Social media usage and impact: a study on Bangladesh Tourism Industry

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Abstract:

In the world of internet, social media becomes a common platform for people where they can be easily connected to the world and influence others by their activities. The purpose of the study was to investigate which social media is used mostly and to what extent it is influencing Bangladesh tourism industry. People of different age groups and gender give their response through a questionnaire and put into SPSS to find out frequency distribution for better interpretation and understanding. The output was tremendous as it shows that Bangladeshi people use Facebook mostly. Hotels, restaurants and destinations gets higher attention. In terms of destination branding each person who interacts in social media can be a brand ambassador of this country. Further investigation is needed to determine how accommodation, transportation, attractions and activities can use social media, as well as to understand tourists' perception over a destination to develop Bangladesh tourism industry.

Key Words: Tourism, Social Media, Hotel, Restaurants, Destination, tourism consumer

1. Introduction:

Social media, an important tool for searching hit, through which we can discover, updated attitudes of tourist towards different destinations and perception about those destinations. Tourism industry is influenced by the thoughts, judgments and advice provided by tourists in different kinds of social media(Ráthonyi, 2013)**.** The highly eloquent nature of consumers in social media has a huge impact on other consumers with their pattern of behavior and experience. Social media for some of its characteristics like budgetary element and non-favoritism, marketing communication acquires enormous benefits from it (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2010)**.** Social media contributes and act as an important tool for the development of the tourism industry. It should take the advantage of social media for precise improvement. Because the industry is heavily banks on the image of the destination, tourist perception, availability of information and encouraging words from the consumers (Zeng, 2013)**.**

The aim of the study is to Identify which type of social media is used by Bangladeshi people and how social media impacts on Bangladesh tourism industry. We have to consider the responses of tourist from tourism system in attempt to explain this phenomenon**.**

2. Literature Review

Social media is the virtual stage that delivers a mode for individuals to take part in conversations. This is also used to connect and share many contents with compatible people and friends. For individuals, it is a way to connect and share content with friends and like-minded people. Social media also helps business to know about the perception about the brand, product and service. It also generates ideas by participating in the conversation with the reviewers to make better business decisions (Falkow, 2011)**.** Social media, now a day, is considered to be a common medium of communication rather than the physical interactions between individuals. Among many social media, some of them are very popular, they are- Facebook, Twitter, Linked in, Instagram and YouTube (ISM, 2014)**.**Travelers read different reviews at different stages like pre, during and post trip while they plan to visit somewhere and the knowledge gained by the reviews helps them to take travel decisions (Gretzel, Yoo, & Purifoy, 2007)**.**

In the world of marketing it is considered that social media will be the next big trend. In several studies it is indicated that social media surpluses in terms of effectiveness over traditional marketing (BAGATURIA & JOHNSON, 2014)**.** Social media is beneficial for consumers as they use it to maintain community and network with others (Hajli, 2014).

Tourism industry understands the insights of tourist through Digital mobility and social media activities enable tourism industry to have appropriate insight in the world of tourists. In terms of tourism marketing Social media has been recognized as one of important competitive tool. Tourism also need to involve tourist with different communication media to exchange the views and encourage them to recommend the positive experience (Živković, Gajić, & Brdar, 2014).Social media can transmit the messages, to and from company, to those targeted very easily. Although, these messages might be

interpretable by various groups of users, there is chance that these messages might be wrongly perceived by the receiver and the thoughts and views generated by them create an undesirable image to the company (Dina1 & Sabou, 2012).

People are sharing their thoughts more on digital and social media. Because of their role as a customer, they try to find out information about products then purchase and consume them and make comments based on their experience. This is for many purposes, including in their roles as consumers as they search for information about products, purchase and consume them, and communicate with others about their experiences. It is assumed that by 2017 one-third of global advertising spending is forecast to be in digital channels (eMarketer, 2014).

Social media have created wonders as far as accessibility is concerned, which is based on web-based, mobile based or cloud based technologies. There is a saying in hospitality management "you do one thing bad ten people will know by the word of mouth." This proverb has been changed with "word of million mouths" by the grace of social media (Khan, 2012).

3. Methodology

The nature of the study is exploratory. It endeavors to evaluate the impact of social media in Bangladesh tourism industry. Therefore it relies on respondents' attitude towards several factors which has been determined by the analyst .on the study. The research was conducted in Dhaka from the point of view that Dhaka is a city where one can find persons from every district of Bangladesh. The questionnaire has been divided into two sections, one aims to know the demographic factors of respondents and another part consists of several research issue presented in dichotomous form, aiming to know the level of involvement of people through social media in tourism industry of Bangladesh. This survey was conducted on 74 people who use social media in their daily life. The convenience sampling method was used to collect data. This type of sampling has been used because it was very difficult for the researcher to go in front of every person and it is very much cost effective way of doing a research.

To collect data, questionnaire has been provided personally and through email. The responses were coded and put into SPSS to analyze and interpret the data, Microsoft excel was also used to get a figure for representation. In SPSS, frequency distribution analysis has been done to find out the percentage of different factors.

4. Social media for tourism:

Social internet outlets have become widespread phenomena as the use of this by the travelers who repeatedly use the media to share their pleasure and displeasure (schools, Best Hspitality Degrees, n.d.). Social media has a significant contribution on different aspects of tourism, exclusively in information search and decision-making behaviors, promotion of tourism and in focusing on best practices for interacting with consumers (Zeng & Gerritsen, What do we know about social media in tourism? A review, 2014)**.** The information sharing practice in social media about holiday-destinations appear as valuable articulations of pleasantness and emotional support (Munara & Jacobsenb, 2014).

To reduce uncertainty and construct some confidence about the destination area, tourist need a reliable source to predict about the experience they will receive (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Internet user from around the world gives priority to the comments made in social media for making travel plan and it plays a big role in decision making (Sahin & Sengün, 2015).

*Figure:* Key social media platforms
Source: Universal McCann 2008

5. Analysis & Interpretation:

5.1 The type of social media is used mostly by Bangladeshi people is shown in table-1.

Table-1

Type of social media usage regularly

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	57	77.0	77.0	77.0
	Others	11	14.9	14.9	91.9
	Twitter	4	5.4	5.4	97.3
	LinkedIn	2	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	
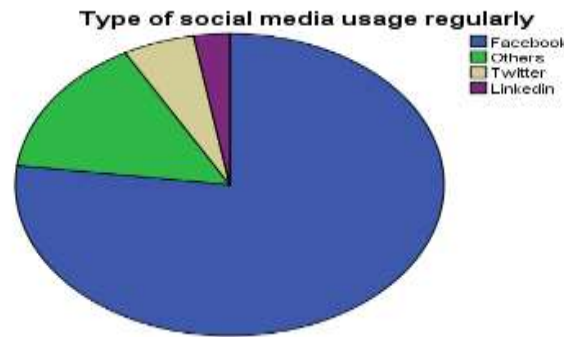
Figure: 1

From the table, it is seen that major portion of respondents uses Facebook regularly and the number of respondents in favor of Facebook is 54 which is 77 in percentage. With a difference of 62.1% from Facebook, other type of social media which includes different blogs, video sharing sites, are used daily by the respondents which is 14.9%. Two other type of social media, LinkedIn and Myspace are very rarely used by people. The table is represented in a pie chart that easily signifies that Facebook is the leading type of social media that is used regularly by the people of Bangladesh which clearly states that most of the Bangladeshi people are interacting in Facebook which will help the persons who works to develop tourism as well as business persons who conduct their business related to tourism industry can easily reach to their potential clients through Facebook.

Table-2

Time spend in social media daily

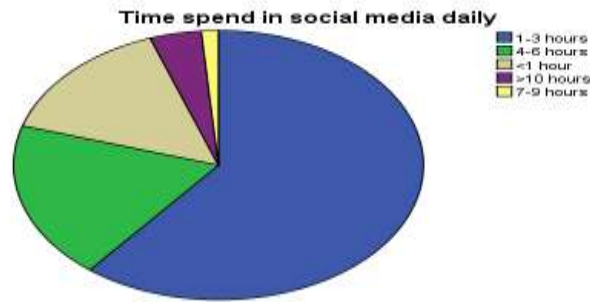|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3 hours	45	60.8	60.8	60.8
	4-6 hours	14	18.9	18.9	79.7
	<1 hour	11	14.9	14.9	94.6
	>10 hours	3	4.1	4.1	98.6
	7-9 hours	1	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

Figure: 2

Table shows that the amount of time that respondents spend on their chosen type of social media. Here 60.8% of respondents expressed that they use their type of social between 1-3 hours and 18.9% said that they use social media for 4-6 hours. Very few people fall into 7-9 hours category which is only 1.4%. This data signifies that apart from day to day life chores, people of Bangladesh spend a fair amount of time in social media. This also represents that people of Bangladesh have a decent time to interact with their chosen type of social media, which indicates there is a very good probability of getting influenced by the contents shared in social media.

Table-3

Tourism related information sought by tourist in social media:

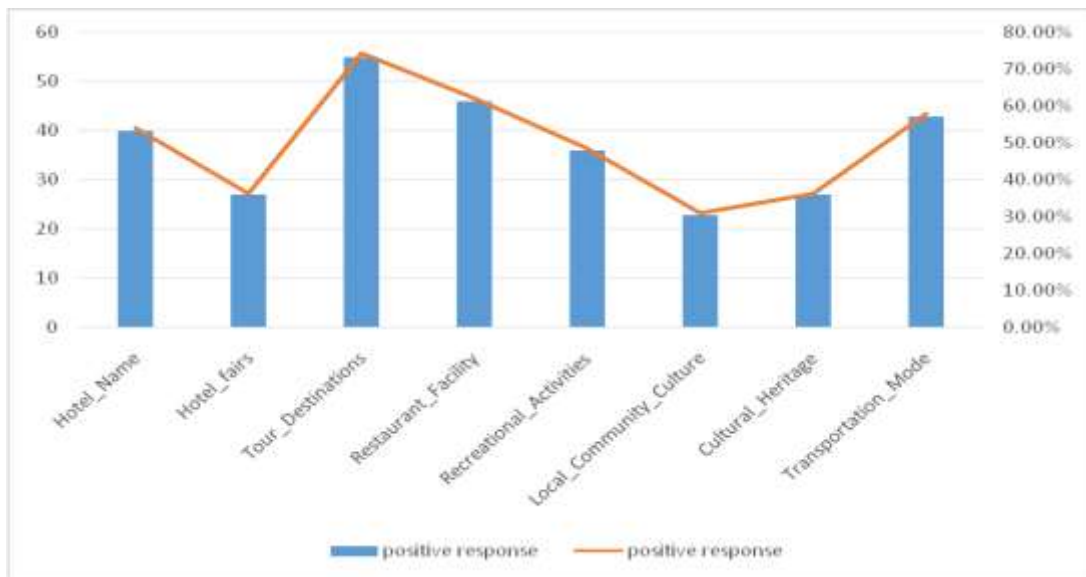|	positive response	
	Count	Row N %
Hotel Name	40	54.1%
Hotel fairs	27	36.5%
Tour Destinations	55	74.3%
Restaurant Facility	46	62.2%
Recreational Activities	36	48.6%
Local Community Culture	23	31.1%
Cultural Heritage	27	36.5%
Transportation Mode	43	58.1%

Figure: 3

From the table-3, it is observed that, People of Bangladesh continuously looking for information regarding tour destinations, restaurant facility, hotel name, recreational activities, and transportation mode which is 74.3%, 62.2%, 54.1%, 48.6% and 58.1% respectively. Bangladeshi people have a very low interest on local community's culture. This gives an indication to the personnel involved in hotel, restaurant, recreational activity and transportation business can conduct their marketing activities through social media and can easily reach to their clients. In terms of hotel name and hotel fare, from the above table and figure, it can be clearly point out that most people are searching hotel name rather than hotel fairs.

5.3 The level of interaction people make in social media analysis section:

Table-4

Generally chosen holiday destinations from the posting of others in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	49	66.2	66.2	66.2
	No	13	17.6	17.6	83.8
	No Comments	12	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

From the table-4, it is seen that out of 74 respondents 49 said yes, 13 said no and 12 said that they have no comment regarding this statement and it is 66.2%, 17.6% and 16.2% respectively. This signifies that people of Bangladesh do choose their holiday destinations based on the postings made in social media by others.

Table-5

Shares experience about holiday destination in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	55	74.3	74.3	74.3
	No	15	20.3	20.3	94.6
	No Comments	4	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

This table-5 exhibited that 74.3% of people share their experience in social media so that other people can see those thing and feel motivated or not about a particular thing. This also helps us to understand that destinations should be well managed by destination management organization (DMO) to attract more tourists to the destination. Different government bodies who works for the development of Bangladesh tourism can get tourist satisfaction level by looking at the postings made in social media.

Table-6

Remarks given in social media from the selection of travel agency.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	34	45.9	45.9	45.9
	No	25	33.8	33.8	79.7
	No Comments	15	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

The above table-6 shows that 45.9% of the respondents select travel agency based on the remarks made by others and 33.8% response no to the statement. This indicates that people are not that much concerned with and they do not judge a travel agency by the remarks given in social media about travel agency.

Table-7

Shares experience about travel agency in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	32	43.2	43.2	43.2
	Yes	29	39.2	39.2	82.4
	No Comments	13	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

From this table-7 it is seen that 43.2% people do not share their experience that they get from a travel agency in social media. In contrast 39.2% people said they share their experience about travel agency in social media.

Table-8

Influence of the comments about hotel enterprises in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	36	48.6	48.6	48.6
	No	23	31.1	31.1	79.7
	No Comments	15	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

The above table-8 shows that 48.6% of the respondents said yes regarding this statement whereas 20.3% said they have no comments on this statement. This result gives an idea that social media is influencing to shape Bangladesh tourism consumer behavior regarding hotel enterprises as majority of them get influenced by social media.

Table-9

Share positive experience about hotel enterprises in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	36	48.6	48.6	48.6
	No	23	31.1	31.1	79.7
	No Comments	15	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

Table-9 shows that people share their positive experience about hotel enterprises in social media and the results from the table shows that 48.6% response is in favor of the statement that leaves a conclusion that hotel enterprises should focus on customer satisfaction and build customer value. Alongside with satisfying and creating value to the customers they need to provide and maintain a standard level of service to create a good brand image on customer's perception.

Table-10

Influence with the comments regarding restaurants in social media.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	60.8	60.8	60.8
	No	19	25.7	25.7	86.5
	No Comments	10	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

The above table-10 is showing that most of the respondents get influenced by the comments providing in social media about different restaurants and 45, which is 60.8%, out of 74 expressed positivity regarding this statement. This signifies that restaurants at the destination areas must be maintained according to a good level of service and their products must be hygienic.

Table-11

<div align="center">

Share views on restaurants in social media.

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	38	51.4	51.4	51.4
	No	25	33.8	33.8	85.1
	No Comments	11	14.9	14.9	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

From the above table-11 it is seen that 51.4% of the respondents stayed positive regarding this statement and 33.8% stayed on the negative side. This projects that people of Bangladesh are active in sharing their views about different types of restaurants which leaves an understanding that restaurants should deliver quality food and service to the current consumers.

Table-12

<div align="center">

Information shared in social media increase knowledge.

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	63	85.1	85.1	85.1
	No Comments	7	9.5	9.5	94.6
	No	4	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

From the table-12, regarding this statement, it is found that social media helps to increase people's knowledge which is 85.1%. That indicates that people increasing their knowledge by using social media.

Table-13

<div align="center">

Knowledge about different destinations of Bangladesh was fewer before using social media.

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	64.9	64.9	64.9
	No	14	18.9	18.9	83.8
	No Comments	12	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

From the table-13 it is seen that 64.9% of the respondents stayed positive regarding this statement, 18.9% stayed on the negative side and only 16.2% people has no comment on this statement. This result signifies that information related to destinations could be easily communicated through social media. This information is not only helping Bangladeshi people but also to the potential international tourist.

Table-14

<div align="center">

Social media increases knowledge about different destinations of Bangladesh

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	56	75.7	75.7	75.7
	No Comments	9	12.2	12.2	87.8
	No	9	12.2	12.2	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

The result from the table-14 shows that 75.7% of respondents are in favor of the statement and very few with only 12.2% said there is no change in the knowledge about different destinations of Bangladesh after using social media. As the major portion is in the favor of the statement we can understand that by using social media destination branding can be possible that will help to build an image of the destination area.

Table-15

Attraction by the photos and videos shared in social media to go to a destination.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	63	85.1	85.1	85.1
	No	8	10.8	10.8	95.9
	No Comments	3	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	74	100.0	100.0	

The result from table-15 shows that 85.1% respondents become attracted by the photos and videos shared in social media and it also influence them to choose a destination. This signifies that photos and videos are influencing and has a huge impact on potential tourist's motivational factor.

Conclusions & Implications:

Bangladesh is the land of beauty and it has a huge potential to emerge as one of the best tourist friendly country in the world. In this country tourism industry has everything it needs to be flourished. This study set to investigate the impact of social media on Bangladesh tourism and to understand the impact so that Bangladesh can emerge as a single tourist destination as well as how much importance tourism business personnel should give on social media.

Social media now the fastest way of communicating information and these information can be generated by officials who works in close relation to Bangladesh tourism industry as well as the persons who share their views, comments, photos and videos in social media. This research clearly states that Bangladeshi people are very active in using social media. This research finds out that people are much influenced and they express themselves even more, by the posting and sharing different things in social media.

Travel agencies consider as a part of operational sector of tourism industry. Research suggests that people are less concerned about travel agencies as there is mere difference between positive and negative reactions on getting influenced or sharing views on travel agencies. But regarding restaurants responses are very much positive as people likes to take suggestions from social media and also try to share their opinions there. If restaurants provide quality service it would help to build image of the restaurant and business will run smoothly.

Overnight tourist need a place to stay and hotels plays a vital role in providing accommodation facility to tourists. People of Bangladesh is highly involved in searching hotels and evaluating their performance by sharing their experience which helps hotel industry to understand their guests need, want and demand. This will eventually help hotel industry to grow and reduce their service inconsistency. Alongside with hotel food and beverage industry is also highly influenced by social network activity. People get easily motivated by the posts and also contribute by giving comments and reviews about different restaurants.

The results show the interest of people to know about a destination. This drives them to go at the destination area and many of them express their feelings through social media which in turn influence other people who doesn't familiar with or visit to that destination. It confirms that people who use and shares at social media also works as a brand ambassador of a destination which will help to build destination image not only to domestic tourists but also international tourists. Business personnel from these 4 sections should create and maintain social media platform and interact to let people know about their existence which will help these businesses to position their brand and generate customer reliability and loyalty.

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Appendix:

Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been designed to understand the social media usage and impact on Bangladesh tourism industry

First Section: Demographic Information

1. Name of the Respondent (optional): ....
2. Designation (optional): ....

3. Occupation:
    a) Student   b) Government service   c) Private company service   d) self-employed

4. Age Group:
    a) 15-24 years   b) 25-34 years   c) 35-44 years   d) 45-54 years

5. Gender:
    a)   Male   b) Female

6. Marital Status:
    a)   Married   b) Unmarried

Second Section: Analysis Section

a) Please indicate the type of Social Media that you use most and average spending time on those:

I.	What type of social media do you use regularly?	Twitter	Facebook	LinkedIn	Myspace	Others
II.	How much time do you spend in your type of social media daily?	<1 hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	>10 hours

b) What tourism related information you want to know from social media? (You can choose more than 1):

o   Hotel names
o   Hotel fairs
o   Tour destination
o   Restaurant facility
o   Recreational activities
o   Local community's culture
o   Cultural heritage
o   Transportation mode

c) Please give tick to any one option of the following statements:

Statements			
1. I generally choose holiday destinations from the posting of others in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
2. I share my experience about holiday destination in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
3. Remarks given in social media help me to select a travel agency.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
4. I share my experience about travel agency in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
5. I am influenced from the comments about hotel enterprises in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
6. I share my positive experience about hotel enterprises in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
7. I am influenced with the comments regarding restaurants in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
8. I share my views on restaurants in social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
9. Information shared in social media helps to increase my knowledge.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
10. My knowledge about different destinations of Bangladesh was fewer before I use social media.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
11. After using social media my knowledge about different destinations of Bangladesh has increased.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments
12. I become attracted by the photos and videos shared in social media to go to a destination.	○ Yes	○ No	○ No Comments

The questionnaire has been developed solely for academic research purpose and information provided by the respondents will remain confidential.

Thanks for your participation.
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