel guides may not capture, which is why one of the significant trends in the tourism industry is that individual tourists increasingly rely on UGC to make travel decisions (Amatulli, De Angelis, and Stoppani, 2019; Oliveira & Casais, 2019). Lastly, the level of social media engagement is the extent to which tourists interact with content on social media and can increase their influence through stories of personal changes or achievements that are shared on social media by ordinary people. The involvement of the public not only keeps the truth of social media from being questioned and adds to its persuasion but also raises the persuasiveness of the stories that are being shared. When tourists involve themselves with transformational or achievement-oriented content, they contribute to its dissemination and esteemed reputation. As a result, it becomes more likely that it will impact a larger audience that wants the same or similar things.

These factors are responsible for the whole experience of traveling, and they are the very factors that absolutely lead to the selection of the destination. Tourists frequently rely on social media to obtain information about the latest developments, as well as the personal experiences of people concerning prices, weather-related conditions, and other factors that could be their main guidelines for planning their trip.

The Extent of Social Media Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

Werenowska and Rzepka (2020) explored the influence of social networking sites on the daily lives of Generation Y members. They found out that even if Generation Y are aware that social media might misrepresent reality, they tend to trust the information provided there because the primary aim of most travels is to exchange views about the places visited.

Further, Sultan et al. (2021) revealed that tour operator-generated and generated user information improves passengers' impressions of their destination and assists them in selecting an environmentally friendly destination. User-generated content (UGC) has become a potent tool for modern marketing (Bolotsky, 2023).

In relation to the study, the concept of expectation versus reality is what people experience in their everyday lives. It is a phenomenon that can be both exciting and disappointing (Manaher, 2023). Social media helps to increase the awareness of tourist destinations, helping tourists to discover more about the destinations and their products (Dedeoğlu et al., 2019). Further, expanded awareness and exposure to social media have been demonstrated to improve the perceived reliability of the place positively (Aftab & Khan, 2019). However, in an attempt to present their vacation as better than it actually is, 36% of millennial tourists post deceptive photos of their trips, according to a 2018 Allianz Global Assistance study. Several of these dishonest posting strategies are well-known. Only the best photos will be hand-picked by tourists and posted on social media sites like Instagram. They will make themselves appear younger, fitter, tanner, and more vibrant by using filters and other technology. To make sure that only the most attractive persons appear in the finished result, they will crop images. Another popular tactic is to create the impression that they have exclusive access to VIP locations and activities by manipulating camera angles and perspective (Arnold, 2018).

Moreover, traditional media sources are more trustworthy because fact-checking information is done prior to publication as a result of adhering to specific professional standards. Also, they often adhere to particular editorial principles and have verification processes (Team, 2024).

Social media's impact on tourism has grown in popularity as a research topic in recent years. Prior studies have concentrated on specific facets of social media as a marketing instrument in the travel and tourism sector.

Moreover, there are only research studies pertaining to the positive results of decision-making in utilizing social media in selecting their tourist destination. Specific aspects of social media's influence on decisions regarding tourism require further investigation. In this study, the researchers determined how tourists rely on social media to get information on travel and tourism. Furthermore, the study determined the positive and negative effects of social media sites on tourists' decisions while selecting a tourist site.

Furthermore, previous research has highlighted elements contributing to tourists' dependency on social media. Still, they had yet to measure its extent of influence on the tourist's decision-making. The current study evaluated the variables that influence reliance on social media as the source of tourism information among tourists and the extent to which social media influences tourists' destination choices.

Social media were not available in the past, and people could not talk about their real-life experiences and convince the community they were in (Sultan et al., 2019). However, because of the new technological innovations, social media has emerged as a significant consideration for the destination decisions of tourists, a key factor and motivator, and it provides all that is required from information and inspiration. The study of Tham (2022) suggests that the influence of social media can either be highly influential or have no impact at all, given the different elements of contextual factors such as the level of engagement on social media, destination novelty or familiarity, and the complexity of the planning process (Tham et al., 2019; Tham, 2022).

For instance, destinations that have a strong social media presence can reduce uncertainty about the tourist destinations by informing tourists about these destinations, demonstrating how easily to plan a tour (Pereira et al., 2023). Additionally, social media is a crucial tool that saves cost and time when it comes to advertising and promotions in a tourist spot, according to the previous study of Pereira et al. (2023).

According to Howe (2024), the Philippines is experiencing a lot of social media usage, with around 86.75 million people being actively engaged in social media as of 2024. Filipinos spend approximately three hours and thirty-four minutes on social media each day (Howe, 2024), which is significant considering two hours and sixteen minutes are approximately the global average (Gonzales, 2019). Elaborate interaction with social media applications such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram can be very effective in the tourism industry because of tourists' choice of destination. Moreover, the high penetration rate of social media in the Philippines, with an estimated 74.72 percent in 2022 (*Philippines: Social Media Reach 2029 | Statista, 2023*), suggests that a large portion of the population could be influenced by content related to tourism destinations.

Globally, at the start of 2024, there are approximately 5.04 billion social media users, which is around 62.3 percent of the world's total population. This represents an increase of approximately 5.6 percent over the past year, with the inclusion of 266 million new users in 2023. Comparatively, the usage of social media in the Philippines is higher than the global average, with a penetration rate of 74.72 percent versus the global average. This indicates that Filipinos are more engaged with social media, which could translate to a more significant influence on their travel decisions.

Furthermore, the Department of Tourism (DOT) in the Philippines is using social media influencers to promote tourist attractions. In this way, the community, in turn, is turned into supporters of local tourism and encouraged to use social media to showcase their towns (Report, 2021). This approach is quite apt considering the enhanced social media engagement in the area, making the destination image stronger and enhancing both visitor satisfaction and tourist contentment through the direct provision of the needed informational and familiar content.

Besides that, a significant relationship exists between the number of social media platform users and the effect of these platforms on the selection of tourism destinations. Tourists are increasingly using social media to search for travel-related information, including online reviews, which they think would be helpful in making a better destination choice (Chavez et al., 2020). This is due to tourism's intangible and experiential nature. Furthermore, shared experiences and communication on social media like Facebook and TikTok can significantly impact attitudes and decisions, can be transformed, and usually have the power to influence people's desires.

Furthermore, the study of Agyapong and Yuan (2022) demonstrates that behavioral intentions are a positive actor in states of insight when it comes to travel preferences, and social media is a direct source of influence on these decisions. Tourists' satisfaction certainly enhances their destination choices through social media usage, considering the process of getting insights into their decisions is very active, and the main factors to achieve that are the social media platforms (Agyapong & Yuan, 2022). Thus, this suggests that the rise in the number of social media users will also indirectly impact the potential tourists' decisions and engagement with destinations. The high penetration rate of social media in the Philippines likely amplifies this effect.

CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

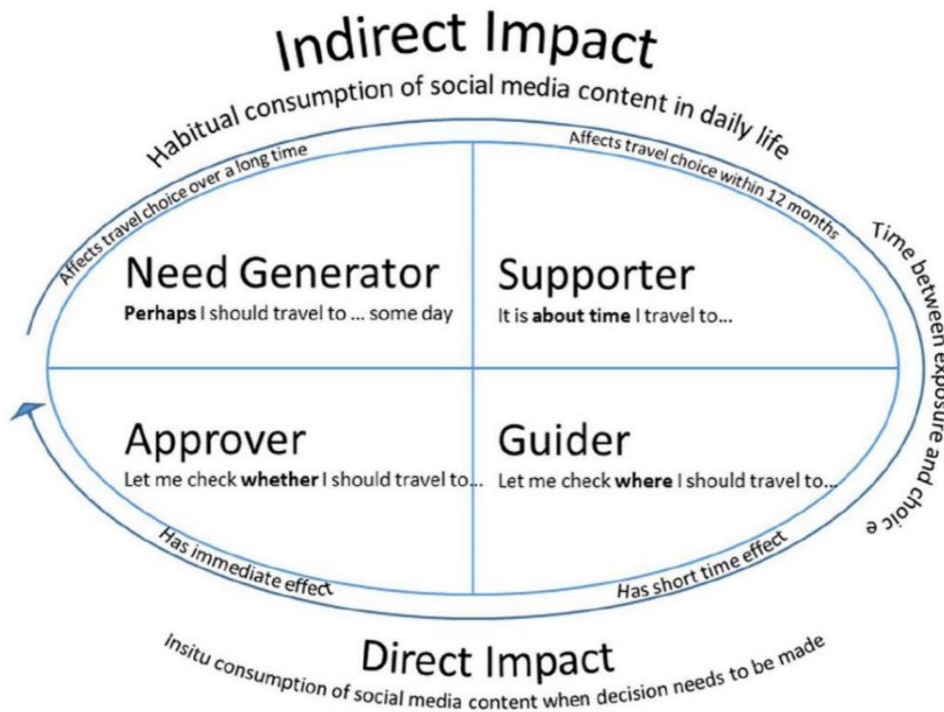


Figure 1

Roles of Social Media in Tourists' Choices

According to the model analysis of Liu et al. (2019), there are four distinct functions of social media in tourism destination selection decisions. Firstly, indirect impact occurs when tourists are regularly involved in social media, even if they have yet to have the intention to search for tourism information. In this category, there are two functions classified: supporter and need generator. On the other hand, direct influence transpires when tourists utilize social media to steer their decision-making or to approve or decline their initial selections. These are respectively classified as guides and approvers. This model explains how tourists engage and rely on social media by using it as their need generator, supporter, guide, and approver of their decisions in the selection of their prospective tourist destinations.

In the study, the researchers used key terms. Influence is the impact that social media has on how tourists behave, think, and decide on their travel destinations. Social Media is a platform that contains information that influences tourists' choice of destination. In this tool, tourists share their experiences, feedback, and travel reviews. A tourist is an individual who comes to stay and visit a place that is regarded as being interested in achieving satisfaction and pleasure. Tourism is the industry composed of tourism and hospitality businesses. A tourist destination is a place that includes accommodation where tourists spend time in recreation and leisure. Reliance is how they depend on and use social media in their choice of destination. Social media engagement is an indicator of how often social media users interact and utilize social media for various purposes.

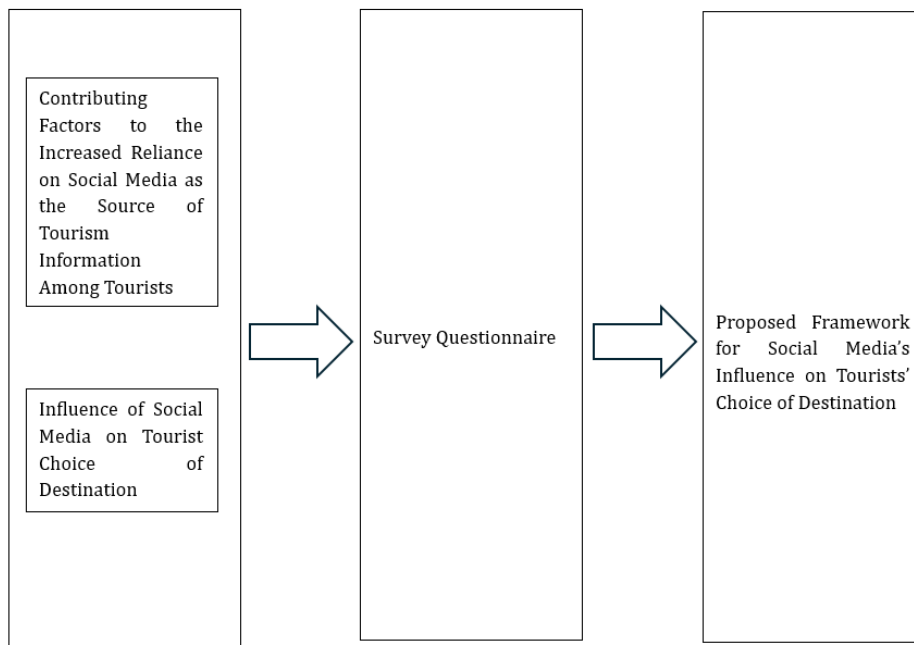


Figure 2

Research Paradigm

Figure 2 depicts the research paradigm for determining the reliance on social media in influencing tourists' choice of destination.

Input consists of the respondents' profiles and aspects related to the dependent and independent variables of educational research. Generally, all the details specified in the statement of the objectives were stipulated.

Data tabulation, analysis, and interpretation were all covered, and every detail was contained, from the early data collection to the academic research's final findings and recommendations.

The researchers developed the questionnaire and utilized it to survey all Saint Mary's University Tourism Management students to examine the importance of social media in influencing tourists' destination choices.

Output contains the actions taken after analyzing the study results, as well as recommendations and other relevant factors. Based on this, the researcher developed recommendations that will assist people in the tourism and hospitality industries to enhance their marketing strategies, which aided in attracting tourists and meeting the expectations of tourists, particularly hospitality and tourism management students, regarding the quality of their products and services.

Generally, Figure 1 indicates the direct and indirect impacts of social media in creating a bucket list of tourists for their choice of destinations. It can provide data on how tourists utilize social media, such as a supporter, guide, need generator, and approver, during the creation of their bucket lists. Meanwhile, Figure 2 measures the tourists' engagement in social media, the contributing factors to their increased reliance on social media as their source of information for the bucket lists of their choice of destinations, and the significant relationship between the contributing factors to the increased reliance on social media and the extent of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination. Hence, tourists' consumption of social media and their reliance on social media influence their decision-making process in creating a bucket list.

In relation to figures 2 and 1, as seen above, Figure 2 connects to Figure 1 and depicts the typical actions of any tourists who plan to travel and select a place. Figure 1 also depicts four functions of social media in terms of travel plans to a chosen destination, which are dependent on Figure 2, which impacts social media's influence on tourists.

Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2022) found that passive access to travel-related User-Generated Content (UGC) is positively connected to the intention to select a travel destination. This indicates that passive access to travel-related UGC motivates tourists to choose the same vacation destination to visit. That is, exposure to travel photographs, video clips, posts, statuses, and other types of UGC on UGC platforms urges people's behavioral intentions, such as the intention to choose a travel destination.

Passive access to travel-related UGC was also found to have a significant impact on potential tourists' willingness to visit a particular destination. This finding suggests that the more likely people are to encounter destination content through UGC platforms, the more likely they are to want to travel to the same destination.

So, figure 2 basically aligns with Figure 1 in such that the tourists use the functions in order to choose their final destination of traveling, reflecting their engagement on social media, the influence of social media on the extent levels, the contributing factors to reliance on social media as a source of tourism information among tourists, and the significant relationship between the influence of social media and the contributing factors to reliance on social media as a source of tourism information among tourists.

Statement of the Objectives

The study determined the reliance of social media in influencing the tourists' choice of destination for the Second Semester of AY 2023-2024. The study was aimed to achieve the following research objectives:

1. Identify the level of social media engagement of the tourists;
2. Evaluate the factors contributing to reliance on social media as the source of tourism information among tourists;
3. Determine the extent of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination and
4. Determine the significant relationship between the reliance on social media as the source of tourism information among tourists and the extent of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination,
5. Propose a framework for social media's influence on the choice of destination.

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the reliance on social media as the source of tourist information among tourists and the extent of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter covered the methodology used during the study. In light of this, the research areas and reasons for the locale's selection were outlined. The research design, research locale, research respondents, research instrument, data gathering procedure, treatment of data, and ethical considerations were all covered in this chapter.

Research Design

The current study utilized a quantitative research method, specifically descriptive-correlational research design, to explain social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination. The study also ascertained the level of social media engagement among tourists, assessed the factors that lead to tourists depending on social media for travel-related information, and ascertained the extent to which social media influences tourists' destination selection. In addition, a survey questionnaire was employed as a means of collecting data. The questionnaire comprises a checklist designed to ascertain the respondents' level of social media involvement and assess the variables and extent of social media's impact on tourists' destination selection. So, with this, the quantitative research design was appropriate for the research to meet its objectives.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Saint Mary's University-College at Ponce Street, Don Mariano Marcos, 3700 Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. The Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, is the owner and operator of SMU, a private Catholic university—the late Msgr. Jurgens Constant founded it. He has journeyed to the Philippines, serving as a parish priest for missionaries. The School of Accountancy and Business (SAB), the School of Engineering, Architecture, and Information Technology (SEAIT), the School of Teachers of Education and Humanities (STEH), and the School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHANS) are the four schools that make up the University today. Based on the University's four Marian virtues—communion, excellence, innovation, and passion for Christ's mission—Saint Mary's University has generated. It continues to produce innovative, competitive graduates. SMU was chosen because one of its four schools, the School of Accountancy and Business, has the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department which it was presumed that students belonging to that department were more exposed to the concepts of traveling and tourist destinations compared to other schools whose specialization were inclined in medical and natural sciences, engineering, liberal arts, teaching, and humanities.

Research Respondents

The study's respondents were all Tourism Management students. Thus, this research used a population study. The researchers coordinated with the Saint Mary's University Registrar's Office to provide a copy of the data on enrollment, which was the study's target population. As of the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024, the total number of enrolled college students in Saint Mary's University's Tourism Management Students is 184. The first year of tourist management had 10 males and 46 females for a total of 56; the second year had 10 males and 31 females for a total of 41; the third year had 4 males and 38 females for a total of 42, and the fourth year had 11 males and 34 females for a total of 45.

Moreover, the majority of first and second-year students traveled twice in the second semester, with 12 and 15 answers, respectively. On the other hand, the majority of third and fourth-year students traveled once in the second semester, with 13 and 12 answers, respectively. The Tourism Management students were the selected respondents of this study because they belonged to the Tourism Management course and were more exposed to the concepts of traveling and tourist destinations.

Inclusion/Exclusion with Withdrawal Criteria

The respondents included in the study were:

1. All currently enrolled in the Tourism Management course at Saint Mary's University;
2. Using social media as a tool in choosing their tourist destinations;
3. Eighteen years old and above.
4. Tourism Management Students who have experienced traveling at least once.
5. Students who shifted their course in Tourism Management that had one semester.

On the other hand, the respondents excluded from the study were:

1. The researchers of this study;
2. Students who do not have social media accounts, and
3. Seventeen years old and below.

Research Instrument

In this study, the survey questionnaire was used to solicit people's views and experiences regarding the influence of social media in choosing tourist destinations. The survey questionnaire in this study obtained the data to be analyzed, making this study attainable and researchable. The research questionnaire was taken in part by Guerreiro et al. (2019) for part I, Sabanaeva (2017) for part II, Berhanu and Raj (2020), and Paul et al. (2019) for part III.

The survey questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first part was a checklist containing the social media networks and how long they are utilized within a day. The respondents were asked to check the social media networks they used and the time they spent using social media accounts within a day. In the second part, there was another checklist with statements about how much tourists rely on social media when they are doing their travel research and planning. The respondents chose from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree if they agree or disagree with the statements by checking their level of agreement or disagreement. In the third part of the survey, which followed a checklist form, participants were asked to check the boxes indicating how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement on how much of an impact social media had on their choice of vacation spot. The respondents chose from strongly agree, which indicates that the influence was at a high extent; agree, which indicates that the influence was on average; disagree, which suggests that the influence was at a low extent; and strongly disagree, indicating that the influence of social media was at the lowest extent.

Data Gathering Procedure

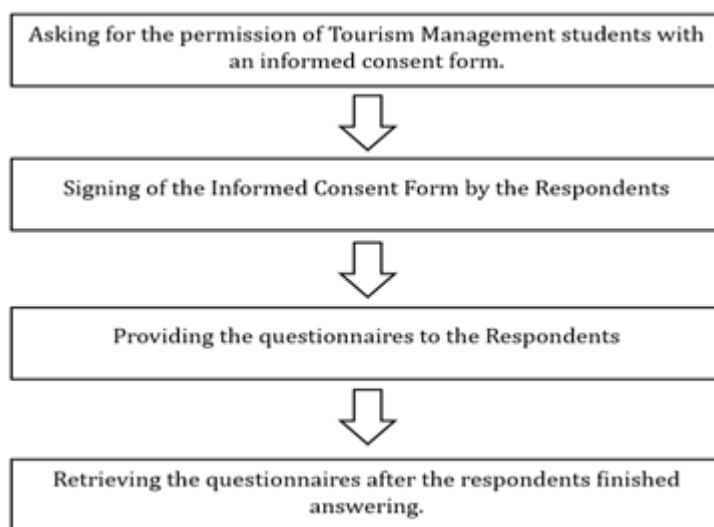


Figure 3

Schematic Diagram of Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers asked for permission from Tourism Management students of Saint Mary's University through an informed consent form, which explains the study's purpose and objectives. These letters were personally presented and distributed to the Tourism Management students. The researchers explained to the participants that the survey was voluntary participation and had the right to withdraw or not participate in the study. Moreover, the researchers explained that their details and answers on the survey questionnaires were protected.

After asking for approval and permission from Tourism Management students, the researchers let the respondents sign the informed consent letter.

Then, the researchers provided the questionnaire to the respondents and asked them to answer the required information.

Finally, the researchers retrieved the questionnaire after they finished answering it.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered from the respondents was tabulated and presented in several tables. Statistical tools such as frequency and percentage were used to show the respondents' profile variables, such as sex, year level, and address. The researchers used the Likert scale in the three parts of the questionnaires to identify the tourist's

social engagement level, factors contributing to the reliance when engaged in travel research and planning, and social media's extent of influence on tourists' choice of destination. The researchers solved the mean and standard deviation per point scale using a statistically weighted mean range.

Table 1

Scale of the Factors that Contribute to Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information among Tourists

Scale	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Reliance at the lowest extent
1.50-2.49	Disagree	Reliance at a low extent
2.50-3.49	Agree	Reliance at a high extent
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree	Reliance at the highest extent

Table 2

Scale of Social Media's Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

Scale	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree	Influence at the lowest extent
1.50-2.49	Disagree	Influence at a low extent
2.50-3.49	Agree	Influence at a high extent
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree	Influence at the highest extent

Table 3

Scale of Significant Relationship Between the Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists and the Extent of Social Media's Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

Pearson r	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
+0.80 – +0.99	Very High Correlation	The highest reliance of tourists on social media as their source of tourism information also greatly influences their choice of destination
+0.60 – +0.79	Moderately High Correlation	The high reliance of tourists on social media as their source of tourism information also highly influences their choice of destination
+0.40 – +0.59	High Correlation	The average reliance of tourists on social media as their source of tourism information also averagely influences their choice of destination.
+0.20 – +0.39	Moderately Low	The low reliance of tourists on social media as their source of tourism information also the low influences their choice of destination.

	Correlation	
+0.01 – +0.19	Very Low Correlation	The lowest reliance of tourists on social media as their source of tourism information also has the least influence on their choice of destination.

Ethical Considerations

The research study was submitted to the Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board (SMUREB) for approval. The SMUREB was contacted through their email, which was reb@smu.edu.ph, or through their cellphone number, 09177053041. They also had a physical office on the 2nd floor of Rev. Fr. John Van Bauwel Hall, SMU Main Campus, Ponce Street, Don Mariano Marcos, 3700 Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

Conflict of Interest. The respondents carefully chose those participating based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which ensured knowledge prior to the actual participation in the study in order to deter potential compromise in the conduct of the study. Every respondent gave their informed consent and was of legal age. The researchers made the respondents understand that there was no conflict of interest or other potentially conflicting interests, including financial interest and relationship and affiliations between researchers and respondents and in subject matter or materials discussed in the research, especially since researchers have no financial and personal gain from the study. The researchers funded the study as part of their partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management degree, in which information was gathered, and results were objectively used for research purposes only.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Data Protection. The Data Privacy Act of 2012, which safeguards the fundamental human right to privacy, protected the respondents. This act ensured that their right to privacy was not violated. Moreover, the researchers provide options to the respondents for not indicating their names on the survey questionnaires. The other information, such as the demographic profile of the respondents (age, sex, and year level), was not published for their confidentiality and privacy. For security reasons, their identities were therefore protected; even their survey questionnaire answers were saved and treated as private information.

Furthermore, the respondents were in charge of the data collection from 2023 to 2024. All hard copies of the data were shredded after the whole research paper was finished in bound form. In contrast, the soft copies were permanently deleted from the researcher's computer units or laptops.

Management of Vulnerability. Considering the topic of this research, the researcher accessed the respondents' personal information and relied primarily on information and opinions from them. The respondents were of legal age and were associated with various ethical issues. Therefore, the researchers started collecting the data after the respondents signed the informed consent forms. The identity of the participants was also kept confidential, and only the researcher had access to their personal information. Moreover, the researchers explained to the participants that the survey was voluntary participation and that they had the right to withdraw or not participate in the study.

Risks. There was a sufficient positive benefit-risk ratio, which motivated the study's conduct. The respondents' security and well-being were given priority in the present study. The respondents were safe since their data were held confidentially. Additionally, the researchers ensured that those taking part were psychologically, physically, and socially prepared to complete the given survey questionnaires. In answering the questionnaires, the researchers used an appropriate approach to make the respondents feel comfortable and less awkward.

Benefits. The study benefits the respondents because it served as new knowledge to the academe, the local government, Hospitality and Tourism entrepreneurs, and the community on creating an effective and trustworthy marketing strategy using social media. This study determined social media's reliance on influencing the tourists' choice of destination.

Informed Consent. The researchers provided a form that the respondents gave and signed. This written form included all of the pertinent information that was shared with the respondents, as well as the methodology used to conduct the survey. Moreover, parental approval was not required because the respondents were adults (18 years old and above). The research paper did not include the respondents' identities, and their answers were kept private. Furthermore, the respondents were clearly informed that they might withdraw from taking part in the study at any point. The researchers safeguarded the data they collected, and strict informed consent procedures were followed before the information was released. Furthermore, the respondents had a sense of control over their personal information to lessen their fear that the data or information might be utilized in any other unintended manner.

Terms of References. For Saint Mary's University's research study, the research output was owned by the university, but the students remained as the authors. The results of this study may be shared throughout Saint Mary's University through students' research fora. The study could also be submitted for publication in national or international journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results of the constructed survey questionnaire. As stated in the previous chapter, a total of 184 Tourism Management students at Saint Mary's University were selected as the study's respondents. The data obtained were analyzed statistically, and the interpreted results are detailed in this chapter.

Section 1. The Level of Social Media Engagement of the Tourists

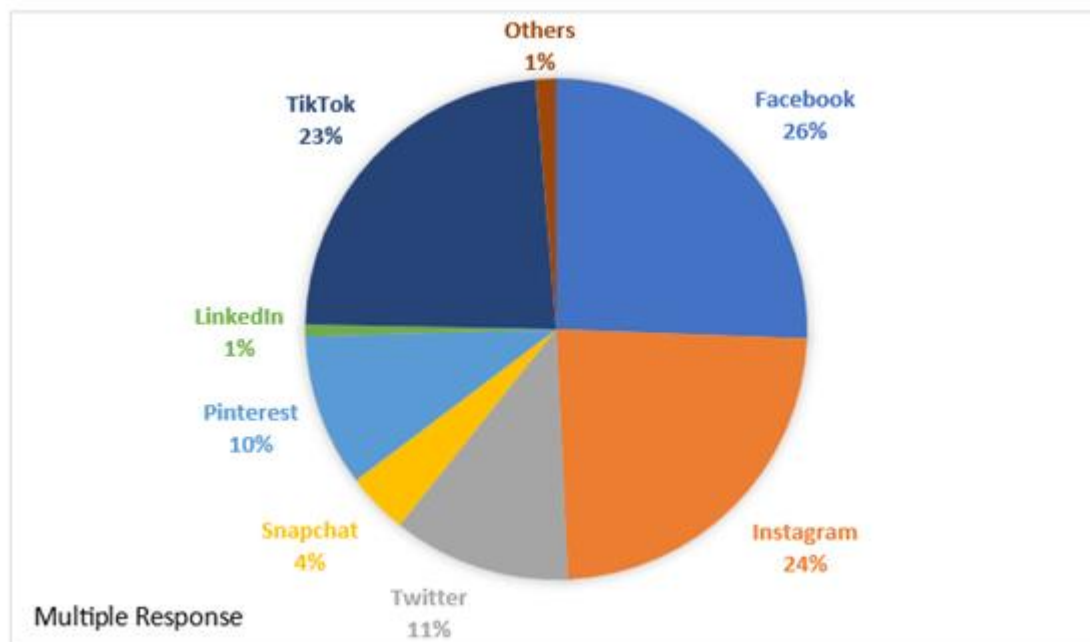


Figure 4

Social Media Platforms Utilized and Engaged by the Respondents

Figure 4 indicates the social media platforms used by the respondents in their travel planning. As can be seen in the figure, 26%, which was the majority of the respondents, use Facebook, while the least of them were using LinkedIn and other social media platforms such as Discord, Thread, Loklok, Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, with 1%. This implies that Facebook is the social media platform that is mainly used and engaged by tourists. As supported in the study of Balangit et al. (2023), the most popular social media tool, Facebook, promotes tourism locations. Also, it is the most widely used source of information platform for tourists looking for travel destinations. This is proven by a study conducted by Tjoe (2024), which found that 51% of millennials claimed Facebook interactions had an influence on or encouraged them to plan

their travels. In relation to this, according to Dalimocon et al. (2022), the majority of their respondents had favorable remarks on Facebook as a platform for information sources when choosing or looking for tourist attractions. They argued that tourists use Facebook to find information about a specific location quickly. Nonetheless, in order to get the most benefits from this medium, individuals must verify every information they receive or make additional use of it. Therefore, social media, particularly Facebook, has proven to be a great platform for marketing campaigns.

Moreover, according to GWI's Social Media Trends Report, Facebook still retains its rank as the top widely utilized social media in the Philippines in 2022, at least from 2021 to 2022. Meta advertising resources also reported that Facebook gained 83.85 million users in the Philippines in early 2022. There are various reasons why Facebook is still widely used in the Philippines. First, it enables people to communicate with friends and relatives who live far apart. Second, it offers convenient access to news and entertainment. Third, it is one of the few venues where people can freely discuss their personal stories and experiences. Fourth, it provides an environment in which people can freely express themselves. Fifth, it provides numerous accessible functions, such as live streaming, photo sharing, and messaging. Finally, the potential reach of free data streaming makes it an excellent source of economic opportunities. Furthermore, one of the reasons individuals are not abandoning Facebook instead of using other social media platforms is that Facebook's Free Data program in the Philippines improved platform accessibility significantly. As such, it remains a preferred platform for disseminating knowledge to the general population (Philippines, 2023).

Additionally, Instagram (24%) and Facebook (26%) share very close data because, first, both platforms allow for video and photo sharing. Also, because both of them allow for internet interactions, they will be able to see posts and engage with their family, friends, social media influencers, and celebrities (Motoc, 2022).

Table 4

Duration in Using Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms	Less than 1 hour a day	Between 1 and 3 hours a day	Between 3 and 5 hours a day	More than 5 hours a day	N/A
Facebook	27	45	48	56	3
Instagram	56	52	33	35	3
Twitter	95	16	10	9	49
Snapchat	93	8	0	3	75
Pinterest	103	17	5	6	48
LinkedIn	81	7	0	0	91
TikTok	22	30	50	71	6
Others:					
a. Loklok	78	15	5	8	73
b. YouTube					
c. Messenger					

d.	WhatsApp					
e.	Discord					
f.	Telegram					
g.	Thread					

Table 4 presents the number of hours the respondents spend using social media platforms. According to the data, most of the respondents spend more than 5 hours using TikTok (71), Facebook (56), and Instagram (35) platforms. In contrast, the majority of the respondents spend less than 1 hour on platforms like Pinterest (103). This implies that tourists spend invest most of their time on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram because of the entertaining content and travel-related information they provide; however, tourists spend less time on Pinterest because it is solely used to boost marketing methods. In April 2023, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest were the top four “active” social media platforms in the world, with 2.989 billion, 1.628 billion, and 465 million monthly active users, respectively. This ranking is similar to that of the Data Reportal 2023, which showed that Facebook had the highest number of active users every month worldwide.

According to Ainsworth (2024), individuals are motivated to dedicate a more prolonged period to TikTok and always look for new videos to watch on this application because TikTok provides a limitless amount of content, the majority of which is brief and entertaining. In addition, Chan (2024) stated that TikTok has nearly caught up with Facebook and Instagram. It has already exceeded X (formerly Twitter) as the most popular social media network among Filipinos aged 16 to 64, with 67.9%, despite its recent launch as an application. Also, TikTok ads reach 65.3 % Filipino female users compared to 34.7% Filipino male users. On the other hand, Facebook is a critical player in this ecosystem, providing a platform for interaction, fun, news, open discussion, and even commerce. However, Filipinos spend 40 hours and 46 minutes every month on TikTok, 1.5 times more than they do on Facebook (26 hours and 54 minutes). This reveals that although Facebook's monthly usage and social media preference in the Philippines shows a different story, real-world time spent using social media apps shows a different story.

Furthermore, Filipinos spend 14 hours and 3 minutes on Facebook Messenger, which is a popular communication tool among Filipinos, with 92.1% using it regularly. These social media apps dominate Filipinos' social media time, leaving other platforms far behind (Howe, 2024). According to Facebook's April 2023 advertising audience data, the global number of male users of Facebook is 56.8%, while 43.2% are females. Furthermore, young people from developing nations were among the most active Facebook users worldwide, accounting for 22.6% of Facebook's total ad audience aged 18 to 24 (Data Reportal, (n.d.)). In comparison, Instagram has been widely used among Filipinos, especially for social media marketing, which is why it ranks among the top three most popular social media networks in the Philippines. This social media platform regularly attracts a significant number of users because it is well-known for its visually appealing and entertaining content (Eight Media Online Solutions Inc., 2023). The study by Howe (2024) also revealed that 72.5% of internet users aged 16 to 64 utilized Instagram in January 2024, and those who were active on the platform spent an average of three hours and forty-one minutes there.

Additionally, according to Khan (2024), Pinterest is utilized to assist its users in improving their marketing strategies; thus, 61% of all Pinterest users stated they visit Pinterest prior to commencing a new project, which includes directions on how to complete a task, DIY projects, and product recommendations. Moreover, Statista reports that fashion and lifestyle tourists spend less than an hour on Pinterest. Nevertheless, only 5% reported using the platform for more than an hour. Furthermore, over 42% of monthly active users of Pinterest are Gen Z, which implies that Pinterest's audience is getting younger by the day. Of the total users of Pinterest, women account for 69.5%, compared to 22.4% for men.

In relation to this, the study of Tham et al. (2020) articulated that existing social media engagement is widespread among tourists. Tourists like these rely on social media, and their trust in making use of it is to choose destinations and, as a result of their experience, use it for various purchasing choices. Consequently,

previous research discovered a strong correlation between a high level of social media engagement and a higher likelihood of social media influencing tourists' destination choices.

Section 2. The Factors Contributing to Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists

Table 5

User's Decision-Making Process of Social Media's Influence

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Social media platforms help plan trips more efficiently.	3.37	0.56	Reliance at a high extent
2. Social media platforms make travel planning easier.	3.39	0.56	Reliance at a high extent
3. Social media platforms are useful for travel planning.	3.39	0.55	Reliance at a high extent
4. Would like to use advice from social media platforms.	3.28	0.54	Reliance at a high extent
5. Plans to use content on social media platforms to plan future trips.	3.25	0.57	Reliance at a high extent
6. Intent to use social media content for travel planning.	3.19	0.55	Reliance at a high extent
7. Social media platforms are dependable.	3.01	0.56	Reliance at a high extent
8. Social media travel information is honest.	2.68	0.68	Reliance at a high extent
9. Social media travel information is reliable.	2.94	0.59	Reliance at a high extent
10. Social media travel information is sincere.	2.89	0.63	Reliance at a high extent
11. Social media travel information is trustworthy.	2.75	0.64	Reliance at a high extent

Legend: 1.00-1.49 (Reliance at the lowest extent); 1.50-2.49 (Reliance at a low extent); 2.50-3.49 (Average); 3.50-4.00 (Reliance at the highest extent)

Table 5 presents the factors contributing to reliance on social media as the source of tourism information among tourists. It was found that most of the respondents agreed that social media platforms are helpful for planning travel and make it easier when you are planning for your travels (M=3.39, SD=0.56; M=3.39, SD=0.56). The descriptive frequency result indicates that 42% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 57% agreed with the statement. In comparison, 2% of the respondents disagreed. This implies that tourists consult social media platforms for their travel planning.

On the other hand, the minor factors that influence respondents' reliance on social media when gathering information are reliability and accuracy. Based on the data collected, the respondents least agreed with the statement 'social media travel information is honest' ($M=2.68$, $SD=0.68$). Of those surveyed, 53% agreed, and 36% disagreed that social media provides honest information. This indicates that tourists are still uncertain about the travel-related information they gather on social media. However, tourists still trust this information because the majority of them agree that social media information is honest.

The study by Sabanaeva (2017) found that a large percentage of travel consumers depended on social media to gather information that improved their travel plans. According to this study, whatever one posts on social media timelines is consumed by the general public with ease, which provides users with critical information and data that helps make critical decisions concerning the destinations they intend to visit. Furthermore, the study stated that users reported that social media platforms were easy to use. However, it was not only more accessible for looking for content but also easy for users to share content from different destinations.

In addition, considering that people utilize social media websites, tourist attractions ought to embrace social media in order to advertise more detailed travel plans (Tham et al. 2020). Now, consumers search for travel-related information instead of relying solely on travel agents to book and arrange everything.

Social media helps to increase the awareness of tourist destinations, helping tourists to discover more about the destinations and their products (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). Further, expanded awareness and exposure to social media have been demonstrated to improve the perceived reliability of the place positively (Aftab & Khan, 2019). However, in an attempt to present their vacation as better than it actually is, 36% of millennial tourists post deceptive photos of their trips, according to a 2018 Allianz Global Assistance study. Several of these dishonest posting strategies are well-known. Only the best photos will be hand-picked by tourists and posted on social media sites like Instagram (Arnold, 2018).

All in all, the overall mean of Table 5 is 3.10, which implies that the factors contributing to reliance on social media as the source of tourism information among tourists are high. This indicates that the mean score given by respondents for factors contributing to reliance on social media in the utilization of social media's travel-related information for planning trips is on a scale where high values imply significant influence. The overall mean suggests that, on average, respondents believe social media plays a significant role in their dependence on travel information.

Social media is an essential decision-making tool for modern tourists. From discovering inspiration and ideas to validating decisions through social interactions, digital platforms have radically changed the way people plan and execute their trips. Tourists' decisions are greatly influenced by the relevant information and personal experiences of other users they find on social media (Perez, 2024).

Some tourists argue that travel-related information on social media could be more trustworthy because it might lead to disappointment as a result of misleading advertising, in which tourism advocates may use incorrect photographs to promote a place. This may cause tourists to have high standards and get dissatisfied when they get to the actual destination. Therefore, it is a problem that compromises tourist satisfaction and trust when inaccurate, misleading, and deceptive marketing is used in the tourism industry. The tourism industry needs to deal with these issues and make sure that tourists are given clear, accurate information.

Furthermore, the importance of online reviews in tourists' decision-making continues to increase. To choose where to stay, what to do, and where to eat, tourists browse on social media platforms for online reviews. It is possible to doubt genuine and fraudulent reviews because some feedback might be prejudiced or dishonest. Thus, even if online reviews can be a valuable resource for tourists, they should be analyzed carefully and only partially depended upon when making decisions.

In all, social media has become a vital source for tourists looking for information on online tourism and has changed the way individuals make travel decisions.

Section 3. The Extent of Social Media's Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

Table 6

Trustworthiness of Information and Communalities

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I trust the recommendations of visitors on social networks.	3.06	0.53	Influence at a high extent
2. I trust my friends' reviews and comments about tourism destinations on social media.	3.28	0.52	Influence at a high extent
3. Social media is more reliable than traditional media, such as newspapers, TV, radio, etc.	2.74	0.69	Influence at a high extent
4. Information from social media is timely.	3.04	0.52	Influence at a high extent
5. Social media is more influential than traditional media in my final travel decision.	3.09	0.57	Influence at a high extent
6. There are fake positive or negative comments from deliberate manipulation of online reviews on social media.	3.34	0.52	Influence at a high extent
7. Social media provides information about 'new tourism destinations'	3.37	0.53	Influence at a high extent
8. 'Tour reviews' of others in social media help me to select a destination	3.29	0.51	Influence at a high extent
9. 'Comment' and 'Reply' in social media provide important information	3.31	0.55	Influence at a high extent
10. 'Videos' shared on social media influence me to select any destination	3.34	0.53	Influence at a high extent
11. 'Images' of tourism spots shared on social media attract me to visit that place	3.37	0.52	Influence at a high extent
12. Information found on social media regarding tourism seems reliable to me.	3.07	0.53	Influence at a high extent
13. Social media helps me to gather tourism cost-related information.	3.21	0.47	Influence at a high extent

14. Social media helps me to get travel route information.	3.22	0.50	Influence at a high extent
15. Safety and security issues in tourism destinations can be identified from social media.	3.05	0.62	Influence at a high extent
16. Problems or risks in tour destinations can be pointed out from social media.	3	0.65	Influence at a high extent
17. Social media can be helpful in knowing about the restaurant or food facilities.	3.31	0.49	Influence at a high extent
18. Ideas about accommodation facilities can be obtained through social media.	3.24	0.49	Influence at a high extent
19. Social media provides information about transportation infrastructure.	3.18	0.49	Influence at a high extent
20. Social media helps me select the best time to visit.	3.22	0.56	Influence at a high extent
21. Social media provides information about transportation.	3.16	0.53	Influence at a high extent
22. Social media provides an understanding of the culture and heritage.	3.18	0.54	Influence at a high extent

Legend: 1.00-1.49 (Influence at the lowest extent); 1.50-2.49 (Influence at a low extent); 2.50-3.49 (Average); 3.50-4.00 (Influence at the highest extent)

The present study revealed that the respondents perceived that the information about 'new tourism destinations' provided on social media ($M=3.37$, $SD=0.53$) and the images of tourism spots shared on social media can be trusted ($M=3.37$, $SD=0.52$). The descriptive frequency result indicates that 60% of the respondents agreed, and 3% disagreed with the trustworthiness of information about new tourism destinations and images provided on social media. This finding suggests that tourists' decision-making processes may be influenced by the degree of trust in social media content. Tourists may be more likely to visit the destinations or engage in related tourism activities if they trust the information and pictures they come across on social media. The perception of trust has the power to influence travel decisions and preferences significantly.

In support of this, the study by Paul et al. (2019) articulated that social media can manipulate tourists' destination selection decisions through two different approaches. Tourists collect information about transportation, routes, accommodation, food, costs, security, risks, and problems regarding the tourist destination to make decisions rationally. However, digital word-of-mouth spread over social media in the form of images, videos, comments, and replies may cause tourists to decide cognitively.

Furthermore, trustworthiness is essential for online marketing as well as for success in the tourism and hospitality industries (Choi et al., 2018). Tourism marketing strategies can be significantly impacted by the perceived reliability of content and photos shared on social media. Professionals in the field of tourism marketing, together with organizations and businesses, can use social media platforms to provide information

on new travel destinations and highlight visually appealing spots with the assurance that their audience will find them trustworthy.

Moreover, the finding is in accordance with the findings of Berhanu and Raj (2020), who conclude that visitors show a positive level of agreement towards the trustworthiness of travel information sources on social media. The results of the study showed that foreign tourists view social media travel information sources as reliable. Further, the past study revealed that the most influential information sources are advice and recommendations from friends and relatives, positive reviews on social media travel communities and sites, TripAdvisor's list of top destinations/hotels/airlines, trip photos and videos uploaded by friends on the social media travel, guide books, and social networking sites.

On the other hand, the respondents least agreed on the reliability of social media compared to traditional media like newspapers, TV, Radio, and other traditional media outlets ($M=2.74$, $SD=0.69$). With respect to the reliability of social media compared with traditional media, 51% of respondents agreed, and 35% disagreed with the statement. This result implies that the respondents agree more with the reliability of traditional media outlets because they usually follow specific editorial policies, have mechanisms for verification, and observe specific professional standards in fact-checking information before it is published (Team, 2024). Conversely, inaccurate or false information is likely to be found on social media platforms due to the lack of solid systems that can be used to confirm its truth or reliability.

However, though social media information is subjected to manipulation and false information, tourists can easily be swayed by these various social media platforms. Still, it also hastens the dissemination of tourism information as it enables businesses related to tourism and tourists themselves to post updates or promos about their enterprises as well as ongoing events. To cater to urgent information and last-minute deals that require reaching the target market with speed, such a quick spread that provides room for adjustments is vital. To complement this effort, businesses involved in tourism may conduct live streaming events where they engage potential tourists through question polls, among other features available on social media, thus establishing customer relations based on satisfaction. For these reasons, respondents continued sourcing their information concerning tourism from social media platforms even after using them for quite some time now.

In addition, the overall mean of the findings is 3.19, which indicates that social media's influence on the respondents is at a high extent. This means that the mean score given by respondents concerning the impacts of social media on perception creation about tourism information is on a scale where high values indicate significant influence. The overall mean indicates that, on average, respondents perceive social media's influence as relatively high.

Moreover, the high level of influence implies that the average score shows that social media greatly affects how tourists view information about tourism. This suggests that when looking for or evaluating information about tourism, respondents heavily depend on social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok. The claim also means that tourists have much trust in what they read about tourism on social media. This trust can be said to have contributed to various factors, including recommendations from influencers and friends, user-generated content, or even how real something seems when shared through these platforms.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the research indicate that it is paramount for destination marketers as well as managers to utilize social media platforms effectively. These are ideal platforms through which information can be passed on and influenced by potential tourists. Also, this means that conventional sources such as official tourism websites or printed materials might need to be supplemented by their social networking counterparts so far as their impact is concerned.

In relation to this, a study was conducted on trust in social media for tourism information. It was found that those who have trust in social media tend to find it helpful when planning to travel (Tuclea et al., 2020). Additionally, the research by Munar and Jacobsen (2013) looked into the trustworthiness of different social media platforms and other Internet-based information and suggested that people's beliefs towards receiving tourism-related data through this channel increased their desire for communication as well as social media

engagement, which is more helpful throughout the travel planning process, the greater the attention they pay to social media.

Yoo and Choi (2021) also pointed out that information shared by tourists is more trustworthy than that given by travel businesses. To be specific, UGC has become reliable among visitors who use it extensively to decide where to go and make necessary arrangements for their trip. According to them, what people post on social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter about their journey experiences through blogs or review pages is believed to be more accurate than details availed by companies offering holiday packages. This confidence in user-generated content positively influences travel intention and self-congruity. Wang and Yan (2022) argue that trust mediates the association between social media information quality and travel intentions.

Generally, the findings show the significance of social media platforms for promoting popular tourist destinations and advertising new tourism destinations. Traditional media might seem more trustworthy than social media platforms because of concerns about verification, manipulations, and rapid propagation of fake news. However, it is still a common source of travel information due to its immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility among tourists.

Section 4. The Significant Relationship Between the Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists and the Extent of Social Media’s Influence on Tourists’ Choice of Destination

Table 7

Significant Relationship Between the Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists and the Extent of Social Media’s Influence on Tourists’ Choice of Destination

	The Extent of Social Media’s Influence on Tourists’ Choice of Destination	
Reliance on Social Media as the Source of Tourist Information Among Tourists	Pearson’s r	.649***
	p-value	.001
	N	179
	QD	Moderately High Positive Correlation

Legend: +0.80 – +0.99 (Very High Correlation); +0.60 – +0.79 (Moderately High Correlation); +0.40 – +0.59 (High Correlation); +0.20 – +0.39 (Moderately Low Correlation); +0.01 – +0.19 (Very Low Correlation)

The correlation analysis is shown in this table to examine the relationship between tourists' reliance on social media for travel-related information and the degree to which social media influences tourists' destination preferences. The two variables had a significant relationship, according to Pearson's r-correlation values ($r=.649$; $p=0.001$). Specifically, there is a relatively strong positive relation between tourists' dependence on social media as a source of tourist information and the level of social media's influence on tourists' choice of destination. This implies that tourists' extensive reliance on social media for information about travels also significantly influences the destinations they select. Moreover, this means that if tourists heavily depend on social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok for travel advice, then they are likely to be more swayed by what they find there when deciding where to go. With this in mind, we can say that people’s decisions about where to travel can be significantly affected by the extent of their usage of such platforms as Facebook, which can offer them an opportunity to see different destinations from a local perspective, thereby making informed choices about where to visit based on what other tourists who have been there before say. All these suggest that destinations are no longer selected merely because guidebooks or travel agents recommended them but rather due to insights shared through social media platforms, which are deemed authentic as well as current

since they reflect the actual state of things around at any given time. Therefore, the study suggests that destinations should use social media effectively so that they can be able to attract modern tourists who may never know about some places if not for these social media platforms.

This is followed by the study of Tankovic et al. (2022), which states that the influence of social media when choosing travel destinations is positively related to the decision-making process. From the social media platforms, the gathered information provided tourists with insights about the destination, and the results for the specific locations highlight the significance of maintaining an active social media profile.

Based on the fact that people use social media platforms, the study by Tham et al. (2020) concluded that tourist places should embrace social media to enable more thorough trip preparation. Nowadays, people look up travel-related information online rather than depending entirely on travel agencies to make all of the reservations and arrangements. Furthermore, in accordance with the study of JorgeAcain (2022), the tourists' choice of destination is influenced by their usage of social media, and their opinions shift as they read, review, and comment on the posts.

In conclusion, when tourists rely on social media to choose where they want to go, they will most likely end up going to that place. This means that social media has a significant impact on tourism. Suppose destinations and businesses can keep up with this and change their marketing strategies accordingly. In that case, this can lead to enhanced competitiveness and sustainable growth.

Section 5. Proposed Framework for Social Media's Influence on the Choice of Destination

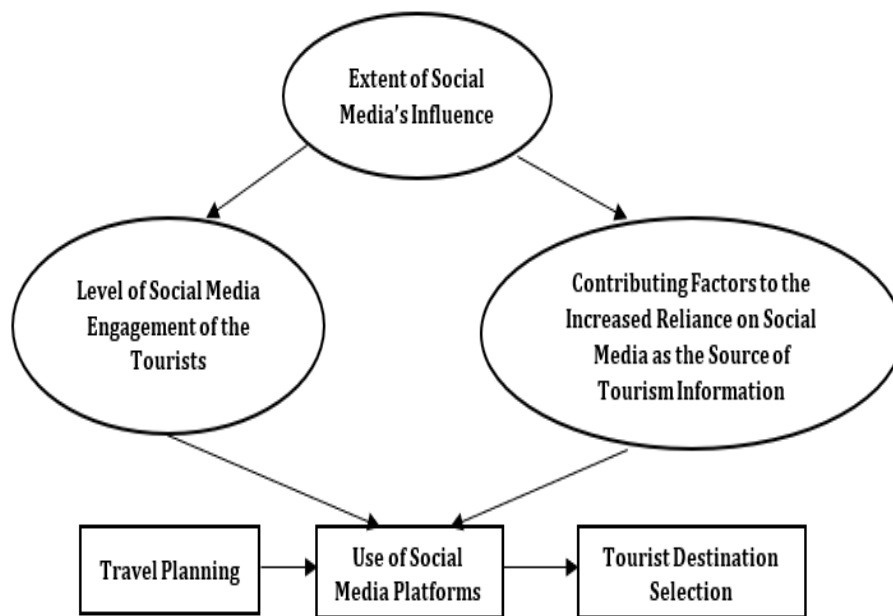


Figure 5

Proposed Framework for Social Media's Influence on Tourists Choice of Destination

The figure shown above outlines the proposed framework for the impact of social media on the tourists' choice of destination. The travel planning phase represents the first stage, and it is characterized by the initial interest in travel that people express, often through various factors such as adventure, leisure, cultural discovery, or escaping routine. After the spark of interest, tourists are actively searching for many destinations to collect relevant information. This can be surfing travel websites, watching videos, and looking at comments and reviews. Social media platforms increasingly play an essential role in travel planning. Tourists discover destinations, activities, and places to stay through platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. They are able to follow travel influencers, tourism boards, or travel-related hashtags.

In addition, the second phase of the framework is represented by the use of social media platforms. Tourists are found socializing on different platforms every so often. For example, some use the platforms to be updated about their destinations, and others for whole research periods. They consume and share a variety of content (photos, videos, reviews, and recommendations). Tourists communicate with content by liking, commenting, sharing, and direct messaging. Comments and reviews are the result of tourists who have firsthand experience and provide deep insights into destinations, accommodations, and activities.

On the other hand, positive comments help add value to the place, while negative feedback may raise concerns. Besides, tourists, travel photographers, and other content creators share pictures and information about various places that can be visited, as a result of which people can get a glimpse of the culture, attractions, and even the infrastructure of the places they are going to. Tourists can both be provided pleasure and determination by exciting videos and great pictures. Also, social media influencers are a great help because their followers believe in their choices and see them as reliable sources of information. On top of this, tourists' trust in content is highly dependent on the reliability of the creator, the originality of what was posted, and its correlation with one's personal preference. Tourists often consider the credibility of the influencer or platform sharing the content. However, effective influencer marketing strategies can still influence decision-making. Thus, this interaction can influence the tourists' perception of destinations and shape their preferences.

The last phase of the framework is the selection of tourist destinations. After tourists have gone through the social media content and interacted with it, they omit irrelevant options and make decisions about their destination. The content they came across, their interactions, and the degree of trust in the information have a significant impact on this decision-making process. Ultimately, the chosen destination is a combination of the tourists' preferences, budget considerations, personal travel plans, and time and accessibility problems.

To sum it up, the whole process, from planning a trip to selecting a tourist destination, shows the involvement of the use of social media platforms. Content, interaction, and confidence in the given information are the main components that determine what the tourists see and the decisions they make. Social media platforms are genuinely an excellent way to interact with potential tourists, providing them with quick and relevant information and creating an atmosphere of community. Active engagement leads to building trust and creating positive brand recognition with the tourists. Aside from that, the availability of abundant information on social media platforms has made the whole process of trip planning easier. Tourists can now see a better picture of the destination and their preferred activities.

Level of Social Media Engagement of the Tourists

The level of social media engagement by tourists, mainly through searching and sharing videos and photos, has become a pervasive aspect of the contemporary travel experience. The understanding of tourists' behavior through this trend not only pushes the tourist to get more deeply into their surroundings but also influences their decisions on buying trips or visiting places. The study by Keutelian and Keutelian (2024) analyzed nearly 2 billion engagements across various platforms. It revealed that the best times to post on social media are generally from Tuesday through Thursday between 9 am and 2 pm. These times align with periods when users are more likely to be active online, seeking information and interacting with content related to their interests, including travel. For instance, on Facebook, there are many users during mid-mornings on weekdays, while TikTok has peak engagement on weekdays, particularly on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4 to 6 pm and mid-mornings from 9 to 11 am on Wednesdays and Thursdays (Keutelian & Keutalian, 2024)

Moreover, tourists predominantly utilize popular social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube to search for tourism information and to share their travel experiences. Each platform serves different purposes in terms of content sharing:

1. **Facebook:** Although Facebook is primarily a platform for friends and family to get together, people are starting to use it to create their mini e-versions of their travel journals, complete with photos and captions. Tourists often use Facebook to share detailed stories, updates, and reflections on their travels with friends and family (Christou, 2016b).

2. **TikTok:** With its short format of uploaded videos, TikTok is one of the most famous social media platforms that tourists have loved. They use the trending content of TikTok to create viral videos about the places of their trips, their meals, and their spontaneous interactions with people around the world. It offers high-quality tourist information, makes it readable for individuals, and, in the same way, can also help make potential tourists interested, making them better and faster to get the information they need. It is also a significant factor in travel intentions and decisions, such as destination and accommodation selections, travel route formulation, and product purchases. TikTok is essential as it can turn locations into “red spots on the Internet” due to its massive user base and the popularity of self-produced tourism short videos (Li, 2021, pp. 176-186).
3. **Instagram:** Known for its visual attractiveness, Instagram is most frequently used by tourists to upload photos and short videos showing scenic landscapes, iconic landmarks, and culturally significant experiences. Maiké Ovens from the Social Media Academy for Travel Tourism believes that Instagram undoubtedly serves as a source of inspiration for vacationers (Martiny, 2023). By offering a predominately visual platform, the platform plays up one’s need to come up with and stage the travel exploits in a wishful way. The rise of Instagram has led to the emergence of “Instagrammable” destinations, places renowned for their aesthetic appeal and photo opportunities. (Author, 2023).
4. **YouTube:** As a platform for longer-form videos, YouTube gives tourists the opportunity to make a whole repository of travel vlogs, which incorporates narration of their travel itineraries, accommodation reviews, and immersive experiences. The monetary incentives offered by YouTube also draw the attention of travel influencers who want to earn money out of their content (Leung et al., 2013).

Furthermore, pictures and videos with good quality uploaded on social media platforms give people the urge to travel and assist them in making their decisions about the place to visit. It has been shown that storytelling in tourism influences users’ interaction with the site and their decision to visit that place based on information they get from audio-visual stories and pictures. User-generated content such as reviews, recommendations, and personal experiences provided by friends and influencers are referred to as social proof. Honest evaluations and statements confirm the attractiveness and trustworthiness of destinations, which leads tourists to choose them.

As for social media’s real-time updates, it provides tourists with information about the most recent events or situations. Thus, they can use this information to plan their future travel accordingly, such as being kept informed about current events, local discoveries, and new trends (Hudson et al., 2013). Liking, commenting, sharing, and direct messaging are some of the ways people communicate information. Through these, they can maintain mutual relationships, seek advice, and enter ongoing dialogues that make their trip planning more productive (Xiang et al., 2010).

Different time segments are usually reported as tourists’ watching or searching for travel information on social media platforms, and many factors can influence them. However, the decision-making scenario of social media travel is directly connected with the increasing impact and influence of social media. All these features make travel much more enjoyable for tourists, and they mostly become favorable about destinations. The real-time accessibility of updates, personal recommendations, and peers’ inputs are among the most critical factors that are considered to contribute to the creation of top-flight travel experiences for tourists and the formation of perceptions of the destinations.

Thus, social media platforms are platforms that let you take a virtual tour of a place by means of striking pictures and videos. This is because tourists often see the beautiful landscapes, attractions, and shared experiences of others, which inspires them to go there (McCabe, 2019). On the other hand, spectacular photos and personal travel stories posted on social media by tourists also produce a sense of desire. However, this does not mean that the narrative of the power of influencer marketing on social media will be able to fully replace the authenticity of a traveler’s journey (Hossain et al., 2019).

Contributing Factors to the Increased Reliance on Social Media as a Source of Tourism Information Among Tourists

Social media is indeed critical when it comes to the contemporary tourist because it has become a significant source of tourism information. It is generally utilized in the designing of travel, chiefly for a selection of accommodation, attraction, and destination options. The current study demonstrates that social media is a powerful tool and can influence tourists' destination choices. In fact, tourists treat recommendation-based information on social media platforms with more credibility than unsolicited advertising.

The study of Liu et al. (2019) also disclosed that the destination decisions of tourists encompass a wide variety of destination qualities, including beautiful sceneries, culture, atmosphere, and other attractive features. However, people also tend to visit the website with the intent of seeing images of different places they have yet to go but whose characteristics they like, which they do not immediately know what it looks like. The online exposure of such photographs prompts the public to acquire some knowledge about the place they prefer. Consequently, many feel the need to visit the place soon, and tourists also show an interest in this place in the future. Moreover, social media can also effectively facilitate travel planning because it can motivate people to eventually go on a trip to a place they have desired to visit for some time.

Besides that, social media plays a multifaceted role in conveying tourism information, influencing tourists based on various factors:

- **Prices:** Tourists primarily pursue cheap online marketing, which is based on the one-hand decision of cost-effectiveness. Tourists might view options with references to the prices and find cheaper ones posted by others. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube are familiar places for people to post about their experiences, and they are thus a great way to get information. Typically, these are posts that have been sponsored by hotels or airlines and promotions from also tour operators. This kind of service really helps a person compare prices, give him/her convenient opportunities to track market prices and check out travel deals and discounts that may be offered through various partners. For example, tourism operators may collaborate on social media to offer competitive pricing, which can significantly affect destination decisions (Keelson et al., 2024).
- **Weather:** Tourists often use social media to get information about the climate and weather of their tourist spots. The real-time weather updates and predictions on social media can impact tourists' decisions, especially when deciding on the time to visit or the choice of weather-sensitive activities. For instance, platforms like Twitter and Facebook are efficient instruments for passing on weather updates, specifically during natural disasters or extreme weather events. Tourists usually join local authorities or meteorological services on Twitter to get updates on the weather from their destinations. In addition, an analysis of climate- and weather-related comments on tourist attractions in China found that related weather data was a significant determining factor for tourists and their choices of attractions (Tao et al., 2021).
- **Celebrities/Influencers:** Celebrities and influencers are indeed the most prominent parts of the tourist industry in the promotion of the places as these individuals get paid or share their travels through their social media, and it is of the utmost consequence in tourist ventures. They have a vital role in the introduction of the new destination to people who might exist in all parts of the world. As a matter of fact, many fans are eagerly looking to follow in their footsteps on their next vacation. As they continue to increase their exposure, influencers act as the engine to creatively manage and combine user-generated content and audience involvement to publicize travel campaigns that draw the attention of large audiences, eventually boosting engagement on social media platforms. Moreover, social media users are compelled to share the news and get involved in discussions and possibilities, both of which have a positive impact on society (Staff, 2024). Further, the trust that followers have in social media influencers is a very crucial factor in influencer and tourism marketing. Influencers alter tourists' behavior in the travel industry by establishing a sense of trust with their audience (Pop et al., 2021).

Other factors that impact tourists' reliance on social media as a source of tourism data are:

- **Tourist Contentment:** The positive experiences shared by tourists, such as satisfaction with accommodations, attractions, and overall trip enjoyment, can form the views of potential tourists and their decisions. The study by Wang and Yan (2022) found that the standard and scope of the information found on social media are positively linked to travel information, with reliability acting as the mediator.
- **Destination Image:** The image of the destination is formed through user-generated content, which can be in the form of photographs, videos, and reviews. A positively framed comment can be a spokesperson for the tourism destination, which in turn can either attract or shy tourists away. Rural tourism-related information on social media will likely be shaped for a more significant part of the perception of the destination image. Furthermore, it can be understood as the most critical determinant of travel intention (Bingxian et al., 2021).
- **Availability of Information:** Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and travel-specific platforms like TripAdvisor and Travel blogs offer a wealth of information. The information contained on social media platforms about the places is very detailed. Thus, tourists who want to know more are open to guidebooks and official websites, including tips, itineraries, and local insights. For instance, one can seek advice itineraries and understand the unknowns of places through the real stories shared on social media. This user-generated content provides authentic perspectives and real-time updates that traditional travel guides may not capture. Individual tourists increasingly depend on UGC to make decisions about their trips, which is a significant trend in the tourism sector. (Amatulli et al., 2019; Oliveira & Casais, 2019).
- **Level of social media engagement:** The extent to which tourists interact with content on social media can increase their influence through stories of personal changes or achievements that are shared on social media by ordinary people. The involvement of the public not only keeps the truth of social media from being questioned and adds to its persuasion but also raises the persuasiveness of the stories that are being shared. When tourists involve themselves with transformational or achievement-oriented content, they contribute to its dissemination and esteemed reputation. As a result, it becomes more likely that it will impact a larger audience that wants the same or similar things.

These factors are responsible for the whole experience of traveling, and they are the very factors that absolutely lead to the selection of the destination. Tourists frequently rely on social media to obtain information about the latest developments, as well as the personal experiences of people concerning prices, weather-related conditions, and other factors that could be their main guidelines for planning their trip.

In addition, the use of social media for tourism information confirms the significance of establishing an online presence and reputation management for businesses in the tourism industry. Moreover, democratization in the tourism industry is to be mentioned, as ordinary tourists and influencers exert a considerable influence on global travel, and this happens worldwide. Nevertheless, tourists must pay attention to the authenticity and reliability of information broadcasted on social media, as it may be induced by bias or being counterfeit. It also highlights the democratization of travel information, where ordinary tourists and influencers alike can shape perceptions and influence decisions on a global scale. However, tourists should also exercise caution regarding the authenticity and reliability of information sourced from social media, as it can sometimes be biased or misleading.

In conclusion, social media is the primary platform where tourists meet and receive information about tourist destinations, expenditure on various projects and activities, weather updates, and suggestions from influencers. The transforming technology and demographics have been observed to move as the technology and consumer behaviors have established the new technologies and social norms.

The Extent of Social Media Influence on Tourists' Choice of Destination

Social media were not available in the past, and people could not talk about their real-life experiences and convince the community they were in (Sultan et al., 2019). However, because of the new technological innovations, social media has emerged as a significant consideration for the destination decisions of tourists, a key factor and motivator, and it provides all that is required from information and inspiration. The study of Tham (2022) suggests that the influence of social media can either be highly influential or have no impact at

all, given the different elements of contextual factors such as the level of engagement on social media, destination novelty or familiarity, and the complexity of the planning process (Tham et al., 2019; Tham, 2022).

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For instance, destinations that have a strong social media presence can reduce uncertainty about the tourist destinations by informing tourists about these destinations, demonstrating how easily to plan a tour (Pereira et al., 2023). Additionally, social media is a crucial tool that saves cost and time when it comes to advertising and promotions in a tourist spot, according to the previous study of Pereira et al. (2023).

According to Howe (2024), the Philippines is experiencing a lot of social media usage, with around 86.75 million people being actively engaged in social media as of 2024. Filipinos spend approximately three hours and thirty-four minutes on social media each day (Howe, 2024), which is significant considering two hours and sixteen minutes are approximately the global average (Gonzales, 2019). Elaborate interaction with social media applications such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram can be very effective in the tourism industry because of tourists' choice of destination. Moreover, the high penetration rate of social media in the Philippines, with an estimated 74.72 percent in 2022 (*Philippines: Social Media Reach 2029 | Statista, 2023*), suggests that a large portion of the population could be influenced by content related to tourism destinations.

Globally, at the start of 2024, there are approximately 5.04 billion social media users, which is around 62.3 percent of the world's total population. This represents an increase of approximately 5.6 percent over the past year, with the inclusion of 266 million new users in 2023. Comparatively, the usage of social media in the Philippines is higher than the global average, with a penetration rate of 74.72 percent versus the global average. This indicates that Filipinos are more engaged with social media, which could translate to a more significant influence on their travel decisions.

Furthermore, the Department of Tourism (DOT) in the Philippines is using social media influencers to promote tourist attractions. In this way, the community, in turn, is turned into supporters of local tourism and encouraged to use social media to showcase their towns (Report, 2021). This approach is quite apt considering the enhanced social media engagement in the area, making the destination image stronger and enhancing both visitor satisfaction and tourist contentment through the direct provision of the needed informational and familiar content.

Besides that, a significant relationship exists between the number of social media platform users and the effect of these platforms on the selection of tourism destinations. Tourists are more and more depending on social media to search for travel-related information, including online reviews, which they think would be of assistance in making a better destination choice (Chavez et al., 2020). This is due to tourism's intangible and experiential nature. Furthermore, shared experiences and communication on social media like Facebook and TikTok can significantly impact attitudes and decisions, can be transformed, and usually have the power to influence people's desires.

Furthermore, the study of Agyapong and Yuan (2022) demonstrates that behavioral intentions are a positive actor in states of insight when it comes to travel preferences, and social media is a direct source of influence on these decisions. Tourists' satisfaction certainly enhances their destination choices through social media usage, considering the process of getting insights into their decisions is very active, and the main factors to achieve that are the social media platforms (Agyapong & Yuan, 2022). Thus, this suggests that the increase of social media users will also indirectly impact the potential tourists' decisions and engagement with destinations. The high penetration rate of social media in the Philippines likely amplifies this effect.

In relation to this, Liu et al.'s (2019) model analysis indicates that social media plays four distinct functions in the selection of travel destinations. Firstly, the indirect impact situation happens when tourists unconsciously use social media without intending to look up information about travel or tourism. This category has two roles: the need generator and the supporter. The former is the demand generator, while the latter is the supporter who motivates. The direct influence appears the moment tourists deliberately use social media as a tool to help them consider their options or to verify or disprove notions they gathered earlier from other sources.

Considering these aspects, the conducted study provided a framework for examining the influence of social media on selecting a destination. A new way of looking at it through the framework is the interaction of the tourists' decision process with social media travel information, hence revealing its paramount role in the marketing and promotion of tourism-related businesses. Tourism businesses and destination marketers need to change their strategies in the direction of using social media to their advantage, which is becoming an effective way of communicating today. This encompasses communication by generating fresh and appealing content, interacting with tourists, and collaborating with influencers. User-generated content (UGC) has become a potent tool for modern marketing (Bolotsky, 2023). One effective way is to encourage tourists to share their experiences and get involved in the process of UGC development to foster authenticity and evidence, thereby attracting more tourists. So, the framework can be beneficial not only for tourism-related businesses and marketing professionals but also for tourists.

According to the study of Vanlalhriati et al. (2019), social media has become a more important aspect when it comes to tourism promotion, in which the tourism industry highlights tourist attractions. Moreover, hotels, restaurants, and the food and beverages sectors are mostly subjected to social media at the time of their operations. They do this through quality service that they skillfully show and tell through social media to their target market. They also engage fashion models, celebrities, and influencers in the creativity of their references, as they can put the right messages on different social media platforms that will reach the audience and get good feedback from them. In addition to this, as suggested by the study by Gebreel and Shuayb (2022), promotion and marketing platforms in social media appeared to be the most crucial and most easily influenced among tourists who make choices about destinations and tourism sites of visiting and traveling accurately. Social media platforms have become the primary reference for many tourists all over the world. The previous study concluded that social media platforms have considerably influenced tourist's decisions. In other words, social media platforms have influenced the tourist's final decision. Consequently, tourists use social media to pitch ideas and to gain aid, support, guidance, and approval with respect to their preferences for a tourist destination.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter shows the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Conclusions

In this study, various statistical methods, such as mean, standard deviation, and significant value, were used to address the objectives encountered in order to assess the relationship between tourists' reliance on social media as a source of tourist information and the extent to which social media influences tourists' choice of destination.

Due to its ease of use in giving details regarding a particular area, Facebook is the social media network most frequently used and engaged by tourists. Furthermore, due to the amusing content and travel-related information that TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram offer, the majority of respondents spend more time there; on the other hand, tourists spend less time on Pinterest because the platform is only utilized to promote marketing strategies.

The majority of respondents concurred that social media platforms are helpful and facilitate the planning process for vacation. This suggests that tourists look up travel-related information on social media sites. However, the statement "social media travel information is honest" received the least amount of agreement from the respondents, suggesting that tourists are still unsure of the accuracy of the information they get

online. Still, based on the percentage of the respondents, most of them believe social media information to be reliable, so they continue to trust it. The overall mean shows that tourists depend significantly on social media for travel details. Respondents give high ratings, indicating a substantial impact on using social media for travel planning.

Moreover, the extent of social media's influence on tourists' destination choices is that they trust social media to provide information about new tourism destinations as well as pictures of tourist spots posted on social media platforms. Thus, this means that social media platforms are significant factors in promoting popular tourist destinations and advertising new tourism destinations. On the other hand, traditional media might seem more trustworthy than social media platforms because of concerns about verification, manipulations, and rapid propagation of fake news. However, it is still a common source of travel information due to its immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility among tourists. The overall mean of the finding implies that social media significantly influences tourists, as seen in their average scores regarding the influence of social media on perceptions of tourism information, where high ratings significantly have a notable effect.

Furthermore, when tourists rely on social media to choose where they want to go, they would most likely end up going to that place. This means that social media has a significant impact on tourism. Suppose destinations and businesses can keep up with this and change their marketing strategies accordingly. In that case, this can lead to enhanced competitiveness and sustainable growth. Hence, there is a significant relationship between tourists' reliance on social media for tourism information and the extent to which social media influences tourists' destination choices. This result implies that tourists' reliance on social media for tourist information has a significant impact on their destination choice.

In addition, the proposed framework shows the whole process, from planning a trip to selecting a tourist destination and the involvement of the utilization of social media platforms. Content, engagement, and trust in the given information are the main components that determine what the tourists see and the decisions they make. Social media platforms are genuinely an excellent way to interact with potential tourists, providing them with quick and relevant information and creating an atmosphere of community. Active engagement leads to building trust and creating positive brand recognition with the tourists. Aside from that, the availability of abundant information on social media platforms has made the whole process of trip planning easier. Tourists can now see a better picture of the destination and their preferred activities.

In conclusion, social media platforms have become the primary reference for many tourists all over the world. The current study, which was supported by previous studies, concluded that social media platforms have considerably influenced tourists' decisions. In other words, social media platforms have influenced the tourist's final decision. Consequently, tourists use social media to pitch ideas and to gain aid, support, guidance, and approval with respect to their preferences for a tourist destination.

Recommendations

This is a preliminary study in order to comprehend better the explored relationships between the use of social networks, the level of engagement in social media, and tourists' reliance on social media as a source of tourist information, as well as the extent of social media's influence on tourists' decision-making processes when selecting a destination. Given the study's conclusions, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Tourism and marketing professionals, as well as entrepreneurs, use Facebook, the platform with the most significant number of users, to promote travel destinations, travel-related goods, and services. Additionally, TikTok and Facebook are the social media sites that respondents spend the most time with; hence, researchers suggest utilizing these platforms to reach a larger audience and build brand awareness. Furthermore, entrepreneurs and tourism and marketing experts use the most popular and influential social media platforms to effectively promote travel destinations, products, and services as well as accelerate the growth of their companies. This is because it was discovered that there is a significant correlation between the degree to which social media influences tourists' choice of destination and the reliance on social media as a source of travel information. In addition, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) should create engaging, visually appealing content that showcases

- local attractions, activities, and unique experiences. However, they must also encourage tourists to share their genuine experiences through UGC. They should highlight their authentic stories and reviews to build trust and attract more engagement. Moreover, in creating content, it is crucial to use high-quality images, videos, and user-generated content to make it impactful.
2. The Department of Tourism (DOT), specifically the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), can utilize the research study to gain additional knowledge on effectively and efficiently marketing tourism products and services, tourist destinations, and newly discovered tourist destinations because this research study has revealed how social media platforms can influence tourists' destination choices.
 3. Tourists can use social media sites for travel information because the majority of respondents firmly agreed that these sites proved helpful in planning a trip and made decision-making easier. Moreover, tourists trust social media platforms for destination visuals, as individuals discover new travel destinations via social media and can trust these images.
 5. Future researchers can employ, adapt, or refer to the framework in their own studies. Additionally, they have the opportunity to extend or expand the scope of the existing research.
 6. Educational institutions can incorporate the results of the study into course subjects such as Tourism Marketing of Tourism Management and Hospitality Management courses to widen the perspectives of future tourism and hospitality professionals on how to efficiently and effectively sell their products and services.

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