Assessing the Relationship between Social Media and Sustainable Tourism: *A Review*

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ABSTRACT

Achieving sustainability is a primary agenda of developing countries for Vision 2030. On the other hand, technological advancement appears to be a catalyst for achieving those goals. Similarly, the role of social media cannot be ignored while reviewing the impact of tech advancement on our social well-being. This research study evaluates the nexus between different factors of sustainable tourism. It focuses on tourism resources, i.e., natural, artificial, renewable, and non-renewable. Government participation is responsible for optimising economic benefits; while preserving social, cultural, and ecological features. The researcher analyses different social media in India to assess the significance of Responsible/ Sustainable Tourism. This research paper will help the tourists to suggest the various platforms of social media and its importance related to tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Green tourism fosters growth and instils the responsibility of protecting the environment among tourists. In a digital world, this responsibility is endowed by social media. On social media platforms, the thoughts and actions of people/ organisations curate followers.

Social media platforms are influential in marketing products. Purposive use of social media for marketing products and sharing the vision and mission of companies. Researchers have validated that sustainability and responsibility go hand in hand to promote tourism and protect natural resources; therefore, fostering responsible and sustainable campaigns has become an integral part of social media.

Millennials and Gen Z express their opinions and advocate global campaigns on social media, i.e., UNICEF. International tourism ethical guidelines. i.e., responsible tourism tips are preferably shared on social media to attract followers. Organisations use social media to share their corporate social responsibility efforts. Initiatives related to sustainability

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and outcome are also shared on social media, i.e., reducing carbon footprint, reusing greywater for irrigation, saving water and likewise industries.

Discussions on the sustainability of tourism products, protecting nature and adopting eco-friendly practices are shared on social media. Companies share the desired outcome of achieving sustainability goals against their set benchmark. If any, its objectives and renewable energies are highlighted on social media. Banning plastic waste into a reusable resource, no plastic to be used in a landfill, using sustainable products. These ethical practices are shared by companies and discussed on social media by Netizens.

Recently, tourism destinations have faced challenges, many arising from new technologies, mobile and social media. Usage of social media platforms has increased, gaining insight into people's opinions on different agendas and discussions (Newman et al., 2019). People on these platforms often exercise freedom of speech by expressing their opinion. "Social media" is a term that refers to new media forms and has the active participation of people involved (Mayfield, 2008). Social media is a powerful tool in democratic countries, as it gives the liberty to hold discussions. The government uses this platform to increase social awareness of rural and child poverty, save the planet, health, education, migration and youth participation. Engaging social media as a communicator of sustainable and responsible tourism goals assists travellers in adopting the best practices. Travellers use social media frequently to access and collect information, data and communication (Kavitha & Bhivaneshwari, 2016). Social media facilitates communication and aids in creating and directing social environments. Travellers' use of social media occurs concurrently with their developing identity, physical development, emerging sexuality and moral consciousness.

Social media is considered for tourism businesses, online visibility, capitalization of competitive advantage, and an effective and affordable tool (Buhalis, 2000). The current article is organised to understand the role of social media as a trendsetter of responsible and sustainable tourism by offering a systematic literature review providing an overview of the fundamental concepts of "responsible tourism," "sustainable tourism," and "social media." The paper examines factors responsible for social media as a medium of knowledge and information transfer regarding accountable and sustainable tourism amongst travellers. A methodological approach is followed that allows new forms of understanding to be established by assessing the relevant literature that is systematic and integrative (Newman, Benz & Ridenour 1998). The findings on social media as a trendsetter in sustainable and responsible tourism are further synthesised and elaborated as discussions. The impact of social media on various generations is to connect for various reasons which may be related to work, fun or information gathering purposes. Hospitality sector in specific, role of social media is very vital as concluded by Yazdanifard and Yee (2014). This is followed by a section on the theoretical and practical implications of the research. Finally, the limitations and areas of future research are noted before the conclusion.

Social media is accepted as a trendsetter of millennials' opinions, whereas senior citizens are not apt to use this media. The researcher wants to judge the acceptance of social media as an aggregator/trendsetter of sustainable tourism.

The jobs sector is a significant element of sustainable tourism in the jobs sector. What has changed, and how are they using social for recruitment? The researcher would like to study what jobs are available, what has changed and how the promotional activities of short messages are developed and floated.

Broader trends in social media are,

- How are government tourism bodies communicating sustainable tourism in different countries?
- Using sustainable tourism-related hashtags, channels and influencer approaches?
- How they sell and use it at different times during peak season.
- What is happening on sustainable properties?
- Which brands are more focused on it?
- What certifications are they talking about?
- The role of travel aggregators

STUDY METHODS

The present review paper used sustainable tourism-related hashtags to find out the potential literature to review. Social Media, including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr have the most followed hashtags like #sustainabletravel, #responsibletravel #sustainabletourism #ecotravel #ecotourism #responsibletravel #ecotourism #instatravel #sustainability #ecofriendly #nature #slowtravel #greentravel #sustainableliving #conscioustravel #ethicaltravel #ecolodge #wildlife #adventuretravel. These hashtags on social media express its responsibility and sustainability goals towards a green planet.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Della Corte et al. (2019) conducted a bibliometric analysis of sustainable tourism in the open innovation realm and depicted emerging themes. The researchers have explored that there is an interconnection between sustainable management and its implication in the Hospitality Industry. The policy makers of Tourism destinations could implement the viable schemes which should be based on industry specific factors and also to satisfy the needs of the customers related to the hospitality industry.

The research paper of Postma et al. (2017) developed to inspire businesses to use sustainability as a yardstick to implement sustainability The critical strategic questions, and actionable strategic propositions were considered, i.e., sustainability, foresight, and

business identity will guide tourism businesses to develop a proactive attitude and robust strategies for a sustainable future in 2040.

Sustainable tourism is the complete tourism experience, including concern for economic, social and environmental issues with attention to improving tourists' experiences (Hall et al., 2016).

Using institutional theory, Peters et al. (2020) studied organisations' rationale for monitoring motivations for joining a voluntary sustainable tourism association and the organisation–association dynamics, which leads to conflicting forces resulting in goal misalignment and loss of monitoring data.

Workman et al. (2019) studied the cultural awareness of Chinese college students who will be future trendsetters. Four different innovation groups were identified: trendsetters, early adopters, late adopters, and reluctant adopters via Manova. Differences were noticed in cultural receptivity, awareness, and future orientation among trendsetters and followers.

Dwivedi and Pandey (2013) emphasised that Social media plays a constructive role in sharpening societal needs. It is often used to portray a positive image of the organisation and institutions. Social media is used to sensitise people and raise awareness of a responsible society.

Theoretical review: The following paragraphs present a brief theoretical review of the study topic.

Sustainability challenges: Climate change, depleting natural resources, and socio-economic inequalities have forced humans to assess their three-dimensional impacts on tourism which are environmental, social, and economic. The Brundtland Report of 1987 was based on the idea of economic growth occurring more ecologically sound and equitably. Significant impacts were highlighted if economic effects on the environment remained unmanaged (Budeanu, 2005). Subsequent conferences on responsible tourism were held, such as the First Conference on Responsible Tourism hosted in Cape Town in 2002, World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg (2002) and Second Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations held in Kerala, India (2008). These conferences highlighted the definition of responsible tourism as an approach that improved the quality of life for the local community and surroundings, creating economic opportunities to enhance the tourists' experience. Public-private partnerships were also given importance (Spenceley et.al, 2002 as Responsible Tourism Manual of South Africa, DEAT, July 2002). The lack of adequate measurement systems to assess the achievement of the same was also highlighted (George et al., 2010).

The tourism industry is trying to minimise the impacts by propagating the sector to be more responsible and sustainable in reducing the carbon footprint. Responsible Tourism was

defined in Cape Town in 2002 alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Responsible Tourism is about making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit (Cape Town Declaration, 2002). So, responsible tourism is about creating better places for visitors and communities to live in and creating better places to visit. Sustainable tourism is defined as "Sustainable tourism covers the complete tourism experience, including concern for economic, social and environmental issues and attention to improving tourists' experiences" (Hall et al., 2016). The difference between sustainable and responsible tourism is that the former is more of a concept. At the same time, the latter refers to the practices and behaviours that can lead to sustainable tourism.

Global warming is leading to climate change. Rising global heat and depleting natural resources have made people realise sustainability's significance. This has led to the sensitization of the masses to teach them the essential aspects of sustainability.

Various steps were taken to control the global climate. Conferences were held with the agenda of promoting sustainable/ responsible tourism, i.e., the First Conference on Responsible Tourism was hosted in Cape Town in 2002, World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg (2002), and Second Conference on Responsible Tourism was held in Kerala in 2008. These conferences signified responsible tourism to improve the quality of life, leading to the local community's active involvement in sustainable development by creating more opportunities.

Social media as a communicator: Engaging social media as a communicator of sustainable and responsible tourism goals may assist millennials in adopting the best practices. Chatterjee and DeSilva (2021) spoke about the role of social media platforms in promoting sustainable tourism in the Indian states, i.e., Odisha and Assam. "The advent of social media in the global market has changed communication, observation, interaction and exchanging information. The adoption of social media as new technology has impacted the working sustainable tourism business with the omnipresence of international organisations, i.e., the International eco-tourism society. These firms are marketing themselves on social media platforms and sensitising people about achieving sustainable tourism goals."

Social media platforms increase to gain insight into people's opinions on different agendas and discussions (Newman et al. 2019). Various people on these platforms often exercise freedom of speech by expressing their opinion. Taboo topics are easily discussed as the profile's identity remains hidden from the public. The disadvantage is that people develop fake social media profiles to raise their voices as also supported by Anderson (2012), Kim et.al, (2015), and Ayeh et. al (2012) and several properties allow the leverage of the customers to avoid the negative social media marketing.

Social media is a powerful tool in democratic countries, as it gives the liberty to hold discussions. The government uses this platform to increase awareness on social

topics, i.e., rural and child poverty, saving the planet, health, education, migration, and youth participation. Moreover, international organisations support these social causes to sensitise people to awareness. Maitra, Shukla, Janjua, and Raja (2023) reinforced the implication of social media in sustaining renewable energy. They elaborated that to achieve sustainable storage of renewable energy, one has to adopt an all-inclusive approach with the participation of the entire world, as renewable energy sources are not limited to one state or country or region. The responsibility of engaging people is achieved innovatively by engaging people across the country. Social media is an important tool for incorporating responsible behaviour towards our planet. Social media also promotes 17 Sustainable development goals.

Non-profit organisations, i.e., Bibles for the world, American War Memorials Overseas and Green Cities Fund, voice their social awareness opinions. Social Problems such as corruption, poverty, gender inequality and climate change are prevalent in every country. In some countries, restrictions are posed on freedom of speech and religion. Therefore, social media is a primary and preferred tool for expressing opinions. In today's parlance, tourism councils assure to have their webpage on social media to reach a larger audience.

The global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is responsible for international sustainable travel and tourism standards. Its webpage can be followed and shared on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, and Pinterest platforms. Social Media platforms are a preferred tool for bringing up human rights topics for moderation. Human rights violations include violence against women, and girls' issues are represented by UN Women inviting tweets to address the silence of people.

Discussion: The findings from the literature review are discussed in the following paragraphs:

- Social media as a responsible communicator of sustainable green practices supported by Byrum (2019), Alexandrescu et.al, (2018), Carpenter et.al (2016), Kapoor et.al (2021), Sarkar, et.al,(2022).

- Government bodies are communicating sustainable tourism in different countries explored by Saufi et.al (2014), Ayuso, (2007), Dabphet et.al (2012) and Middleton & Hawkins (1998).

- The channels and influencer approach supported by Bhattacharya (2022) and Graci (2020).

- Process of tourism products being sold and used during different times, i.e. peak season or higher tourism probability in the touristic destination stated by Martine el.al, (2008), Sampol (1996) and Goodall (2013).

- Best utilisation of sustainable properties – which brands are getting more focus as supported by Manaktola and Jauhari (2007), Peršić (2009) and Cerchione and Bansal (2020

- The role of travel aggregators in promoting green certification of travel products, i.e., airlines, hotels and other sectors Davies & Cahill (2000) and Chan (2013).

- Availability of jobs in this sector, and use of social media for recruitment Ladkin and Buhalis (2016), Klavers (2022) and Madera (2012).

- The industry movement to Net-zero tourism supported by Jones (2023) and Scott (2021)

- New trends and settlers in the industry related to social media marketing as stated by Chatzigeorgiou (2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion: Social media is integral to our lives, and its significance cannot be undermined. Of late, social media is utilised for communicating the responsible values and ethics companies adopt. Firms must spend 2 percent of their net income on CSR practices. These practices portray companies' responsible and sustainable behaviour through active participation in citizens' welfare. Social media marketing plays a different role in various age generations. When people grow older, they reduce the use of social media in comparison to the younger generation as tested by Hysa et. al (2021). It was also stated by Szromac et. al, (2019) that social media marketing may also give ma negative impact on tourist destinations as many a time the destinations are overcrowded per the social media but in reality, it may be different as the tourists which must reach to the destination to visit the places does not reach to the places due to the negative impact of social media also supported by Sachin and Sengun (2015) and Duan et.al, (2016).

Due to the rising threat of global warming, creating a conducive environment with Net zero-emission has become the need of the hour. Changing climatic conditions have led to disruptive changes, and there is a constant fear of destruction caused due to the artificial environment of Air conditioners and Heaters. To overcome the challenges of climate change, Governments are constantly thrusting on new ideas, i.e., NetZero developing policies to fight climate change. WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) has collaborated with UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and Accenture to roadmap Net-Zero.

Climate change is a significant current and future challenge for Travel and Tourism worldwide, and stakeholder pressure is rising. Because of its global scope and its vast interlinkages with other sectors, travel executives can play an essential role in the fight against climate change. To address these challenges, WTTC, in collaboration with UNEP and Accenture, is excited to launch a Net Zero Roadmap for the Travel and Tourism sector.

Implications: This paper is based on the review of literature to investigate the importance of social media marketing in the hospitality industry. Social media plays a vital role to promote tourist destinations and inform the visitors about the availability of the places to

lodge. There are a few suggested implications of the study for theory/ theory development by the various brands; readers of various types of research; business and management practices.

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