

Social Media Marketing and Destination Choice of Millennials: An Analytical Review

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Abstract

Millennials have been exerting a peculiar fascination not only on business leaders but also on the academic experts. Whilst the members of Generation Y are also called Digital Natives, rather than Digital Immigrants (Prensky, 2001), their life has begun with the digital environment and information technology profoundly affects how they live and work (S. Bennett, Maton *et al.*, 2008; Wesner & Miller, 2008).

Most of the business managers researchers and policy makers are interested in the identification of use of social media by these Millennials because by way of knowing it they can understand the positive and negative outcomes of these digital natives and subsequently can design and develop their products and the product line

Most of the business manager form customer identity their service expectation analyzing their habits and their brand loyalty towards brands and forms through the use of social media by these Millennials. With this they can also assess the purchase behavior of these consumers and their perceived value towards the business organizations

This helps in conceptualizing organizational decisions about service customization and productivity. The present study focuses on the relationship between social media and the travelling decisions made by the generation. The study is done on the basis of responses received from the generation Y population. A questionnaire has been designed to assess the hypothesis that there is a strong relationship between the use of social media and the travel decisions made by them. A sample size of 244 has been selected to study the relationship. Based on the responses received from generation Y inferences have been made.

Keywords: Social Media, Generation Y, Millennials, Travel Decisions

Introduction

With more businesses going from offline to online mode the life of individuals have changed and internet technology has integrated into their daily routine it is very much evident that after 1990 the influence of Information Technology and particularly the use of social media has revolutionized the information searching and sharing Not only by the common man but also by the Millennials to a great extent For few people adopting the online consumerism has a great challenge as they had never used such an emerging technology and they are very much new to them people born between 1980 and 2000 have integrated the information technology and social media into their daily life and activities and this does not seem to be a challenge for them because they can move from their local outreach to

a global outreach understanding how these Technologies can influence and simplify their life and at the same time they have also grown up with these Technologies.

It is widespread known that more than 80% of generation why people want to share their information or opinion or reviews online with their friends as they can somehow influence the purchasing decisions of their friends and relatives through this way.

Generation Y considers the review websites as a strong source of influence from their personal experience to their influential experience while discussing their travel plans this is also reflected in the decisions made by this generation when it comes to making travel decisions as social media not only stands for creating more friends online but also sharing information and deciding where to go how to go there and at what particular destination they should visit which facilities This has actually opened up a new era of options and decision making processes for this generation.

It is clearly indicated that social media cannot be now taken away from the generation Y and generation Z as it has created an online culture that encourages its users to share their experiences and has changed the way they think and behave in their day to day life. Most of the members of this generation have taken and are taking enough time to consider whether their personal experiences should go online and their likes and dislikes should also be discussed in public domain.

Major social media platforms like Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram not only attract users because of the features of Editing their content but also they can share their experiences and group with the like-minded people around them. While sharing their experiences and reviews, sometimes this generation shows the characteristics of split personality like a difference between who they are and what they really want to project on these social media platforms.

Their identity can be split, who they really are and what they want people to see (Garbutt, 2014). New social media platforms are been designed everyday and most of the people from this generation want to try and find out that how these new platforms can create a better life or a positive life to them. Generation Y-ers are also known as Millennials, echo-boomers, Generation We, Net Generation, Peter Pan Generation and children of baby boomers (Bleedorn, 2013).

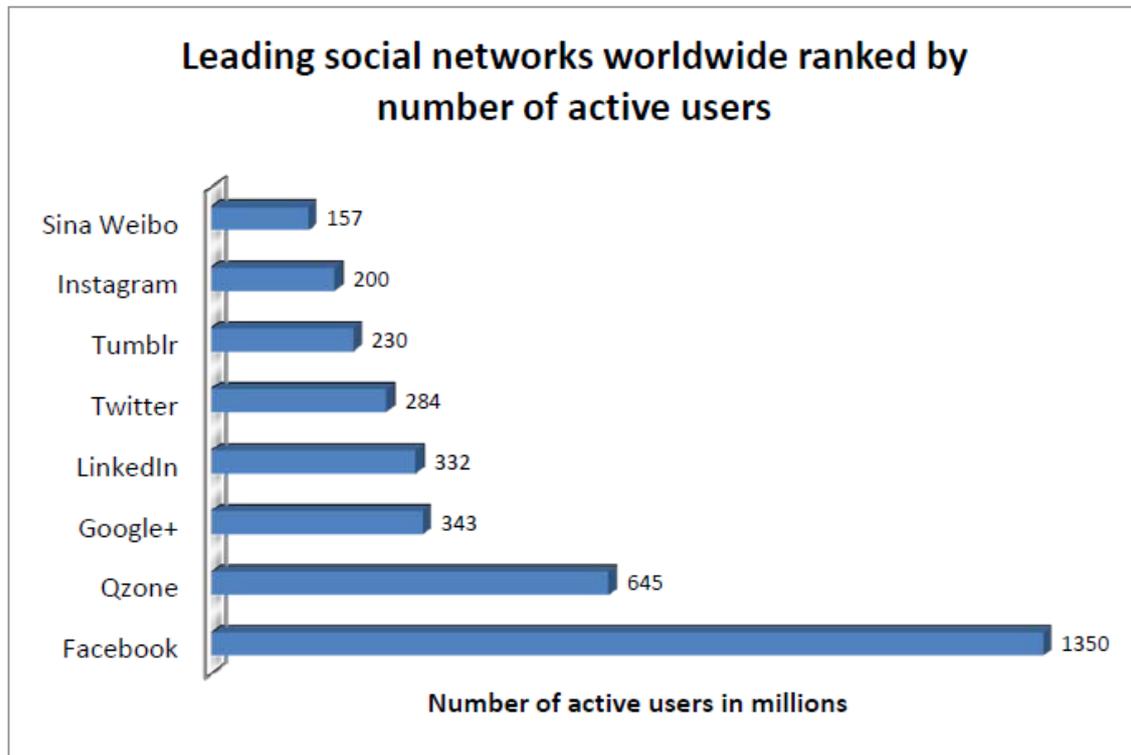


Figure 2. Leading social networks worldwide ranked by number of active users (Source: Statista.com, 2014b)

By looking at figure to it is very much clear that fat Facebook has been on the topmost position in terms of uses with approximately 1350 million active users followed by fusion which is the largest social media site in China with 600 million active users although Google Plus was introduced in 2011 it has already counted and attracted more active users Then Twitter which was launched in the early 2006. It is also evident from this figure that different social media platforms are used by users for their varied purposes if we look at the Twitter mostly short messages are discussed while on Facebook alert content is shared.

Background of the study

It is clearly indicated that social media cannot be now taken away from the generation Y and generation Z. New social media platforms are been designed everyday and most of the people from this generation want to try and find out that how these new platforms can create a better life or a positive life to them.

Last few decades tourism has seen a lot of changes and the business has gone tremendously transformed with new preferences from the customers. it is not only the preferences of the customers but the changing Information sharing and discussing platforms which have kept industry people on their toes to identify and develop new tools to tap this ever-changing industry. With so much of ready information available on various platforms generation y has become more critical and often try to compare prices check the guest reviews and collect Useful information online rather than going to a travel agent or an information centre. Generation Y forms their opinion with the reviews and online information available more quickly. it is therefore the need of the hour that marketers should evolve their marketing strategies keeping this uses of social media by generation Y and Z. the decision

making process of generation why travelers have much of the influence from this world of social media where they wish to buy an experience a tourism product. In the tourism literature a number of research articles have clearly defined that how Technology can influence the decision making choices of the travelers.

For instance, Gretzel and Fesenmaier's (2009) study elaborates how different technologies (e.g., online customer support, e-mail and online travel communities) are used throughout the three stages of tourism consumption process. Although substantial effort has been made on examining how Internet technology impact travelers, there is still a knowledge gap regarding the role of social media on travel decision making process by travelers in general and Generation Y travelers in particular.

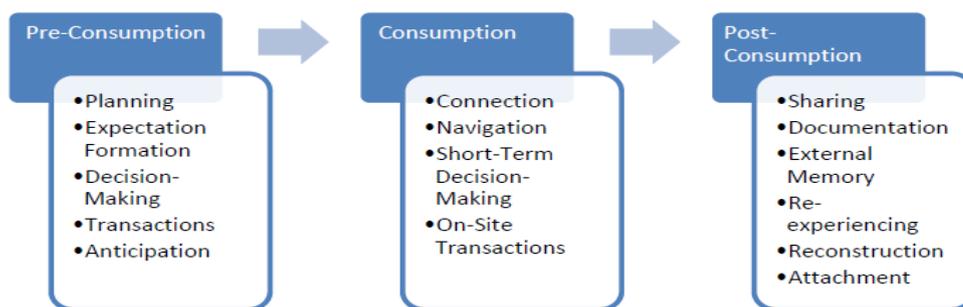


Figure 3. Information needs in the three stages of tourism consumption (Source: Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2009)

Considering that an answer to the research objective of “study the relationship between social media and travelling decisions made by Gen Y” is not identified yet, the aim of this study is to fill this research gap and define the level of influence on the decision making process of Generation Y. This study is empirical in nature exploratory in nature and a quantitative research approach would be employed will be designed in keeping the objectives in consideration and would be circulated among the generation by members of Delhi NCR.

The quantitative data thus collected from the respondents would then be analyzed in order to reduce a closer insight into the decision making process of Millennials with this the expected contribution of this research would be

- To provide answers to the research questions
- To provide tourism business owners the preferences and choices being made by the generation Y and Z
- To contribute in the academic domain by offering firsthand knowledge of generation Y and their decision making process in tourism related products in the area of Delhi NCR

Young travelers - Millennials

Generation Y people are also known as Millennials, echo-boomers, Generation We, Net Generation, Peter Pan Generation and children of baby boomers (Bleedorn, 2013). There is no fixed and consensus time frame for the birth of Generation Y-ers (Bolton, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Loureiro & Solnet, 2013). But in general, People who are born between 1980 and 1999 are widely classified as the Millennials.

Generation y has many differences from the previous generation and portrays unique characteristics. Advantages with this the put in which were Technology advanced. First, the Millennials are different with their imbibed nature of technology savvy and they have opened up their eyes with it. In contrast to their predecessors, they are bound to technology even on an emotional basis (Bolton et al., 2013), which Indicate that there is a big contribution in their information gathering through the use of Smartphones, laptops and tablets not only for personal use but at the same time for business purposes. Few researchers also believe that this generation consider work-life balance a strong factor and do not want to compromise on this. It is very much evident that the family system has become more important with this generation.

Social Media: Concepts, Issues and implications

Social media is a technology driven Computer Based and advanced system which helps users sharing their ideas information and experiences with the help of virtual networks and groups around them. Many of the social media platforms are quick in responding and provide uses a wide area of content and this content can be used to reduce information and use that information for personal use or professional use. The contents on social media can be in the form of documents videos and photos and these all can be used to assess the contents and design some conclusions.

Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2017, ranked by number of active users (in millions)

Facebook	2234
YouTube	1900
WhatsApp	1500
Facebook messenger	1300
We Chat	1058
Instagram	1000
QQ	803
Tiktok	500
Sina Weibo	431
Twitter	335
Reddit	330
LinkedIn	303
Skype	300
Snapchat	291
Viber	260
Pinterest	250
Telegram	200

(Source: <https://www.statista.com>)

Review of Literature

Erkan Akar & Birol Topçu (2011) proposed that social media applications that build consumer communities involving rich user-generated content are new marketplaces and/or tools for marketers. Parson A. (2017) suggested that managers today face many challenges when using social media in their marketing strategies.

Tourist Behavior and Decision Making Process

In 1972, Stanley Plog presented a paper, “Why Destination Areas Rise and Fall in Popularity,” to the annual meeting of the Southern California Chapter of the Travel Research Association, suggesting a model which presented tourists as lining up along a spectrum, ranging from “allocentric” (adventure-seeking, preferring the exotic) to “psychocentric” (safety-seeking, preferring the familiar). These categories are :

Allocentric (The Wanderers) – Allocentric are those tourist who always try to find out new culture and explore new places with a wide range of activities search tourist are extrovert in nature and their behavior shows a lot of confidence all such tourist have a preference of exploring the unknown places and they always wish to meet new places new culture and New lands. Their choice of selecting hotels food and necessity also is of high category and for package tour they are not very much inclined towards. Such tourist cannot be asked to permit to structured itineraries and they would always want to have their own time to explore a new area or make their own arrangements and shoes a different set of activities and tourist attractions.

Psychocentric (The Repeater) – on the other way psychocentric tourist are usually non adventuresome they would always love to go to a destination which they have already explore and they would visit the destination again to relax and explore the food and activities. Search tourist will always try to go to a destination which is familiar to them and use typical type of accommodation and would like to eat in a family restaurant. They never want to use new places new eating outlets and do not want to explore anything on their own.

Midcentric (Combination) – this category of tourists covers the ones who swing between the above said two types.

Henley Centre Model of Holiday-making

A British Consultancy of Futurology, Henley Center has divided the tourists into four phases –

- **Phase I- Bubble Travelers** – Search tourist has very little knowledge and money and they would always prefer package tour and they never participate in cultural activities at the destination what they want to be the part of it by only observing it and satisfy their curiosity
- **Phase II- Idealized Experience Seekers** – Search tourist are very much confident in their nature and they have had the experience of overseas travel and they are very much flexible and adjustable in nature.
- **Phase III- Seasoned Travelers** – such tourist are suspenders and they have more confidence and would always like to experiment on new places and culture they have an inbuilt nature of adventure and would always go to solo trips.

- **Phase IV- Complete Immersers** – such tourist immerse themselves in the new culture heritage language and food experiences they would like to plan their holidays but sometimes their holidays are not well structured.

Research approach

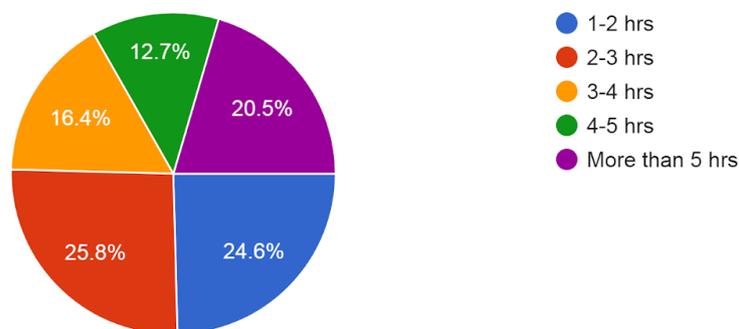
For the present study a quantitative approach of data collection has been applied and respondents have been contacted through an online survey.

Results analysis and discussion

The present study was conducted among the members of generation Y at selected university campuses of Delhi NCR. To collect data an online survey questionnaire was designed and the respondents were asked about their choices on different aspects which could certify their use of social media for making travel decisions. Out of 244 responses received through this questionnaire, 47.1% were the female students and executive whereas 52.9% were male members. Since this study is being conducted among the members of generation Y who are born between 1981 to 2000 so it was evident that most of them have started using computers, smartphones and other technological devices in the past 5 to 10 years. Out of 244 respondents 71.7% were born between 1996 and 2000 and 23.8% were born between 1991 and 1995. Since it is the time to utilize social media at its best that is why most of these young generation people are on social media and the study found only 0.8% percent people not on the social media. As there was no question asking on how they are not comfortable on social media, the study proposes a future research to discuss about this question that what is taking some people out of social media and what are the disadvantages of using social media.

How much time of a day do you spend using social media

244 responses

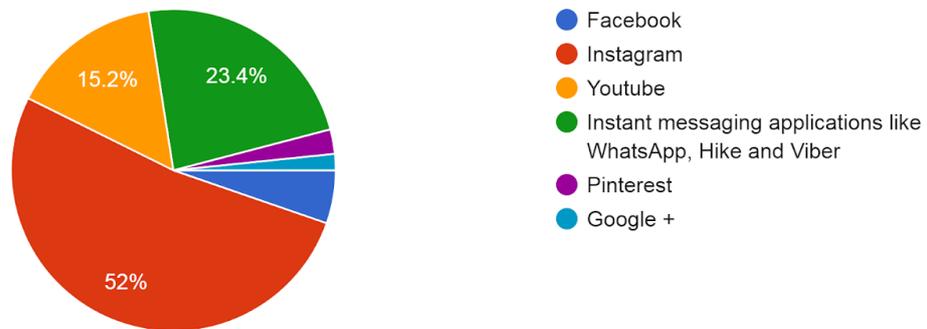


On asking about the social network used by generation Y, it was found out that more than 50% (52%) of the members of generation Y now are on Instagram which allows them to update their experiences very soon. It was very much surprising to note that Facebook users have come down to 13% only which shows the decline of once leader of social networks. Instant messaging application like

WhatsApp, Hike and Viber are also being used significantly by 23.4 % of the members of generation Y.

Which is the most used social network by you

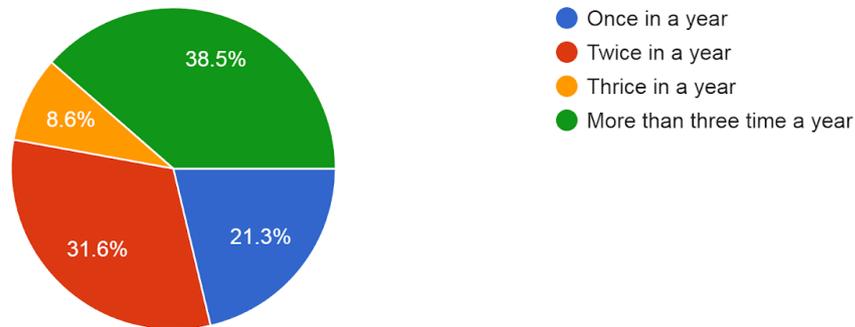
244 responses



It was clearly identified that generation Y members have a good frequency of travel and they always have social media around them which impacts their decision making of travelling. On asking about their frequency of travel in a year, 38.5% respondents travel for more than 3 times a year whereas 31.6 percent of the respondents travel twice in a year. 21.3% percent of the respondent travel only once in a year so it is clearly evident that most of the generation Y members are frequent visitors to places and they want to go on short vacation trips which is reflected by the next response of 36.9% respondents who say that they always want to go on short duration trips. As far as the vacation trips of more than 7 days are concerned, only 12.7% of the respondents clearly indicated that they want to travel for more than 7 days in a year whereas almost equal 25% of the respondents want to go on weekend trips or extended weekend trips.

How many times in a year do you travel?

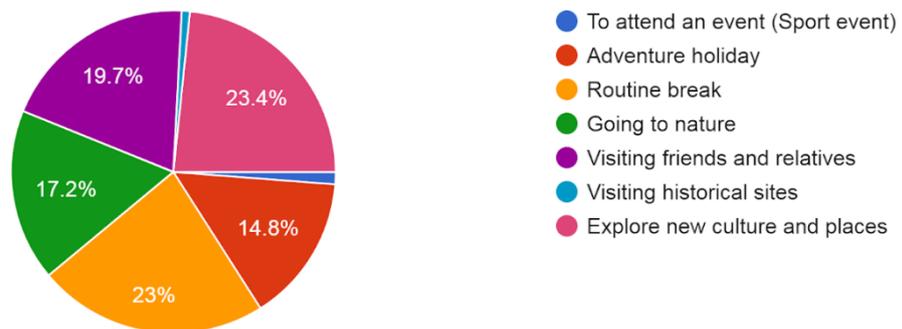
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While inquiring about the prime purpose of their holiday, it was found out that 23.4 percent of the respondents always want to explore new culture and places whereas same 23% want to have a routine break from their mundane work and 19.7% percent of the respondents visit their friends and relatives. While asking about their preference of going to nature, only 17.2 % responded wished to go to natural sites and very few of them want to visit historical sites. That clearly indicates that their preferences for travelling and undertaking holiday is changing and more and more people of this generation want to explore new cultures and visit natural and adventure sites.

More often, my prime purpose of undertaking a holiday is?

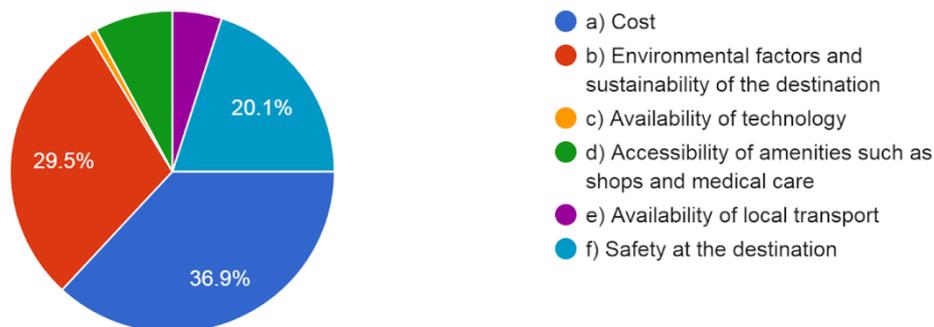
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Although, it has been widely discussed that this generation has a disposable income to spend upon their luxuries and travel but 36.9% percent of the respondents clearly state that they look after the cost while deciding about their holiday destination. At the same time it is also very encouraging to note that this generation looks after the environmental factors and sustainability of the destination which is a good sign and a clear indication that future destination have to look after the sustainability and responsible behavior at the destination. 20.1 % respondents also care about the safety at the destination as it has been many a times debated that India is not a safe country so the government has to look upon this important aspect of not only domestic tourist but also of the international tourist where destinations can be made secure.

For me, the main practical concerns while choosing a holiday destination is?

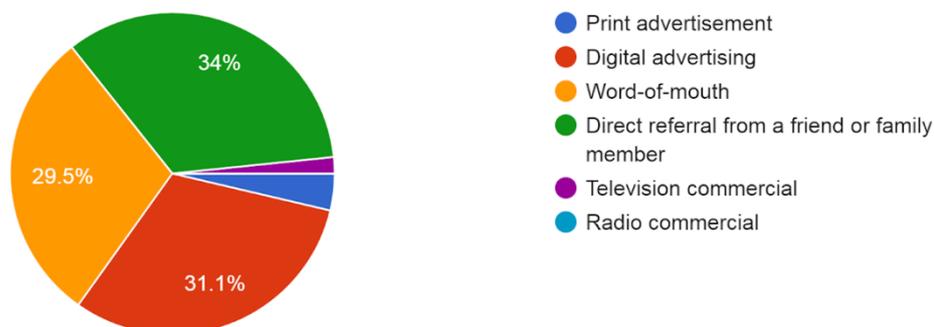
244 responses



Most of the millennials have been influenced by some kind of promotional activities by the companies and 31.1% of the people of this generation always find out digital advertising which has prompted them to think of their destination. It is also worthy to note that 34% of the respondents always take a referral from a friend or a family member clearly indicating that tourism industry works on word to mouth promotion and destinations have to have their image that way so that they can attract more and more tourist with referral programs.

In the past, what has been the most influential in terms of helping you decide where to go/stay/eat, etc. when you're traveling?

244 responses

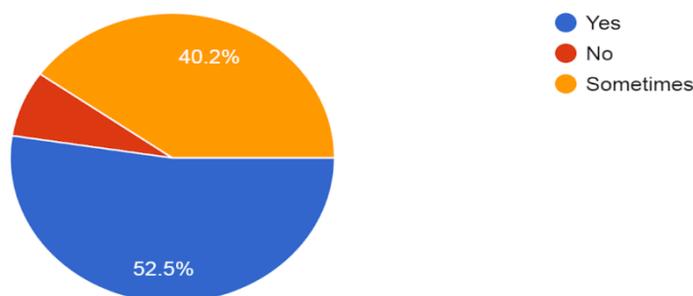


Nowadays all tourists want to read reviews before they finalize any destination for their future travel and this generation is not away from such reviews. This generation wants to review and find out the reviews of other tourist as well who have previously travelled to destinations and it is impressive to

note that more than 52.5 % of the respondents check reviews of other travelers before they finalize any destination or location or accommodation for their future travel.

When booking traveling, do you read other traveler's reviews of the locations and/or accommodations?

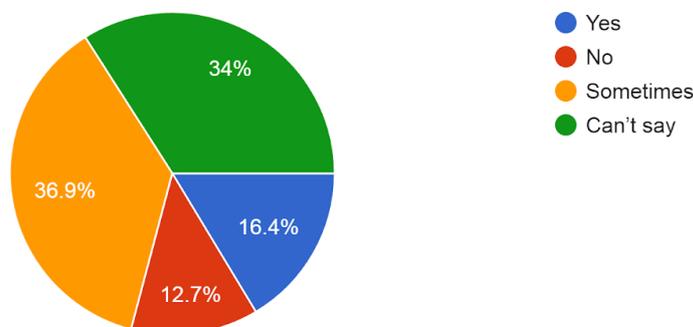
244 responses



This generation believes in their own decisions and the reviews made by other travelers for a particular service is sometimes believed by 56.6% respondents whereas 11.5% respondents never rely on the reviews made by other travelers on review sites like TripAdvisor. It is 13.9% of the respondents rely on the reviews that means the review sites have to work a lot in providing a trustworthy content to the visitors on their site. This can further be studied that how these review sites can make a significant space into the future decisions by the travelers. On asking about the reviews made on review sites whether these are biased or not, 36.9% of the respondents claimed that they believed the reviews to be biased sometimes where as 16.4% of the respondents said that they believe the reviews are biased. 34% of the respondents also felt that they have no knowledge about these review sites being biased.

Do you think that the reviews made by travelers on reviews sites like TripAdvisor, WAYN, Travelocity and Expedia are biased?

244 responses

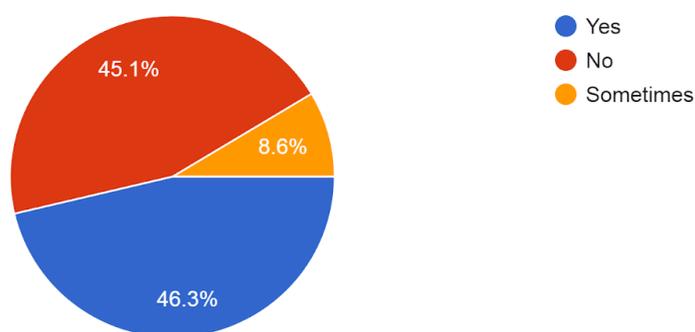


Social media has become a great place to promote tourism related products by the marketers since it is clearly visible that 46.3% of the respondents have a buying experience on the social media sites and platforms. But at the same time it also needs to be accounted that 45.1% respondents have never tried

buying a service on social media that means a lot of work is to be done to promote tourism related products through social media and where 99% population of young people are available on social media platforms, the power of this kind of media can never be overlooked by the marketeers. Moreover 82.4% of the respondents believe that they have always looked for more about a destination after an advertisement on social media.

Have you ever booked a trip to a destination or hotel through social media?

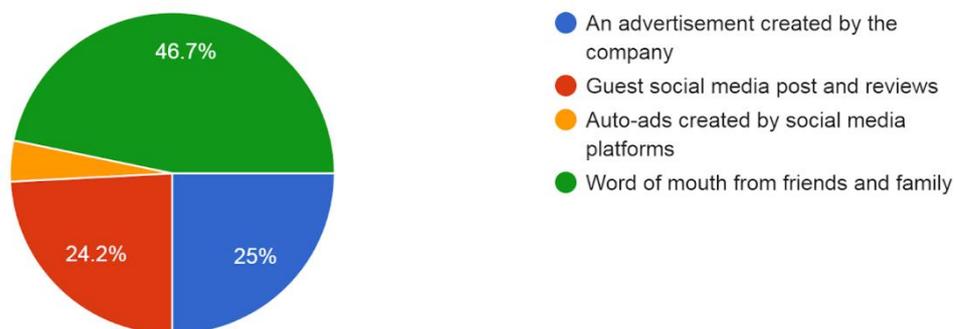
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It is also observed that this generation books most of the air travel product online as it can be seen that 53.7% of the respondents have accepted their bookings done through online media. It is also noteworthy to see that most of the advertisement created by company or travel agencies is not liked by the Millennials whereas they mostly believe on word of mouth from friends and family as it is 46.7% of the respondents have claimed that.

In terms of advertising, which would you trust more?

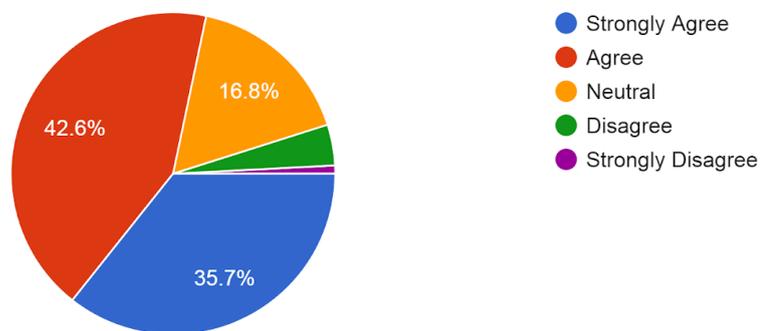
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The business houses have to realize now that word of mouth is a strong effect on the buying patterns of the generation Y members so they have to be very careful in design and delivery of their products online and in operations. Marketeers can always tap this potential of social media as it is very much evident from 59% of the respondents that they are neutral when they were asked about the products being sold on social media platforms and 19.3% of the respondents believe that it is not true that product sold on social media are not trustworthy so it clearly signifies that social media can be used to promote tourism related products.

I think the social media is a new word of mouth

244 responses



Conclusion

There is no doubt that social media has a great impact on the lifestyle and decision making of generation Y. They take decisions very quickly and they are technologically so advanced that they have options to seek more information on a particular issue. It is clearly indicated that social media cannot be now taken away from the generation Y and generation Z as it has created an online culture that encourages its users to share their experiences and has changed the way they think and behave in their day to day life. Most of the members of this generation have taken and are taking enough time to consider whether their personal experiences should go online and their likes and dislikes should also be discussed in public domain. With this instant information available, they take their decisions very fast and in terms of their travels also their decision making is so prompt that they want to go to a destination just after looking at a post on social media from their friends or from the promotional companies. This signifies that social media has a great impact on the decision making of this generation and marketeers have to have their presence online to attract this great segment of potential customers. They have to design marketing strategies to attract this segment. The present study shows the relationship of social media usage and the decision making process of young generation and paves the way for the future researchers to explore the level of marketing efforts to attract this segment.

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