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Perception and usage of digital media among travelers in Bangalore

Dr. T Aswathanarayana and Saritha B

Abstract

Through empirical study among travelers, residing in the Bangalore, this paper presents a comprehensive view of role and impact of digital media on the vacation planning process. Before, during and after the trip, providing insights on usage levels, scope of use, level of influence and trust. Findings suggest that digital media are predominantly used after holidays for experience sharing. It is also shown that there is a strong correlation between perceived level of influence from digital media and changes made in travel plans prior to final decisions. Moreover, it is revealed user generated content is perceived as more trustworthy when compared to travel agents and mass media advertising.

Keywords: digital media, travelers, travel plan, holidays

Introduction

Digital media is all about facilitating people to express and share ideas, thoughts, and opinions with others. It is also about enabling people to connect with others, like they were doing for the last thousands of years. However, what is of significance is that digital media: (a) removed spatial and time constraints that were inherent in traditional methods of communications; (b) provided online tools that enable one to many sharing of multimedia content; and (c) employ easy to use interfaces that enable even non-specialists to share and connect.

The rise of the Internet and the ongoing evolution of digital marketing have a profound effect on the tourism industry to such an extent that it has become by far the most important tool for any travel and tourism business. At the same time, businesses need to realize that they have far less control than ever before, since consumer-generated content has become one of the most significant trends of all. Thanks to the global and highly accessible medium that is the modern Web, consumers are able to leave reviews, post comments on social media and spread word about their experiences to an extent that was never possible before. This trend is particularly important in the travel and tourism industry, due to the fact that more and more people are turning to the Internet to find everything from destination guides to restaurant and hotel reviews.

The Internet plays an important role not only during the planning stage of a holiday abroad, but also during the holiday itself. Due to high use of mobile devices in the last few years, consumer's use their smart phones or tablet computers while exploring their destinations and seeking out local venues and travel tips. When they return home, they will likely leave reviews on popular websites such as tripadvisor.com and on various major booking engines such as Trivago or booking.com. In order for travel companies to hold on to existing customers and attract new ones, they need to work tirelessly to build and preserve their reputations.

Review of Literature

Literature to be reviewed encompasses all the material available in this field of study. For this study various sources such as books, articles, journals, research papers, e-resources, newspapers and magazines were reviewed.

Philip R. Kotler (*Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism, 2008*) - This book takes an innovative approach to discussing the major marketing decisions that hospitality managers

face in today’s global marketplace. It provides exercises to help you gain experience, while including updated material on social networking, database marketing and more.

According to Chekitan S. Dev (Hospitality Branding, 2012) building a viable brand is the key to success in the hospitality industry. It posits that brand should drive marketing strategy as the chief means of attracting customers. This book is research-based and combines cutting-edge trends with a look into the future of hospitality marketing as an industry.

Joseph Michelli (The New Gold Standard, 2008), this book is focused on creating a “legendary” customer experience based on the practices used by the Ritz-Carlton luxury hotel company. It teaches you how to meet all the needs of customers and introduces a variety of useful strategies for success.

C. Ryan (Tourism Management, 2016): This is the leading international journal for all those concerned with the planning and management of travel and tourism. Tourism comprises a multitude of activities which together form one of the world’s fastest growing international sectors. The journal takes an interdisciplinary approach and includes planning and policy aspects of international, national and regional tourism as well as specific management studies.

Objectives of the Study

- To find the travelers perception on digital media in Tourism sector.
- To identify the usage of digital media among travelers in tourism sector.

- To know the major source through which the travelers come to know about travel related products/services

Research Methodology

Primary Data for the study was obtained through questionnaires and interviews, wherein, travelers were elicited. Secondary Data was obtained from books, research papers, magazines, journals, newspapers, e-resources.

Scope of the Study: The respondents selected were all the travelers across Bangalore. This study focused on the analysis of the influence of digital media on travelers. The study attempted to elicit suggestions to enhance digital media.

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling and Anova, t-test method was used for selecting the sample for the study.

Sample Size: A sample of 80 respondents across Bangalore was taken as a representative for conducting the study. Data was collected by the use of a questionnaire through personal interviews and mail.

Plan of Analysis: The primary data collected from respondents was evaluated by using statistical tools such as Cronbach’s Alpha, Analysis of demographic variables (age, gender, residential location), t-test, Mean, Standard Deviation and Anova.

Analysis & Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile

		Count	Column N %
Gender	Male	31	38.8%
	Female	49	61.3%
Age of the Respondents	Below 20 Years	18	22.5%
	21-30 Years	30	37.5%
	31-40 years	22	27.5%
	more than 40 years	10	12.5%
Educational Qualification	High School and below	0	0.0%
	Diploma/UG	25	31.3%
	PG and Above	55	68.8%
Marital Status	Single	38	47.5%
	Married	42	52.5%
	Widowed/Divorced	0	0.0%
Family Income	Below 30,000	14	17.5%
	30,001-60,000	28	35.0%
	60,001-90,000	14	17.5%
	More than 90,000	24	30.0%

The above table1 represents the demographic profile of the respondents. It is found that, 61.3 percent of the respondents were female followed by 38.8 percent male among which 52.5 percent were married and 47.5 percent unmarried. Age wise classification shows that, 37.5 percent of the respondents were in the age group between 21-30 years followed by 27.5 percent between 31-40 years and 22.5 percent below 20 years of age. With respect to the

classification based on educational qualification, 68.8 percent holds a PG and more than PG degree followed by 31.3 percent of diploma or UG holders. With regard to income wise classification of the respondents, 35 percent of the respondent’s family income ranges between 30,001 to 60,000 followed by 30 percent of the respondents with more than 90,000 as family income and 17.5 percent with 60,001 to 90,000 and below 30,000.

Table 2: Preferred Source of information on Travel related products/services

		Count	Column N %
Friends and Relatives	Yes	75	93.8%
	No	5	6.3%
Travel agencies/Tour Operators	Yes	39	48.8%

Independent travel reviews and Blogs	No	41	51.3%
	Yes	30	37.5%
Social Networking sites like Facebook, Twitter etc.,	No	50	62.5%
	Yes	53	66.3%
Print media	No	27	33.8%
	Yes	37	46.3%
Others	No	43	53.8%
	Yes	37	46.3%

Table 2 infers to the travelers preferred source of information relating to travel related products and services. 93.8 percent of the travelers rely on the travel related information's provided by their friends and family members whereas, 66.3 percent use the information provided in Social

Networking sites like Facebook, Twitter etc., followed by 53.8 percent of other sources, 48.8 percent from Travel agencies/tour operators, 46.3 percent from print media and 37.5 percent from Independent travel reviews and Blogs.

Table 3: Digital media used for search on tourism products

		Count	Column N %
Social Media (Facebook, Whats app, Twitter etc.,)	Yes	63	78.8%
	No	17	21.3%
Search Marketing (Search Engines like Google, Yahoo etc.,)	Yes	57	71.3%
	No	23	28.8%
Travel Websites (Make My Trip, Yatra, travel guru etc.,)	Yes	43	53.8%
	No	37	46.3%
Mobile apps (Trivago, Google Trips, Trip Advisor etc.,)	Yes	30	37.5%
	No	50	62.5%

Table 3 refers to the classification of respondents based on their usage of digital media, in search of tourism products. It is found that, 78.8 percent of the respondents use Social media such as Facebook, Whats app, Twitter etc., in search of tourism related products followed by 71.3 percent using search marketing tools like Google, yahoo etc. It was also found that 53.8 percent of the respondents use Travel websites and 62.5 percent use mobile apps for their search relating to tourism product related information's.

getting quick replies on request ($M = 3.95, S.D = 0.761$), getting inputs from the personal experience of others ($M = 3.91, S.D = 0.732$), getting control over decision ($M = 3.89, S.D = 0.842$) and found digital media as convenient than visiting the outlets of travel agents ($M = 3.79, S.D = 0.924$) for getting information.

Table 4: Reason for using Digital Media for Travel related products/services

	Mean	S. D
It is reliable	4.24	.767
I can get quick replies on my request	3.95	.761
I can read about the personal experience of others	3.91	.732
Helps me to save my time	4.06	.769
It gives me greater control over my decision	3.89	.842
More convenient than visiting travel agent outlets	3.79	.924

Table 4 infers to the reason why travelers use digital media for Travel related products/services. From the mean score it was depicted that, majority of the travels felt digital media as reliable ($M = 4.24, S.D = 0.767$) followed by digital media's support in saving time ($M = 4.06, S. D = 0.769$),

Table 5: Predominant use of Digital Media by Travelers

	Mean	S.D
Before a trip to get information and opinion about an accommodation/destination	4.11	.646
During the trip to share information/pictures and/or opinion with your friends/family	4.05	.825
After the trip to write reviews /post pictures/share information's	3.49	.842

With respect to the predominant use of digital media by travelers, majority accepts that, they use digital media before a trip to get information and opinion about an accommodation/destination ($M = 4.11, S.D = 0.646$) followed by during a trip to share information/pictures and/or opinion with your friends/family ($M = 4.05, S.D = 0.825$) and After the trip to write reviews /post pictures/share information's ($M = 3.49, S.D = 0.842$).

Table 6: Independent sample t-test: Demographic variables with Reason for using Digital Media

		N	Mean	S. D	t-value	sig
Gender	Male	31	3.95	0.53	-0.35	0.73 ^{ns}
	Female	49	3.99	0.55		
Educational Qualification	Diploma/UG	25	4.00	0.48	0.30	0.76 ^{ns}
	PG and Above	55	3.96	0.57		
Marital Status	Single	38	3.95	0.50	-0.40	0.69 ^{ns}
	Married	42	4.00	0.58		

Note: NS represents not significant

H1: There is no significant difference in the opinion of travelers relating to reason for using digital media based on Gender.

Table 6 depicts the results relating to difference of opinion among the travelers based on their demographic profile relating to reasons for using digital media. Test results shows, there is no significant difference of opinion exists among the travelers based on gender, educational qualification and marital status at 5 % level of significance

Table 7: ANOVA- Educational Qualification with Reason for using Digital Media for Travel related products/services

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Diploma/UG	25	4.00	0.48	.090	.764 ^{ns}
PG and Above	55	3.96	0.57		
Total	80	3.97	0.54		

H2: There is no significant difference in the opinion of travelers relating to reason for using digital media based on Educational Qualification.

Analysis of variance test was administered to find whether travelers differ in their opinion towards using digital media for search of information on travel related product/services. The F value = 0.90 was not significant at 5 % level of significance stating that the travelers does not differ in their opinion based on educational qualification.

Discussion

The findings above indicate that more respondents are female. Among travelers majority of them fall under age group of 21-30 years. The finding also clarifies that majority of travelers preferred source of information is friends and social media. The finding also indicates the relationship between Digital Media and Travelers.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that digital marketing is inevitable for growth & prosperity of travel & tourism industry. It is one of the Industries that are largely affected by digital phenomenon. In order to attain competitive advantage, tourism players are going with implementing the latest technology and exploring the right way to reach potential travelers by customizing their offerings to specific requirements. In addition to contributing to increase in sales for the travel agents, it makes easy for travelers to decide and buy services online instantly. Digital marketing is not just limited to desktops or laptops. The use of mobile apps is on the rise because people need to be connected with all the time.

Recommendation

Getting into the space of digital marketing seem to be daunting, but over a period of time it gets easier to build customers and be able to make future marketing decisions on feedback collected. As part of marketing strategy, tourism service providers need to focus on making their niche place in the virtual space with their website and partnering with e-commerce aggregators. They have to optimize search engines, enhance user experience and take on to social media, email marketing and content marketing. Tourist service providers have to instantly address the comments/issues posted on Tripadvisor and other travel blogs. As the customers compare the information available on different e-commerce site with respective company website for authentication, an element of trust needs to be

developed. They have to ensure interaction with the customers is clear. The personal information of the customer has to be kept confidential to maintain higher levels of integrity. Ensure the terms & conditions and the policies are clear without and ambiguity. The power of digital communication has to be oriented towards tourism service standardization, understand customer needs better and create impact on purchase decision leading to increase in direct sales via e-commerce. E-tailers have to develop consistency, long- term commitment and have complete knowledge of target audience and an element of creativity to stand unique in the fast changing market place. Use of new tools, techniques and technology has to focus on promoting contents faster and easier which aids not only in sales but also in building the brand.

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