THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLATFORMS ON DECISION MAKING OF THE SOLO FEMALE TRAVELLING BEHAVIOR UNDER THE MODERATION OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

With the growth of technology, the Internet and social media have become an increasingly significant part of our lives; many people and many solo female travelers benefit from the Internet and social media channels in many ways while traveling; as tourism is one of the most closely related fields to the Internet, tourism businesses and travelers are now using social media platforms and networks to advertise and use tourism products and services.

Social media platforms channels play an essential role in solo female travelers' consumer decision making, especially that those travel businesses and agencies can reach more potential solo female travelers and clients in a shorter time and at lower cost by actively using and marketing on social media platforms; these travelers can make a judgment about their travel preferences or modify their thoughts after examining all of the commentson social media platforms reviews and rating;as social media responds to the social demands of large groups from many cultures and areas around the world, Social media platforms allow users, including solo female travelers, to share a wide range of information, images, videos, and textual comments on a variety of topics with others; Social media technologies are growing more significantly in the tourism industry.

This research examines the effect of social media on tourism by interviewing a sample of 40 solo female travelers and finds out the consumers' decision-making under the moderation of their culture as well as the possible links between getting traveling information from social media platforms, utilization of social media, the act of buying, influence, and intention to share holiday experiences on those social media.

Keywords: Solo Travel- Female Travelers- Social Media Platforms- Marketing – Culture

Introduction

The internet and social media platforms by solo female travelers spread daily. Numerous solo female travelers from different cultures benefit from the internet and social media platforms in different ways; solo female travelers' clients can share any data, photographs, videos, and comments around different travel experiences and issues. Social media platforms react to the social needs of these solo female travelers' societies and cultures as of the vast networks they cover. These social platforms are now used by international and domestic tourism businesses, hotels, and enterprises to sell and market their services and products on social media channels. The tourism industry is one of the most tangled industries with the Internet and social media.

This study highlights the essential impacts of social media platforms that solo female travelers use on their traveling decision-making process. Also, this study aims to identify the extent to which their culture affects these decisions, as women are more likely and easier to get what they want by using social networks nowadays.

The wave of change has accelerated in recent years thanks to a new wave of developments. The world of communication witnessed expanding Internet use in recent times. Many advantages, including accessible communication, have characterized the process of social communication, and the methods of communication, and low cost, but on the other hand, it has its downsides, as the Internet is a global system An open plan that connects about 731 countries around the world that differ in their cultures and laws, regulations, and even what It is considered acceptable in one culture may be unacceptable in another, so what is ethical in one society or culture may be seen in another as unethical. (Spenc. 2009)

The change in our life routine and society has increased the number of visitors traveling alone (Jordan and Gibson 2005; Brown and Osman 2017).

Background

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and travel blogs are examples of social media platforms substituting for conventional media tools such as radio, television, and daily papers. They have become more active for their solo female travelers' users in making their traveling discussions, choosing their traveling distention, choosing whether to travel alone or with a group through traveling agencies according to their culture.

Vocational travel was primarily reserved, most likely by males and a few noblewomen before the middle of the twenty-century (Harris & Wilson, 2007). Female travelers who traveled alone were seen unsuitable by society (Craik, 1997); in a few countries throughout the world where gender discrimination still exists, this impression appears to have continued to the present day.

During the Second World War, enormous societal transformations occurred, which resulted in shifting social situations and basic requirements for female travelers. As a result of capitalism, jobs, and greater access to education, In the 1970s, the female tourism industry began to grow in the west (Frohlick, 2013).

Female travelers who travel independently have achieved significant and impactful growth, according to Jordan and Aitchison (2008). The fast-growing international tourist business is seeing a rise in the number of such female travelers who travel independently have achieved considerable and impactful growth. Female travelers' consumption and contribution in tourism are also expanding, and they are currently thought to be a rising power in the tourism industry (Shaw, Henderson &Bialeschki, 2013). Because of this rise in female solo travel needs additional research to recognize this phenomenon better (Heimtun&Abelsen, 2013). These considerable habits are linked to population changes and greater independence, such as increasing single people, increased postponed marriage, rebel people, postponed marriage, and the number of– children marriages (Wilson & Harris, 2006).

Furthermore, Old-style family values have already shifted, cultural prospects of marriage and childbirth are no longer as important as they once were. Due to these transformations, women currently have access to a greater variety of resources and possibilities for leisure and travel. Exploration, social interaction, learning, and self-awareness are among the top priorities for single female travelers (Chiang, and Jogaratnam, 2006). These are explorers, not loners, who are daring, confident, and motivated. When a trip calls, they don't just sit around and wait for a trip chance from their family member or some friends (McNamara &Prideaux, 2010).

Many of our traditional modes of communication have been put to the test. They have been subjected to harsh experiences. The new modes of communication have emerged victorious cultural bias of the new generations and their enormous ability to communicate quickly and inexpensively with others. Social media plays a vital role in consolidating a new societal culture that relies on modern technology and the tremendous progress in communication between people. It has become a significant player, not only in the lives of individuals but also nations. There is no doubt that communication methods and patterns are an essential part of the culture of any culture. Modern means of communication have succeeded in establishing new ways of communicating between people so that traditional methods of communication suffer marginalization, especially among the new generations. Social media, which provide rich and varied contexts for interactional encounters and exchanges amongst increasingly interconnected networks of users, can then explain what happens with culture as a notion. (Burger, Thornborrow, & Fitzgerald, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Few researchers have observed the effect of social media platforms and culture on solo female traveling experiences (Chiang &Jogaratnam, 2006), such as the level of exposure and culture constraints or problems females face while traveling alone, and how those experiences enhance a solo female traveler's thinking and decisions.

Wilson and Harris (2006) conducted the most relevant research on how meaningful solo travel experiences helped women learn about themselves, increase self-empowerment, and broaden their networks. As a result, their sense of self was greatly enhanced, and their perspectives on life, society, and interpersonal relationships were positively influenced. Nevertheless, no research has examined the effect of solo travel experiences, such as solo travel exposure and solo travel restrictions, on personal growth and genuine personality. Experience, escape, relaxation, sociability, self-esteem (Chiang &Jogaratnam, 2006), self and identity development, self-empowerment, and other factors encourage women to travel alone and interconnect with others (Wilson & Harris, 2006).

In other words, by escaping the "ideal" world and immersing themselves in a completely new environment on their own, women presumably expect to improve their personal development (Michael, 2017), resulting in a boost in their authentic personality and, as a result, their self-esteem (Michael, 2017; Wood et al., 2008). Nevertheless, previous research has shown a variety of barriers that prevent women from traveling alone, including a fear of being dangerous, a lack of confidence, and social expectations (Wilson, 2004; Wilson & Little, 2005, 2008). Feminist academics, on the other hand, claimed that if women were able to overcome those limitations or hurdles to enjoy their solo travel experiences, they would be able to feel more empowered and flourish as individuals (Jordan & Gibson, 2005).

Significance of Study

Solo-female travel literature is rarer, and hence this study will focus on female solo travel experiences. Furthermore, this research was informed by literature from three different study areas: tourism (to investigate aspects of solo travel experiences), gender (to investigate the unique aspects of females), and culture studies .and thus could provoke theoretical and practical implications.

It is undeniable that women hold 5 percent of internet transactions (Enelow, 2017).of the top jobs in the world influence the tourism and travel industry. As a result of obtaining insight into female travel behaviors, tourism organizations and specialists may achieve a significant competitive advantage in Market share and competitive advantages.

This research will lay the groundwork for tourism-related businesses and travel agencies which use social media to promote for their trips to offer more meaningful solo female travel experiences that meet the requirements and desires of this rapidly growing and influential travel group. This research helped identify the types of social media platforms that could significantly positively impact solo female travelers. In addition, social media tourism experts can use the data to understand better how female solo travelers' self-perceptions are changing and adapt solutions to help solo female travelers develop their true personalities and self-esteem.

This study can add to the existing research domain about the impact of social media and cultures on solo female travelers traveling decisions. At the same time, previous research has examined female solo travel motivations (Chiang &Jogaratnam, 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006) and female solo travel constraints (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Wilson, 2004; Wilson & Little, 2005, 2008). Just a few studies look at solo travel experiences and how they affect travelers' self-perceptions studies on leisure, women, and gender account for just approximately 10% of all research studies (Henderson & Gibson, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

This research purposes of learning more about solo female travelers' consumer behavior through their use of social media information to travel solo, as well as their travel decision-making process on whether to travel alone or with a travel agency via the influence and the use of social media and their cultural effects on these decisions. This study intends to show that, regardless of their cultural background, solo female travelers may use social media as a basis of information at every stage of their trip decision-making and use social media information to carry out their travel activities at each step. This study will be researched how and why social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have become the internet portal for a large number of single female users to seek, exchange information, and communicate with one another.

Research Objectives and Questions

Regarding the increasing number of solo female travelers and the role of social media platforms in marketing travel destinations to them, the purposes of this study are to pinpoint the causes and motivations behind solo females who use the social media platforms on choosing to travel alone or to travel with travel agencies and also to define the restrictions associated with female solo travel and how do the social media helping them overcome these constraints and taking their traveling discussions.

The study will use an interview approach to examine the below research questions:

• Question 1: If social media affects the decision-making of female solo travelers under the moderation of the culture?

- Question 2: If social media encourages them to travel independently or join a tour group?
- Question 3: If their culture affects their choices traveling distention and traveling methods?
- Question 4: If the offers and promotions of traveling agencies on social media affect their discussions.

Literature review

Tourism is a promising business, and information on social media platforms is critical to its success. The way single female travelers use this information in their decision-making process has altered in recent years. The fast growth of information and communication technology, particularly in the tourism industry, was one of the most critical factors driving this transformation. It is primarily associated with this growth of social media becoming a Web 2.0 platform that allows users to interact.The study focuses on the intentions of solo female travelers, the restrictions they face while traveling, and the impact of social media platforms and culture on their decisions. Solo females are more interested in traveling alone nowadays than in the past; according to Booking.com, the reason can be the spread of social media and mobile phones, which provide these solo female travelers the capacity to contact friends and family gets to travel data from anywhere. Females had utilized social media to keep in touch with domestic areas, and 75 percent said social media made a difference and helped them discover the best places to eat or the best activities to do. The poll of women aged 25 to 45 who had traveled within the last year from the U.K., USA, Australia, Canada, Australia, and Germany was commissioned by online travel agency Booking.com and done by advertising research firm Vision Basic.

Tourism may be a sociocultural wonder, as travelers' encounters are affected by social powers, counting sexual orientation (Berdychevsky et al., 2013). Tourism stimulation is assumed to depend on gender, social population, and the foundation of males and females involved in tourism. Furthermore, because the needs of association in tourism are arbitrated by a few partners and stranded in gendered points of view, it is unique and crucial how traveler's culture sees female and male tourists (Frohlick, 2013).Generally, females dealt with sexual identity impediments in pursuing entertainment exercises. In the golden era of travel, females were unlikely to discover a way to travel during the nineteen-century (Harris & Wilson, 2007). Changes in female parts significantly impacted the travel platform in the 1970s; even though sellers and marketers haven't recognized their potential, open relaxation was still overwhelmingly male (Caruana, Crane & Fitchett, 2008).

Definition of Social Media

As they increase direct engagement between travel suppliers and clients, social media has shaped a modern exchange of debates regarding travel services, roads, trip ways routes, and areas

(Leung, Law, Van Foot &Buhalis, 2013). Texting messages provide a platform for travelers to share and expand feedback about their travel experiences as a powerful social tool for internet communication (Leung et al., 2013; Sigala, Christou &Gretzel, 2016). Social media is perceived as ground-breaking for sharing information since it permits travel shoppers to communicate, share, and connect with others (Oz, 2015; Sotiriadis, 2017). Interactions and opinions shared in the online community impact tourists' decisions and choices in every situation. According to the study, sharing personal experiences and surveys on social media is not detrimental; it has higher perceived reliability than traditional tourism data sources such as travel.

The term "social media" encompasses a wide range of terminology and definitions, many of which are interchangeable; as a result, some experts think that the term "social media" aspect of social media revolves around user engagement, collaboration, and content sharing. In brief, social media is a Web 2.0 which allows users to submit and share content with others. We can also define social media as an online medium used by people, including video, images, illustration, inscription, comics, ideas, gossip, news, etc. Such sources include forums, blogs, and social networks for content sharing.

Travel Social Media Platforms

There is no one way to define travel social media platforms. The most straightforward definition of this kind of social media platform is a platform that records genuine reports of a person traveling to a different destination to enlighten the audience about the many aspects of the location. When it comes to travel social media channels, the most popular ones are Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. They frequently contain features, images, information on places, people, activities, news, and advice connected to the issue under discussion.

Importance of Travel Media Platform

Unlike traditional journalism, travel social media platforms focus on objective reporting and stick to the regular news concerning war, disasters, and political events. They undoubtedly operate on a 24-hour basis. Travel social media networks take a more subjective approach to eliciting the facts of daily life while away from home. It aims to uncover commonality amongst humans while also looking into cultural distinctions. It is one reason why travel social media platforms are vital. They provide people with a method to learn about the accurate depiction of different cultures, which is even more vital in globalization and global issues.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is qualitative. The phenomenon of solo female travelers using social media in travel decision-making has been chosen as the topic of the study

interviews were selected for gathering information about solo female travelers' experiences

because they allow for the investigation of experiences, cultural differences, intentions, and perspectives and the ability to see the world through the eyes of others. Participants' culture, motivation for solo travel, feelings about their solo tours, and interaction at their destinations will be discussed in a semi-structured interview. As a result, the interview will cover the following topics: the culture of the participants, the reasons for solo travel, the emotions and the feelings they have in the journeys, and their interactions at their destinations. The researcher will be open and flexible while interviewing, utilizing questions to encourage respondents to reveal more information.

Population and Sample Size

The targeted population of this study consists of 40 solo female traveler users and members of social media platforms, and the sampling standards are as follows: Participants should be female travelers who have traveled solo or are thinking of traveling abroad for leisure and other traveling purposes.The solo female travelers are from two different cultures west and east.

There are divided into two groups as follow:

- Twenty Western solo female travelersdivided into two categories:
  - ❖ Ten Females that would prefer to travel alone
  - ❖ Ten Females would prefer to travel with a travel agency
- Twenty Eastern solo female travelers divided into two categories:
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  - ❖ Ten females would prefer to travel with a travel agency.

Table 1: Table showing Solo female travelers' participant information:

Ten western female travelers who would prefer to travel with traveling agencies.						
Pseudonym	Age	Education:	Nationality	Who does she Live With?		Job Position

| Andreea	26	B.A. in English Language and Literature	Romanian	Alone	Homeroom teacher she international School
Anesa	21	College of Staten Island (Bachelors in Psychology)	Albanian	Mot her, father, brother	Student
Angela	47	Doctorate Candidate	American	Spouse	Professor for ELL and Family Court Mediator
Cong	31	BSC Nursing From Mcgill University	Canadian	With Roommates	Nurse
Emma	41	Master degree	American	Alone	Retail experience strategy
Evelyn	25	B.A	American	mother and brother	Insurance claim processor
Ilaeira	22	English Literature	Cypriote	Parents	Unemployed, applying for further studies
Jelena	35	Art historian/ tour guide	Serbian	boyfriend	Freelance tour guide
Megan	33	Bachelors Degree Journalism & Laws	Australian	Husband	content creator
Winsome	55	Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Education, HDE, and TESOL	South Africa	With a close female friend	International English Teacher
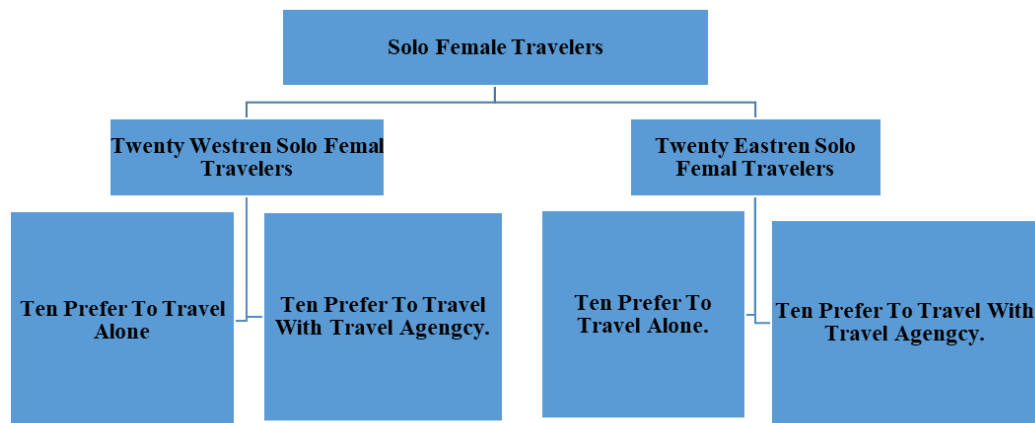
Figure.1 The targeted population of this study consists of 40 solo female traveler

Age, education, marital status, and employment were found to have a significant impact on how solo female travelers use social media pages before and after visiting a destination, solo female travelers who vacationed overseas were more interested in destinations on social media platforms before and after their travels than those who vacationed locally, they were also more interested in writing and reading comments on social media sites about the location, below is table 1 with all participants' information.

CONCLUSION

As previously indicated in this research paper, traveling social media platforms have considerably contributed to the tourist business. Travel writers do more than just review places, hotels, and tourist attractions, and they delve further into society, highlighting aspects that the audience may or may not find interesting.

Solo female travelers that utilize travel social media platforms get a lot of their information from websites like travel blogs, social media platforms, and travel portals. When asked what criteria affected their choice of vacation site, the most prevalent response was safety.

Women's safety is a top consideration for lone female travelers in that location, the importance of safe housing and a convenient commute cannot be overstated.

Choosing a vacation spot is one of the things female solo travelers would like influencers to think about when researching and writing about a trip. In contrast, most travel influencers or bloggers tell, and films do justice to the destinations they portray in terms of beauty and charm; the pieces are primarily aimed at promoting tourism; according to the respondent's influencers are of potential risks.The ability to engage with local people and learn about different cultures and the freedom and flexibility, self-empowerment and independence and exploration, Jordan

and Gibson (2005) and Bianchi (20116) discovered that women travel alone for various reasons, including freedom and self-development. The study's participants are all young women inspired to travel alone by ideas of independence, autonomy, and curiosity about the globe.

Solo travel was portrayed as a journey of self-discovery on the inside. It was also crucial to maintain social connections with locals and other single travelers, allowing cultural exchange and new friendships. According to Murphy (2001), social connection is a primary reason for solitary travel and an important part of the alone experience.This study adds to the current body of literature on solo female travel by drawing on the experiences of a unique sample of solo female travelers. According to our research, even modern women with a high level of education and freedom are influenced by history and culture, which accompanies them on their travels and gives them a sense of diminished self-worth. It's worth mentioning that a tourist's experience and relationship with a destination may be influenced by cultural baggage, and this is a notion that should be researched further in the future.\

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