



ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING TOURISM IN BALOCHISTAN

Dawood Shah Tareen^{1*}  | Dr. Rana Saba Sultan² 

Abstract

Tourism is the key pillar of economy for many countries like Switzerland, Dubai and Pakistan is no exception. Pakistan has the world best tourist destinations. Balochistan is blessed with variety of tourist attractions which includes mountains, beaches, deserts, religious, cultural, archeological and forest sites. Unfortunately, Balochistan is facing two key hurdles in order to attract local and international tourists. The first hurdle is, its hidden and scenic beauty is not projected the way it requires to be and second, the fragile security situation of the province is preventing the tourist industry of the province to blossom to the maximum potential. Balochistan tourist industry has the potential to support the fragile economy of the country provided that Social Media platform is used effectively to attract tourists. Tourist promotion pages exist on different social media platforms providing visual information about various tourist sites of the province. Official pages of the Tourism department, Govt. of Blochistan can be launched on different social media sites to highlight the tourist destinations in an effective way. This research is aimed to highlight the role of social media for promotion of tourism in Balochistan.

Keywords: *Tourism, economy, social media, tourism visuals, planning, tourist destinations*

Author's Affiliation:


Institution: University of Karachi¹⁻²

Country: Pakistan

Corresponding Author's Email: *oscqta@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

This research study highlights the role of social media in promotion of tourism in Balochistan. The key purpose of this research is to know the role of social media in promoting tourism in Balochistan. The usage of social media has enhanced unexpectedly in recent years. 3.2 billion Social media users are expected by 2021 as compared to 1.22 billion users in 2011 (Roberta Minazzi, 2015). The key purpose of this study is to find either tourists or tourist companies in any way benefit from social media when it comes to choose tourist spots in Balochistan. The province has huge potential in the tourism industry due to its flora and fauna, unique geographical sites and diversity of climates. The 700 km long coastal line of the province has great tourist and economic potential provided it is developed in a systematic way (Arshad, M.A, 2017). According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2019 tourism industry gained a growth rate of 3.5%. Forb's Magazine (2018) has declared Pakistan among world's top ten most attractive tourist destinations. Social media is playing an effective role in the growth of tourism industry in Balochistan. Social media is an integral part of people's daily life routine and the marketing, publicity of tourism globally as well as regionally is now preferred more through it.

Unfortunately, hard image is associated with Balochistan due to its unsafe geographical location and long border it shares with war torn Afghanistan and Iran. The 9/11 incident and US attack on Afghanistan badly affected the tourism industry in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular. Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan witnessed worse ethnic and sectarian violence in the last two decades (T.A.Heathcote, 2016). In the Netflix show Bard of Blood, the city of Quetta which is a potential tourist destination in Balochistan, is labeled as an epi center of terrorism. The unfortunate incident of 8th August, 2016 in which dozens of lawyers lost their lives as a result of terrorist attack. As a result of these unfortunate incidents, the tourists visit to Balochistan came to halt. In a nut shell, it can be summed up that the wave of terrorist activities in the region lead to a very negative image of the Balochistan on national, regional and international level and tourists hesitated to visit Balochistan.

Tourism industry in Balochistan is taking full advantage of prospering and diverse social media platforms. Travel blogs, documentaries, visuals and opinions of tourists are spread with in a span of no time to every corner of the globe. Social media has emerged as an effective and cost efficient tool for tourism promotion and as a result, the dependency of tourism industry is enhancing more and more on social media. (Marianna Siagala , Marianna Sigala , Evangelos & Ulrike 2012)

Moreover Balochistan offers wide range of tourist opportunities which includes eco-tourism, religious tourism, archeological tourism and cultural tourism. Increased number of tourist visit to Balochistan would improve the security and socio-economic parameters of the province. Increased job opportunities in tourism industry means rooting out poverty and encourage economic growth. Social media in providing opportunity to both private and public sectors to join together hands for promotion and development of tourism in Balochistan. The public and private partnership with the effective use of social media can boost tourism in Balochistan

to new horizon. Social media plays an immense role when it comes to the marketing of tourism. The tourist companies and tour operators are using social media very effectively and thus getting success in convening tourists to visit Balochistan despite security hurdle. The coastal belt of Balochistan is attracting immense number of tourists and the hard image of Balochistan is slowly fading out. (Dashti, 2016)

The Balochistan tourism industry restored its breath after a long span of war on terror. Balochistan received attention of international vloggers and bloggers .The Balochistan tourism industry is badly affected by the CoVid 19. The tourists decided to cancel their trips as the news of CoVid 19 emerged out. As a result of trip cancellation, the hotel reservation cancellation and refund of tickets affected tourist business. All this created negative impact on the tourist guides, street vendors and everyone associated with tourism industry. (Buledi,Z.A, 2020)

Another key hurdle in revival and promotion of tourism industry in Balochistan is poor tourism infrastructure. There is acute shortage of tourist facilities, hotels, rest houses and proper road network. Take the example of Zairat, which is famous picnic spot due to juniper forests and residency of Founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhamamd Ali Jinnah. Unfortunately the unavailability of Sui Gas in winter season make it hard for the tourists to stay at night due to sever cold temperature. The olive forests and Koh-e-Suleman range in Zhob district takes more than one day to reach the destination due to no proper road network and lack of rest houses. Similarly the coastal belt of Balochistan needs proper rest houses, restaurants and facilities of similar nature. The development of tourism infrastructure will make Balochistan the best tourist destination in the country. (Fazal Haider, 2019)

The China-Pakistan economic corridor has both pros and cons for the tourism industry of Balochistan. The pros includes highlighting Balochistan as an attractive tourist site for international tourists, since Gwadar is the epi center of the corridor. Since the corridor also caused many security issues in the region and the South belt of Balochistan in particular is in gulf of violence. The attacks on the security forces and state installments cause serious security concern among both domestic and international tourists. There is no concept of tourism without peace and security. The role of social media is of vital importance in projecting real and on ground situation to the international community. There is no denial that security issue does exist in Balochistan but the situation is not as alarming the way it is projected in the mainstream media. (Reema Shoukat, 2020)

Public and private partnership is very essential to revive and promote tourism industry of Balochistan. Social media is an effective tool to attract investors. Since Balochistan is the least developed province when it comes to the infrastructure development. There is huge potential for private investment in the tourism industry of Balochistan. A smart and wise marketing strategy through social media for promotion of Balochistan tourist spots can attract private investment. Balochistan tourism industry can provide oxygen to the fragile economy of the country provided the entrepreneurial opportunities are availed to the maximum.(Kamal, 2020)

The digital mapping of tourist sites of Balochistan and developing an app which can provide necessary tourist information can enhance the role of social media in promoting tourism in Balochistan. Balochistan is home of cultural, religious, eco, archeological, historical and coastal tourism. Ensuring tourism infrastructure development, countering insecurity propaganda effectively through the platform of social media will pave way for promotion of tourism in Balochistan. (Asghar Harifal, 2020) Since marketing is an essential tool to attract tourists and social media is the best tool to effectively market the tourist sites of Balochistan. The purpose of this study is to highlight the influence of social media in influencing people's choice in selecting tourist destinations in Balochistan.

Since this research is intended to highlight the role of social media in promoting tourism in Balochistan. It will also explore the different dimensions of social media as a source of tourist information and a tool for tour planning and a medium of sharing personal moments of travel with friends, family members and social media fans and follows to inspire them as potential tourists. Promotion of tourism in Balochistan through social media can help in improving the fragile economy, create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for general public in general and youth in particular. This can be done through creating short film, photographs, blogs and v logs. Thanks to the internet and social media apps which helps in easy propagation of tourist spots of Balochistan. Another good aspect of social media use by tourist passionate is to highlight and explore hidden and unexplored tourist sites which otherwise would never be possible to promote through mainstream media

Research Objectives

To study and analyze social media role in tourism promotion in Balochistan.

Research Questions

1. Do social media provide sufficient information to tourists interested in visiting Balochistan?
2. In what ways social media help tourists to plan their tour?
3. In what ways social media help travelers inspire interested tourists to plan their own trip?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow (1943) though Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation is not directly related to tourism but since its focus is on general human needs which includes travelling. It can be concluded on the basis of this theory that motivation is a key factor that helps in reaching out to decision in any field of life. Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1990) states that their exists three phases in any tourist's decision making process and these stage ae pre tour, during tour and post tour. The role of social media is of critical importance in these three stages. Torres (2010) states that 87% tourists use internet to plan their tour. Roberta Minazzi (2015) in "Social Media Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality" states that social media means

websites and apps that allow its users to communicate and get in touch with people. It provides an opportunity to interact, share information, ideas, express feelings via virtual websites. Social media exist in various forms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp etc. which are very popular among people for personal as well as business marketing. Donald G. Ried (2003) states that social media and tourism co-exist with each other. Passionate tourists update themselves about their favorite destinations through social media which includes accommodation, mode of transportation and cellular network facilities etc. There is no denying of the fact that social media is one of the most effective tourist marketing tool due to its easy access and availability. Social media users can share the visuals and in person experience of their favorite places with in a no time span with fans, followers, and friends. Social media has digitalized the tourist industry. Social media has revolutionized the tourism industry in the sense that every detail about any tourist spot is now at the finger tip of every person.

Though there is no universal definition of tourism due to its complex nature and attribute. However the World Trade Organization (WTO) and United States Nations Statistics Division (UN) (1994) define that in order to qualify to the category of tourist, one has to travel and remain in a place outside of usual residential environment for not more than a year either for spending free time, business or similar other purposes. Tourism has emerged itself as one of the prominent, leading and diverse industry in the world since past decades. According to World Tourism Organization, 5 billion international tourists were recorded in the year 2019. The rise of tourism is directly proportional to the rise of many other sub sectors which includes hoteling, tourist and tour guides, transportation, food and similar other industries. Though in the current COVID-19 situation, tourism industry has declined but it is reviving with the normalization of the pandemic situation. Tourism is an effective source of creating economic and employment opportunities. Balochistan has significant strategic as well as tourism potential. It has panoramic sites, 1100 km eye inviting coastline, historic castles, world oldest juniper forests, diverse flora and fauna, 9000 years old Mehrgarh civilization and beautiful heritage sites. These sites attract thousands of domestic as well as international tourists annually. The tourist industry of Balochistan is in transition and flourishing stage due to improved security situation. Harifal (2020) The government of Balochistan is putting efforts through Directorate of Tourism to improve road infrastructure, building tourist resorts at beaches and providing basic facilities at key tourist sites of the province through public and private joint venture. The efforts of law enforcement agencies cannot be ignored who worked day and night to improve security situation which helped to revive back the tourist industry of the province. Elvis Madonodo (2016) defines social media as online technologies and practices that allow its users to share and create opinions, practices with friends, family members and fellows. Social media networking sites allow virtual communication of ideas, thoughts, beliefs and information with each other. According to Axel Schultze (2012), social Media is the collection of tools and online virtual spaces which enables individuals and business communities to enhance their information and communication needs. Social media exist in various forms and features.

According to Hameed, Yousaf Ali and Amin Ullah Khan (2020) when it comes to

tourism in less developed province like Balochistan, the hidden beauty and soft image of the province is not projected the way it should be. The young generation of the province is struggling at their own to promote the hidden beauty of the province through pictures, documentaries, Vlogs and blogs. Even youth from other provinces of the country share their experience of travelling and tourism in Balochistan in a creative way through social media platforms. The availability of smartphone with speedy internet connections enable them to share live experience with audience which creates enthusiasm and passion among the tourists. Many youth have created Youtube channels, where they share videos and documentaries regarding tourist sites of Balochistan. These social media sites are source of income as the channels pay them according to the number of subscribers and viewership while on the other hand the tourist companies also pay them for the promotion of their cause. The availability of smartphones has facilitated the usage of social media sites. The camera, internet and social media apps, music, editing are all available in a palm of hand. Within split of seconds, you are connected to the globe. This easy access and use of social media has encourage more and more tourism passionate youth to create their own social media pages. These specific social media pages provide information on every aspect of tourist site ranging from mode of transportation available, rest house facilities to mapping of sites. Currently Facebook is the most popular social media site among all kind of Population in Balochistan. There are an estimated 37.00 million social media users in Pakistan in January 2020. Facebook is top of the list with 92.67%, Twitter 3.9%, Instagram 1.07% while You tube stands at 0.92%. Social media being communicative in nature is an effective tourism marketing tool in the province. Despite having potential tourist destinations tourism in Baluchistan is not a very thriving industry mainly due to lack of infrastructures and security issues. There are negligible tourist facilities in the region and the lack of telecommunications services make it unfavorable for travel. Security concern is another big issue especially for international tourists because of the region bordering with Iran and Afghanistan.

Tourism

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The rise of tourism is directly proportional to the rise of many other sub sectors which includes hoteling, tourist and tour guides , transportation, food and similar other industries. Though in the current COVID-19 situation, tourism industry has declined but it is reviving with the normalization of the pandemic situation. Tourism is an effective source of creating economic and employment

opportunities.

Balochistan Tourism Industry

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Social Media

Social media can be defined as online technologies and practices that allow its users to share and create opinions, practices with friends, family members and fellows. Social media networking sites allow virtual communication of ideas, thoughts, beliefs and information with each other. According to Axel Schultze, Social Media is the collection of tools and online virtual spaces which enables individuals and business communities to enhance their information and communication needs. Social media exist in various forms and features.

Social Media Networking Sites

According to Universal McCann 2008 the key social platforms are:



Source: Universal McCann Companies Study on Social Media Trends (March 2008)

FIGURE 1: Key social platforms (Universal McCann 2008)

Some currently in-use famous social networks are:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Snapchat Twitter
- Tiktok
- WhatsApp

When it comes to tourism in less developed province like Balochistan, the hidden beauty and soft image of the province is not projected the way it should be. The young generation of the province is struggling at their own to promote the hidden beauty of the province through pictures, documentaries, Vlogs and blogs. Even youth from other provinces of the country share their experience of travelling and tourism in Balochistan in a creative way through social media platforms. The availability of smartphone with speedy internet connections enable them to share live experience with audience which creates enthusiasm and passion among the tourists. Many youth have created Youtube channels, where they share videos and documentaries regarding tourist sites of Balochistan. These social media sites are source of income as the channels pay them according to the number of subscribers and viewership while on the other hand the tourist companies also pay them for the promotion of their cause. The availability of smartphones has facilitated the usage of social media sites. The camera, internet and social media apps, music, editing are all available in a palm of hand. Within split of seconds, you are connected to the globe. This easy access and use of social media has encourage more and more tourism passionate youth to create their own social media pages. These specific social media pages provide information on every aspect of tourist site ranging from mode of transportation available, rest house facilities to mapping of sites. Currently Facebook is the most popular social media site among all kind of Population in Balochistan. There are an estimated 37.00 million social media users in Pakistan in January 2020. Facebook is top of the list with 92.67%, Twitter 3.9%, Instagram 1.07% while Youtube stands at 0.92%. Social media being communicative in nature is an effective tourism marketing tool in the province.

Social Media role in promotion of Tourism Industry

The advancement of social media technology has transformed the way of tourism promotion. Traditional method of marketing and publicity has been replaced by social media online marketing. In current 21st century, social media has emerged as the most effective tool of tourism in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular. It has changed the dynamics and landscape of tourism. Majority of tourists decide their favorite tourist destination based on the basis of social media rating and reviews. The significant role of social media cannot be denied in terms of decision making behavior. Social media has ensured two ways of communication in the tourism industry as it allows tourists to share their feedback and opinion regarding tourist sites and services provided. Youth in particular consider social media as an important tool for tourism marketing.

Social Media role in Tourism Marketing

Social media has created new horizon in tourism marketing. Social media sites are now more reliable sites for travelers and explorers to gather information for their potential tour by analyzing the comments, videos and visuals on the site.

Marketing can be defined as “The business of promotion and selling out products and services which includes market research and advertisement. Marketing is in fact an attempt to understand the psyche of a customer. It is feeding the product or service in the subconscious mind of the customer. The intended product becomes the automatic choice of the customer. “Seven P Formula” better describe the marketing concepts which are: product, price, place, promotion, packaging, positioning and people. The dependency of tourists on social media has enhanced. The traditional means of communication, marketing and messages has changed dramatically due to rapid emergence of social media. The survival of tourism in current ear is possible by adopting smart marketing techniques through the medium of social media as it is very effective in creating sense of satisfaction among tourists.

Tourist Operators and Social Media

Tourist operators are aware of the fact that traditional marketing techniques no more effective in current era so social media strategy took advantage of the edge available to it. Social media platforms has proved it selves as the most effective and efficient source of tourism promotion. The “four pillars theory of social media strategy in marketing” has four components which are : communication, collaboration, education and entertainment.

Social media role in organizing trip

The collaboration of social media with tourism industry has changed the concept of traditional methods of organizing a trip. Social media effect the conscious and sub conscious behavior of customers ranging from deciding trip venue, mode of transportation, exploring experience of other tourists to the destined site. Social media is not only a source of well facilitated communication but also effectively affect the opinion of tourists through different forms of visuals. Since seeing is believing and these visuals communication gives edge to the social media in tourism industry. Waxer is of the opinion that a trend has emerged in recent years where tourists frequently consult social media platforms to find out information about hotels, read out comments of the previous visitors and form their opinion.

Social Media role in providing information to tourists

Social media is a reliable source of knowledge for tourists and has the capacity to influence the decision making process while planning to plan a tour. Since most tourists share original pictures and videos of their favorite tourist site and their for it is considered more reliable and trustworthy. Tourist can gather any kind of information regarding tourist site from social media within a short span of time. The role of social media in tourist industry has enhanced to such a great extent that no research in tourism and hospitality industry is possible without taking in account

the importance and role of social media in it.

Social media role in influencing Tourists's decision

Social media plays a key fundamental role in changing the tourist's decision making capability. The social media feeds the choice in the sub conscious mind which later on becomes the automatic choice of the tourist. Thanks to the availability of the latest communication technology which enables the tourist to share any kind of visual information globally within in a splits of seconds.

Two way communications exist between social media and tourists in the sense that tourist's pictures, videos along with feedback, comments of the audience are available to the potential tourists at one hand while tourist companies inform and educate potential future tourists in order to reach out to final selection of the tourist site. Social media is in easy reach of tourists and provide an instant way of communication. Though there are other ways and means of communication available to the tourists but social media is the best recommended one for the tourists to search and share information with the audience. Trust play an important role in tourist's choice of selecting a site and the tourists have the facility to obtain instant and live feedback from other tourists through social and mini blog platforms of social media. Both general and particular information about hotels, food points, specific tourist spots, transportation, internet facility etc. are available on various social media platforms where tourist check the reviews of the audience before reaching any final decision. The advantage social media has print and electronic media is that it helps the tourists to discover new emerging trends and in turn provides more information within a short span of time.

Role of social media to motivate tourists

Social media plays an influential role to inspire and motivate tourists to plan their tour based on the following process:
Reviews and Comments of Visitors

The comments and reviews of the tourists on the visuals shared on social media are considered an authentic source of information as compared to any other conventional sources of information. The more impactful visuals social media offers to the potential tourists in order to help them to reach an accurate decision while choosing best available tourist sites.

Trend of sharing pictures on Social Media

The trend of sharing visuals of personal trip on social media is very common. It has become an acceptable norm to share photos online with friends and followers on the social media and getting feedback and reviews from the social media users. More preferred social media sites for sharing photos are WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. The choice of selecting tourist sites for future tours depends on the reviews and comments of the users. Pictures speak loudly regarding beauty

of the tourist spot. The most likes, comments and reviews photos get, the more it influences the decision process while planning for a tour.

Research Methodology




The chapter explains in depth the research methodology adopted for the study. The study was descriptive in nature and quantitative method of research was applied. The target group for data collection was restricted to the social media users while samples selected for the study were WhatsApp public groups' members and Facebook tourist groups and pages members. Twenty five close ended questions with pre- designed answers were part of the questionnaire.

Since an efficient and effective way of collecting data from diverse respondents is questionnaire and there for online questionnaire was used as a tool for primary data collection. Google Forms were used to develop questionnaire.




The method for data collection was online. The links of the questionnaire were shared on WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages. The questionnaire was filled by the members of public WhatsApp groups and Tourist Facebook pages members. 200 participants filled out the questionnaire. Random sampling technique worked out in this scenario keeping in mind the availability and volunteerism of the members. Google Forms systematically analyzed and collected data.



Findings



The data was expressed statistically and automatically in the form of bar-graphs and pie-charts while highlighting percentages responses of respondents to each question. The analysis of data collection was done on the basis of research questions. The following research questions were designed and the responses to these questions are below:



Questions	N	Response in %age	Pie Chart
Do you travel?	132	Yes (68%) No (32%)	<p>Traveling</p>  <p>■ Yes ■ No</p>
On which occasion you prefer to travel?	135	Vocations (24%) Business (18%) Tourism (37%) Family commitment (20%) Any Other	<p>Occasions</p>  <p>■ Vocations ■ Business ■ Tourism ■ Family Commt. ■ Any Other</p>
What is the nature of your traveling?	133	Local (36%) National (44%) International (20%)	<p>Nature of Travel</p>  <p>■ Local ■ National ■ Int.</p>



With whom you prefer to travel?	134	<p>Friends (62%)</p> <p>Family (21%)</p> <p>Alone (8%)</p> <p>Any Other (9%)</p>	<p>Travelling Preference</p> <p>■ Friends ■ Family ■ Alone ■ Any oth.</p>
Have you ever travelled to Balochistan?	135	<p>Yes (77%)</p> <p>No (23%)</p>	<p>Balochistan Travelling</p> <p>■ Yes ■ No</p>
If yes, which medium inspired you to visit Balochistan?	131	<p>Print Media (29%)</p> <p>Electronic Media (35%)</p> <p>Social Media (32%)</p> <p>Any Other (4%)</p>	<p>Media Medium Inspiration</p> <p>■ Print Media ■ Electronic Media ■ Social Media ■ Others</p>



Which tourist spots became your favorite due to visuals available on social media?	134	Archeological Sites (21%) Coastal Sites (27%) Historical Sites (25%) Religious Sites (12%) Cultural Sites (8%) Any Other (7%)	<p>Tourists Spots</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archeological sites Coastal sites Historical sites Cultural sites Any other
Do you think scenic view mater while planning out your tourist tour to Balochistan?	133	Yes (45%) No (23%) To Some Extent (32%)	<p>Scenic view</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No To some extent
How frequently do you visit social media to find out tourism information in Balochistan?	136	Always (22%) Mostly (17%) Occasionally (24%) Rarely (30%) Never (7%)	<p>Social Media Visit</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always Mostly Occasionally Rarely Never



Which social media accounts do you operate?	134	<p>Facebook (33%)</p> <p>Instagram (7%)</p> <p>Snapchat (8%)</p> <p>Twitter (11%)</p> <p>Tiktok (11%)</p> <p>WhatsApp (18%)</p> <p>YouTube Channel (8%)</p> <p>Any Other (4%)</p>	<p>Social Media Accounts</p>  <p>Facebook Instagram</p> <p>Snapchat Twitter</p> <p>Tiktok WhatsApp</p> <p>YouTube Any Other</p>
Do tourist social media pages influence your choice of trip destination to Balochistan?	135	<p>Highly influential (34%)</p> <p>Very influential (26%)</p> <p>Somewhat influential (12%)</p> <p>Slightly influential (16%)</p> <p>No Influence at all (12%)</p>	<p>Social Media pages influence</p>  <p>Highly influential</p> <p>Very influential</p> <p>Somewhat influent.</p> <p>Slightly influential</p> <p>No influence at all</p>



<p>Do you consult social media to find out tourist information about Balochistan?</p>	<p>131</p>	<p>Very Frequently (14%)</p> <p>Frequently (35%)</p> <p>Occasionally (19%)</p> <p>Rarely (18%)</p> <p>Never (14%)</p>	<p>Information about Balochistan</p>  <p>■ Very frequently</p> <p>■ Frequently</p> <p>■ Occasionally</p> <p>■ Rarely</p> <p>■ Never</p>
<p>Do you consult social media to find out affordability of trip to Balochistan?</p>	<p>134</p>	<p>Always (19%)</p> <p>Mostly (16%)</p> <p>Occasionally (38%)</p> <p>Rarely (22%)</p> <p>Never (5%)</p>	<p>Affordability of trip</p>  <p>■ Always</p> <p>■ Mostly</p> <p>■ Occasionally</p> <p>■ Rarely</p> <p>■ Never</p>



<p>Do you consider the information provided by social media authentic about tourism in Balochistan?</p>	131	<p>Yes (28%)</p> <p>No (39%)</p> <p>To some extent (33%)</p>	<p>Information authenticity</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p> <p>■ To some extent</p>
<p>Do you counter check Balochistan tourism related information available on social media?</p>	134	<p>Yes (25%)</p> <p>No (32%)</p> <p>To some extent (43%)</p>	<p>Counter check of Information</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p> <p>■ To some extent</p>

Do social media help tourists to cut down the traveling expenses by providing accurate information?	137	<p>Always (12%)</p> <p>Often (32%)</p> <p>Sometimes (23%)</p> <p>Seldom (18%)</p> <p>Never (15%)</p>	<p>Expenses cut down</p>  <p>Legend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always Often Sometimes Seldom Never
Do you consult social media to find out security situation near tourist spots of Balochistan?	133	<p>Always (16%)</p> <p>Mostly (28%)</p> <p>Occasionally (33%)</p> <p>Rarely (12%)</p> <p>Never (11%)</p>	<p>Security situation</p>  <p>Legend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always Mostly Occasionally Rarely Never

<p>Have you ever changed your current trip plan as a result of Balochistan security situation due to information provided by social media?</p>	132	<p>Yes (38%)</p> <p>No (26%)</p> <p>Sometimes (36%)</p>	<p>Change of trip due to security</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p> <p>■ Sometimes</p>
<p>Do tourist visuals available on social media play key role to finalize your tip to Balochistan?</p>	134	<p>Yes (37%)</p> <p>No (22%)</p> <p>To some extent (41%)</p>	<p>Tourist visuals</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p> <p>■ To some extent</p>

<p>Do you get feedback on the tourism related posts shared via social media?</p>	133	<p>Very Frequently (25%)</p> <p>Frequently (32%)</p> <p>Occasionally (18%)</p> <p>Rarely (14%)</p> <p>Never (11%)</p>	<p>Feedback</p>  <p>■ Very frequently ■ Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never</p>
<p>Do you think tourist companies' social media pages provide reliable information about tourism in Balochistan?</p>	138	<p>Yes (44%)</p> <p>No (26%)</p> <p>To some extent (30%)</p>	<p>Information reliability</p>  <p>■ Yes ■ No ■ To some extent</p>

<p>How much impact social media has created to promote tourism in Balochistan?</p>	<p>135</p>	<p>Major impact (27%)</p> <p>Moderate impact (18%)</p> <p>Neutral impact (22%)</p> <p>Minor impact (13%)</p> <p>No impact (20%)</p>	<p>Promotion of tourism</p>  <p>■ Major impact</p> <p>■ Moderate impact</p> <p>■ Neutral impact</p> <p>■ Minor impact</p> <p>■ No impact</p>
<p>Do you agree Balochistan Tourism Department should appreciate social media enthusiast's role to promote tourism?</p>	<p>134</p>	<p>Yes (47%)</p> <p>No (8%)</p> <p>To some extent (45%)</p>	<p>Social media enthusiast</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p> <p>■ To some extent</p>

<p>Do you recommend any specific social media tourist page to friends and relatives to plan potential future tour to Balochistan?</p>	135	<p>Yes (20%)</p> <p>No (32%)</p> <p>To some extent (48%)</p>	<p>Tourist pages recommendation</p>  <p>■ Yes</p> <p>■ No</p>
<p>Do you believe visiting social Media pages are more informative than any traveling agency to provide tourism information about Balochistan?</p>	133	<p>Agree (38%)</p> <p>Disagree (23%)</p> <p>Neutral (36%)</p>	<p>Social media pages vs tourist agencies</p>  <p>■ Agree ■ Disagree</p> <p>■ Neutral</p>

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results clearly indicate that the trend of using social media platforms for tourist information is common where average tourist use at least four social media apps. The result also highlights that tourist passionate use more than one social media apps. Social media has now become passionate tourist's life routine as it fulfills social, mental and other needs. The results clearly indicate that Facebook is the most famous followed by WhatsApp in Baluchistan.

At least 34% social media users find social media influential to promote tourism in Balochistan. The role of social media in managing and planning of tours is rising with every passing day. The potential tourists trust the reviews and comments of previous travelers when it comes to select final tourist destination in Balochistan.

The results also indicated that relatively higher level of confidence exist between tourists and social media when it comes to planning out tours and visuals of tourist sites play a crucial role in this regard. At least social media can be trusted when it comes to authentication of information regarding tourist sites. The chances of fake information on tourist intended pages are relatively low on social media. The best aspect regarding social media role in promotion and marketing of tourism industry in Baluchistan is the authenticity and genuine information availability without any complexity or hurdle. Coastal areas of Balochistan are the most favored destinations for tourists. Another new dimension revealed from the research is that social media has the capacity to influence the sub conscious mind of tourists when it comes to select the best tourist site is solely due to availability of real, authentic, accurate and reliable information in the form of visuals mostly on the social media platforms. Tourists share live scenes with social media friends and upload pictures, videos along with narration of experience in the form of commentary. All this truly inspire potential tourists to pay visit to their favorite tourist destinations of Balochistan.

We can conclude on the note that conventional method of advertisement no more works in the emergence of rapid and fast social media technology. Social media apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and twitter etc. provide an easy, instant and quick opportunity to tourist companies to promote, propagate and advertise tourist destinations to the potential tourists. Tourists has high level of trust over the reviews, comments, visuals shared on the social media and thus highly recommended by tourists to get information regarding any tourist destination like mode of transportation, hotels, restaurants, mapping of route and similar other information needed by the tourists.

Recommendations

Balochistan is the most unexplored tourist destination of the country and tourism is the best way to promote soft image of the province. The Government of Balochistan has started public private partnership with the aim to attract maximum tourists to the province. The beautiful coastal belt, archeological sites, forests, deserts, religious sites, foods and barren beauty of mountain attract

many local as well as international tourists. Since the focus of this research restricted to local tourism, we can attract international tourists by well representing the digital tourist image of the province by sponsorship of provincial government. The Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Balochistan has minimum footprint over the social media which needs to be enhanced to well represent the hidden tourism beauty of the province over the national as well as international forum. There exists huge vacuum in regard of attracting international tourists in particular and local tourists in general and this research would help in this aspect.

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