

JOURNALISM, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

e-ISSN: 3005-527X , p-ISSN: 3005-5261

Volume 02, Issue 01, March 2024, Pages 1-20

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63067/kxkymm84>

Journal Homepage: <https://jpolas.com>

Promoting Tourism via Instagram: A Study of Instagram Users and the Role of Tourism Companies in Pakistan

Sabahuddin Qazi¹

¹Editor in chief, Press Network of Pakistan, Pakistan.

Email: sabahuddinqazi@gmail.com

Soha Baig²

²Media Researcher, Islamabad Pakistan.

Email: sohabaig25@gmail.com

Abstract

Tourism in Pakistan has come up against challenges in the past in line with negative sentiments and security apprehensions. But, the escalation of social media has opened up new openings for promoting tourism in the country. This study's objective is to explore the role of Instagram users and tourism companies in promoting tourism in Pakistan through the platform. This study examined how Instagram users in Pakistan use the platform to learn about and plan travel, how their perceptions of tourism in Pakistan impact their engagement with tourism-related content on the platform, and the role of tourism companies in Pakistan in promoting their destinations on Instagram. A survey was conducted among 200 Instagram users in Pakistan. The findings of the study propose that Instagram users in Pakistan use the platform to satisfy their need for travel inspiration, information, and connection. They are more likely to engage with tourism-related content on Instagram if they have positive perceptions of tourism in Pakistan. Tourism companies in Pakistan can use Instagram to promote their destinations by creating high-quality content, using relevant hashtags, and engaging with users. The participants' reliance on tourism in Pakistan had a great impact on their engagement with tourism-related content on Instagram. Participants who had a positive penetration of tourism in Pakistan were more likely to follow tourism accounts (70.4%), like tourism-related posts (90%), and comment on tourism related posts (87%). The findings of this study suggest that Instagram is a treasure tool for tourism promotion in Pakistan. Tourism companies in Pakistan can use Instagram to reach a large audience of potential travelers, build relationships with these travelers, and encourage them to visit Pakistan.

Keywords: Instagram, Tourism companies, Pakistan, Tourism.

© 2024 The Authors. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License

1. Introduction

This research will explore the behavior of Instagram users regarding preferences for specific destinations, the types of experiences they seek, their interactions with tourism-related content, and the strategies employed by tourism companies in collaboration with influencers. By understanding the dynamics between Instagram users and tourism companies in Pakistan, this research will contribute to the existing knowledge on Instagram's role in promoting tourism. The findings will inform strategies and recommendations for leveraging Instagram effectively to showcase Pakistan's tourism potential and attract more international visitors. Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, producing substantial economic assistance and employment opportunities for millions globally. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism industry accounted for 10.4% of global GDP and 319 million jobs in 2019 (WTTC, 2021). The tourism

industry supported Pakistan's total economy in 2019 with an annual rate of 5.9% and contributed 4.7% to GDP growth (WTTC, 2020). On the travel and tourism competitiveness index, in 2018, Pakistan's tourist industry was ranked 124th out of 136 nations, regardless of its alluring qualities. Even though a minor improvement in 2019, it maintained its ranking of 121st place among the 140 nations evaluated (Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2019). In recent years, social media platforms have revolutionized how individuals communicate and share their experiences. Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as a dominant force, with over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2022). Its exquisite nature and ability to reach many audiences have made Instagram a powerful tool for promoting tourism and influencing consumer behaviors. Pakistan is among the privileged nations that boast many destinations, encompassing diverse landscapes and offering distinct climates that are appealing tourist attractions. With its vast potential, Pakistan can revolutionize its tourism sector, appealing to global travelers and local adventurers (Hussain, K. (2020). However, Pakistan has had difficulty drawing in a large number of foreign visitors despite its stunning natural surroundings and rich cultural heritage. Pakistan's tourist sector confronts several obstacles, such as inaccurate media representations, security worries, and a lack of marketing campaigns (Javid et al., 2019). Instagram has developed into a medium for visual storytelling, and its widespread use has contributed to the emergence of influencers who can connect and interact with big audiences (Gretzel et al., 2015). These influencers can sway the opinions of aspiring tourists and encourage them to discover new places with their enticing images, films, and narratives. Pakistan may promote tourism by partnering with Instagram influencers and making use of their creativity and reach to highlight the nation's stunning scenery, rich cultural traditions, and friendly people (Huang et al., 2016). By leveraging Instagram's reach, tourism companies and users can attract more tourists, leading to economic growth, job creation, cultural exchange, and infrastructure development.

Instagram users are essential for promoting travel. Since they are engaged users of the site, they make content on their travel tours, which has the impact of spreading the news about tourism initiatives more widely. User-generated content on Instagram significantly influences how potential tourists decide where to go. Instagram's emphasis on visual content and users' candid sharing of real-world events foster an atmosphere of reliability and authenticity, and it is a common source of knowledge, inspiration, and validation for travelers (Xiang et al., 2015). The users help make places and experiences more visible by using hashtags, geolocation tags, and user-generated content. This influences the decisions of prospective travellers (Munar, & Jacobsen, 2013). In addition to its reach, Instagram offers several advantages for tourism promotion in Pakistan. One key advantage is the ability to showcase user-generated content, which provides social proof of travel experiences travelers can expect in the country. User-generated content is powerful for building trust and credibility with potential visitors. It can help overcome the negative perceptions and stereotypes that deter tourists from visiting (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nowadays, users are becoming more and more active on Instagram and in the ongoing engagement with the new media (Turner, 2013). Furthermore, In Pakistan, tourism companies have realized Instagram's enormous potential as a strategic marketing tool. They actively connect with Instagram users and work with influencers and content producers to reach and engage their intended audience (Ghimire & Williams, 2019). Tourism companies in Pakistan, including travel agencies, tour operators, and hospitality providers, play a crucial role in facilitating travel experiences and promoting destinations. Collaborating with Instagram users allows these companies to tap into new markets, create engaging content, and organize sponsored trips that showcase the unique attractions of Pakistan. Such collaborations can enhance the visibility of Pakistan as a tourism destination and attract more visitors (Ahmed et al., 2020). Utilizing Instagram's capabilities, such as collaborating stories, live videos, and immersive IGTV content, the tourism companies promote their nation's cultural history, scenic beauty, adventure tourism options, and one-of-a-kind experiences to a worldwide audience. Despite the potential of Instagram as a promotional tool, more research has yet to be conducted on its role in promoting tourism in Pakistan. Understanding the behaviors of Instagram users concerning travel to Pakistan is essential for tourism companies and analyzing the types of content Instagram users engage with, the destinations they showcase, and the engagement patterns of their followers, valuable insights can be gained on how to effectively engage with this user segment (Gretzel et al., 2017).

1.1 Problem statement

The Problem statement centers on the influence of Instagram on tourism in Pakistan, from the perspective of Pakistani Travelers. It underlines the understanding of how social media platforms like Instagram can contribute to changing the negative perception of Pakistan as a tourist destination and increasing tourism in the country. The study also acknowledges the role of tourism companies in utilizing Instagram to showcase travel experiences and engage with potential tourists.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine how Pakistani Instagram users utilize the network to research and book trips.
2. To examine how users' opinions on Pakistani tourism affect their interaction with travel-related material on Instagram.
3. To comprehend how Pakistani travel agencies market their locations on Instagram.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do Pakistani Instagram users use the app to research and book travel?
2. How do Pakistani travel agencies use Instagram to market their destinations?
3. What influence does Instagram use have on travelers' choices?

2. Review of Related Literature

Instagram has emerged as a well-liked social media channel where companies may advertise their goods and services. Because of its visual component, it's the perfect platform for travel agencies to highlight their offerings. Instagram has revolutionized vacation planning by enabling users to see locations, activities, and services instantly. Instagram has more than one billion active users globally, making it a useful tool for promoting travel (Babakus, Yavas, & Karatepe, 2019). In recent years, Instagram has seen a rise in popularity as a tool for selling travel. Travel agencies are using Instagram to promote their locations and offerings to a worldwide clientele. In their 2018 study, Buhalis and Law looked at how travel agencies used Instagram and discovered that it has grown to be a crucial tool for destination promotion. According to the survey, Instagram gives travel agencies a way to connect emotionally and personally with their audience, which may boost engagement and foster brand loyalty. Additionally, Instagram has become a platform for user-generated content (UGC) or material produced by consumers as opposed to brands. Because it enables travel agencies to present their locations and services through the eyes of their clients, user-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a crucial component of tourism marketing. According to research by Lee, Lee, and Yoo (2019), user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram has a big influence on how valuable people think a place is, which might enhance their desire to visit. Instagram is used by those outside of the developed countries to promote travel. Instagram has been increasingly used in Pakistan in recent years to promote travel. A 2019 research by Mazhar, Khan, and Yousaf found that Instagram has developed into a useful tool for boosting travel to Pakistan. According to the report, Instagram is being used by Pakistani tourism businesses to promote their offerings and travel destinations. In Pakistan, Instagram has emerged as a crucial channel for destination marketing.

2.1 Tourism

Tourism is defined as the actions of people or groups visiting locations beyond their everyday surroundings for enjoyment or business (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). Tourism greatly influences destinations' economic, social, and cultural growth. It creates income and job possibilities in various industries, including hospitality, transportation, entertainment, and marketing. It supports the expansion of regional economies, constructing infrastructures, and preserving and enhancing cultural and environmental resources (World Tourism Organization 2021). The tourism industry in Pakistan has been gradually evolving and experienced positive changes in recent years. The tourism industry in Pakistan has a significant impact on the country's economy. According to the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, the tourism industry contributed approximately 2.7% to the country's GDP in 2019 (PTDC, 2020).

2.2 Instagram

Instagram is a solicitation that lets users create and share content and play a part in social networking. It provides a mobile app and a website interface for users to create an account, post visual content, interact with other users through likes, comments, and direct messages, and discover content from accounts they follow or through the Explore feature. Its primary use is identifying and sharing the most extraordinary images and videos. Each user's account has followers and following figures, which show how many users the individual is following and how many users they are following (Elise Moreau, 2022).

2.3 Tourism promotion via Instagram

Instagram serves as an open online picture album for the tourist industry, and individuals might use it to spread their message. It is crucial to note that the promotion procedure on Instagram differs from that of traditional media, such as print and electronic advertising. Its "self-promotion aid" advantage is its capacity to transform users into prospective marketers for each piece of visual content being shared (Fatanti, Megasari & Suyadnya, I Wayan. (2015). Instagram has become a powerful marketing tool for tourism. The network's emphasis on visual content and vast audience make it the perfect venue for showcasing a location's charms. There were just about over 30 million users of Instagram in 2012. The number will increase to nearly 1 billion by 2022. The app's appeal among young people, who always use social media to plan their vacations, has contributed to this increase (Regiondo, 2022). Tourism companies play a critical role in promoting tourism destinations on Instagram. According to a study by Gretzel, Wang, and Fesenmaier (2015), tourism companies should use a strategic approach when promoting their destinations on Instagram. The report suggests that travel firms should focus on creating visually appealing content, engaging with their audience, and utilizing influencer marketing if they want to promote their destinations on Instagram.

All things considered, Instagram offers travel businesses a useful platform to advertise their services and interact with prospective clients. Instagram stories are another way that Instagram has become essential for marketing travel. Users may upload pictures and videos to Stories, but they vanish after a day. With over 500 million daily active users, this function on Instagram has grown in popularity (Instagram, 2021). Travel companies may showcase their destinations and products in a more personal, behind-the-scenes way by using storytelling. User-generated content, such as resharing a customer's photo or video of their trip to a certain location, can also be highlighted in stories. Travel agencies now have another method to interact with their audience and market their products genuinely and engagingly: by using Instagram stories. (Inversini & Buhalis, 2014). Moreover, Instagram has developed into a medium for specialty travel markets like culinary and adventure travel. Hiking, rock climbing, and water sports are examples of physically demanding vacation activities that fall under the category of adventure tourism. "Food tourism" is traveling to a place to experience its local food and drink customs. Travel agencies may utilize Instagram to highlight their products for these specialized markets, such as culinary and adventure excursions. Due to Instagram's visual format, travel agencies may present their products in a way that makes it easy for prospective clients to picture what they will be getting. 2015's Xiang & Koo Tourism businesses may expand their client base and draw in customers who are enthusiastic about these experiences by focusing on these particular Instagram groups.

2.4 Tourism via Instagram: A Study of Instagram Users

A study found that consumers follow travel accounts on Instagram mostly for their gain, entertainment, and pleasure, whereas they follow DMO accounts primarily for incentives and information (Barbe 2020). Instagram is the most widely used social media channel for finding travel inspiration, according to World Tourism Organisation research. According to the survey, 72% of Instagram users use the app to get ideas for future trips. Additionally, depending on the material they view on Instagram, individuals are more inclined to make trip arrangements, according to the study. After viewing a picture or video on the app, 60% of Instagram users have made travel plans (UNW, 2021). Instagram is a potent instrument for promoting travel. Businesses in the tourist industry may reach a wide audience and encourage travel by producing excellent visual content and posting it on

Instagram. Numerous additional studies have examined the effect of Instagram on tourism in addition to the World Tourism Organization's research (UNW, 2021). According to this research, Instagram can:

1. Increase awareness of tourism destinations
2. Drive traffic to tourism websites
3. Make leads and sales for tourism businesses
4. Increase the image of tourist destinations

2.5 The rise of Instagram in the tourism industry

The travel industry has been greatly influenced by Instagram. A platform is a useful tool for planning and coming up with vacation ideas because of its dedication to visual content (Baruah, 2023). According to research by the travel company Kayak, 48% of travelers use Instagram as a tool for trip planning. Instagram has also made it easier for travelers to share their travel experiences with friends and family. As a result, tourists now feel more a part of a community and are more willing to visit places they have seen on Instagram. Due to Instagram's popularity, there are now more "Instagrammable" sites (Travel Dairy 2023). The travel and tourism industry has experienced both positive and negative effects from Instagram's rise. Positively, Instagram has contributed to an increase in traveler numbers in several locations. Additionally, because tourists are increasingly more inclined to visit places they have seen on Instagram and heard good things about from friends and family, it has contributed to the creation of a more genuine travel experience (Egerton University 2021). Positively, Instagram has contributed to an increase in traveler numbers in several locations. Additionally, because visitors are now more inclined to visit places they have seen on Instagram and have been recommended by friends and family, it has contributed to the creation of a more genuine travel experience. On the downside, there have been a few problems brought about by Instagram's popularity. For example, a large number of Instagram users have made some locations overly crowded. In addition, some Instagram users have a history of acting unethically or dangerously to capture the ideal shot. Generally speaking, the travel industry has been directly influenced by Instagram's rise. The platform has contributed to an increase in tourism, the creation of a more genuine travel experience, and the promotion of lesser-known vacation locations (Baruah 2023). Travelers might find new places to visit with the aid of Instagram. To locate images and videos of locations they have never heard of before, users can utilize hashtags or follow accounts that highlight lesser-known travel spots. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that social media has grown in significance as a channel for connecting travel agencies with their intended market. Above all, Instagram has become a well-liked social media outlet for travelers. With over 1 billion monthly active users, Instagram gives tourism companies a unique opportunity to showcase their products and services to a broad audience (Han, & Kim, 2020). All things considered, Instagram is an effective tool for organizing, planning, and sharing trip experiences. The platform has had and probably will continue to have, a big influence on the travel and tourist sector. Given their sizeable share of the travel market, university students are a crucial demographic for the tourism sector. According to a Han, Kim, and Kim (2020) study, college students use Instagram often and are impacted by social media while planning trips. According to the survey, university students' travel intentions are significantly influenced by Instagram, which they use to research locations, activities, and services.

2.6 Instagram Users and the Role of Tourism Companies in Pakistan

Pakistani Instagram users actively promote travel, and in Pakistan, travel companies are aware of how effective this social media channel is in connecting and interacting with potential customers (Majid & Rahman, 2020). Because of its aesthetically appealing structure and huge consumer base, Instagram has become an operational medium indicative of Pakistan's enthralling beauty, traditional customs, and various sites. Regional and foreign Instagram users have actively contributed to the expansion of tourism by producing and distributing content about their travel experiences in Pakistan (Ali, Kimbu, & Reza Jalilvand, 2021). They expand the geographic and experiential coverage via hashtags, adding location, user-generated material, and follow-on in a virtual reputation impact that expands the reach of tourist marketing. Visitors who are because of booking a trip may be inspired and swayed by the engaging photos, videos, and tales posted on Instagram. Pakistani travel agencies

have increasingly adopted Instagram as an opportunity to advertise their services after seeing its marketing potential (Majid & Rahman, 2020). There has been an increase in interest in tourism in Pakistan during the past several years. This is attributable to the efforts of travel agencies that use Instagram to advertise the nation's tourist spots. This originality has improved Pakistan's tourism destination reputation, rendering it even more enjoyable. Tourism companies in Pakistan mostly found how effective this social media channel is in drawing and interacting with potential tourists. Tourism companies keenly use Instagram to highlight Pakistan's beauty and tourist destinations by working with influencers, photographers, and travel bloggers to produce fascinating content that appeals to a broad audience. Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) uses Instagram as an influential marketing tool (PTDC, n.d.). PTDC is a governmentally owned tourism company that promotes Pakistan's tourism via its authorized Instagram account (@ptdc.official). They post breathtaking images of the nation's scenes from nature, traditional developments, and diverse activities, grabbing Instagram users' hearts and encouraging them to discover Pakistan's natural beauty. Another tourism company, "Find My Adventure" (@findmyadventurepk), also exists. It is an online travel agency that provides sensibly selected journeys and adventures to several locations in Pakistan. By using their Instagram following, they make use of their Instagram following to promote their unique services by posting client reviews, vacation plans, and incredible photos that illustrate many different activities and locations from Pakistan. Besides others, these travel agencies discovered the enormous prospect of Instagram for marketing travel to Pakistan. Employing embracing the aesthetic charm and exciting content offered by the platform, they successfully arouse curiosity and highlight among Instagram users the variety of services Pakistan's tourist sector provides.

2.7 User-generated content as a Reliable source of information

Several studies have found that UGC on Instagram can be a valuable source of information for potential tourists. For example, a survey by the Korea Tourism Organization found that 70% of potential tourists use UGC on Instagram to research travel destinations. The study also found that UGC is more likely to influence potential tourists' travel decisions than content created by businesses or organizations (Chung et al., 2015). There are several reasons why UGC on Instagram can be a valuable source of information for potential tourists. Firstly, user-generated content (UGC) is frequently more genuine than content produced by companies or organizations. Because users who are visiting the location, as opposed to those who are attempting to sell it, create UGC. Furthermore, UGC frequently possesses greater objectivity than information produced by companies or organizations (Atske, 2022). For several reasons, user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram may be a useful informational resource for prospective travelers. Firstly, user-generated content (UGC) is frequently more genuine than content produced by companies or organizations. This is because user-generated content (UGC) is created by travelers rather than by marketers. Second, compared to information produced by companies or organizations, user-generated content (UGC) is frequently more objective. UGC frequently reflects current events better than content produced by businesses or organizations (Toohey).

2.8 Impact of Instagram on destination choice for Pakistani tourists

Travelers from Pakistan are choosing their destinations more and more because of Instagram. People can now share their trip experiences with others and find new areas more easily thanks to the platform. Due to greater awareness of Pakistan's numerous tourist attractions, interest in the nation has grown (Ramos, Celia & Ribeiro 2020). According to research conducted by the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, Instagram is the most widely used social media site among Pakistani visitors. According to the report, 60% of Pakistani visitors have said that their decisions to travel have been impacted by Instagram photos, and 80% of Pakistani tourists use the platform to organize their journeys. Additionally, the survey discovered that young people particularly use Instagram. Instagram is used by 90% of Pakistani visitors under 30 to arrange their travels. This implies that Instagram has a big influence on how Pakistani travelers of the plan their trips. In the upcoming years, Instagram's influence on Pakistani tourism is probably only going to increase. The site will reach even more people as it gains popularity, which will aid in promoting Pakistani tourism to a wider audience (Dark and Bright Side of Social Media in Current Normal). People may now learn

about Pakistani tourism and find new sites more easily thanks to Instagram. People are now more aware of Pakistan's numerous attractions, which has increased interest in the country's tourism.

2.9 Instagram and Consumer Decision-Making Process

Instagram has grown into a potent tool that affects customer decision-making at numerous points in the process. Through aesthetically attractive content and sponsored adverts, Instagram grabs users' attention and introduces individuals to novel offerings during the awareness stage (Casaló et al., 2019; Duffett, 2017). In the information search stage, Instagram is a helpful tool for consumers since it gives them access to first-hand knowledge, user-generated material, and influencer viewpoints. Users may research accounts, hashtags, and geotags associated with their interests, allowing them to learn more and weigh their alternatives before making a choice (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Instagram significantly influences the assessment phase as consumers contrast and assess several choices.

Through product reviews, suggestions, and influencers' insights, Instagram affects customer observations and assessments (Casaló et al., 2019). Instagram's tangible nature helps companies to successfully promote their offers and gives customers a visual representation of the value and attraction of goods and services. The role of Instagram in the consumer decision-making process is crucial, as it raises awareness, provides information, facilitates evaluation, streamlines the purchase process, and influences post-purchase experiences. The visually captivating user-generated content and influencer endorsements on Instagram effectively shape consumers' decisions. In conclusion, Instagram has emerged as a powerful tool for tourism marketing. Its visual nature and user-generated content have transformed how people plan their travel. Tourism companies in Pakistan have also started using Instagram for destination marketing, which has the potential to increase the number of tourists visiting Pakistan. The use of Instagram for tourism marketing requires a strategic approach, and tourism companies should focus on creating visually appealing content, engaging with their audience, and leveraging the power of influencers (Kavoura & Stavrinoudis 2017).

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory primarily put out by Lazars Feld and Stanton (1944) objectives to clarify the motivations behind people's usage of mass media as well as the many forms of pleasure they derive from it. The Uses and Gratification theory explores how the media affects people's lives. It outlines how individuals take the media to further their own wants and experience satisfaction when those needs are met. In other words, the approach emphasizes what users of the medium do with them instead of what the media does to the people (Jason Gordon, 2020). This Theory will benefit the tourism companies in Pakistan to develop tactics by using Instagram to influence latent visitors and endorse their destinations. In the conditions of tourism, Instagram users may use the platform to persuade their necessities and desires such as:

2.10.1 Information

Instagram users can utilize the platform to learn about new destinations, plan trips, and get travel inspiration.

2.10.2 Social interaction

Instagram users may utilize the social media site to connect with loved ones who have a passion for travel or to meet new people who have similar interests.

2.10.3 Entertainment

Instagram users possibly will use the platform to remain entertained by travel photos and videos or to escape from their commonplace lives.

This theory can be used to:

- 1) To recognize the motive of Instagram users who practice the platform for tourism purposes
- 2) To interpret the types of content that are most active and hold attention of the Instagram users who are interested in travel.
- 3) Create plans that will assist Pakistani tourism businesses to utilize Instagram to advertise

their locations and connect with potential travelers.

2.11 Variables

In this Framework, 'Instagram use' is considered as the independent variable, while 'Tourist decision-making process' and 'Destination choice' are the dependent variables. Refers to the following variables it involves activities such as:

- Instagram use (Browsing through posts, Sharing photos, Following influencers or brands, Interacting with other users)
- Tourist Decision-making Process (cognitive and behavioral processes, choices, and actions when planning and engaging in tourism activities)
- Destination choice (personal preferences, available information, social influences, previous experiences, and perceptions of the destination's attributes)

The theme of my questions was based on the use and gratification theory. According to the Uses and Gratification theory, what do users of the medium do with them instead of what the media does to the people? Questions Based on the Uses and Gratification Theory were helpful to investigate Instagram users in Pakistan how they utilize the Platform as a valuable resource for learning and Planning about their travels and how the Tourism companies in Pakistan play a significant role in promoting their destinations on Instagram. The queries will be related to the Study of Instagram Users and the Role of Tourism Companies in Pakistan. Instagram use' is considered as the independent variable, while 'Tourist decision-making process' and 'Destination choice' are the dependent variables.

3. Research Methodology

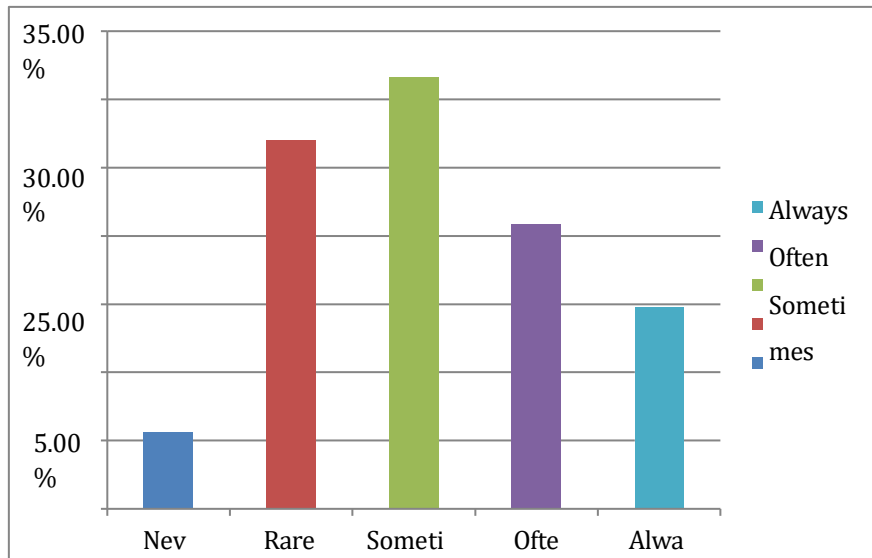
The survey method was used as a research method. A questionnaire was developed for the survey among 200 participants from Instagram users from Pakistan. For this Researcher used a quantitative approach such as a questionnaire in the form of a Google survey. A survey was conducted among Instagram users from Pakistan. Therefore, the target population for this study was 200 Instagram users and during this research, a convenience sampling technique was used to select participants for the survey. The questionnaire was distributed to Instagram users who follow travel and tourism-related accounts or use tourism-related hashtags.

3.1 Data Collection Procedure

For the collection of the data for the relevant research Google survey forms were used to create the survey questions and distributed through Emails and Different social media applications.

4. Results and Analysis

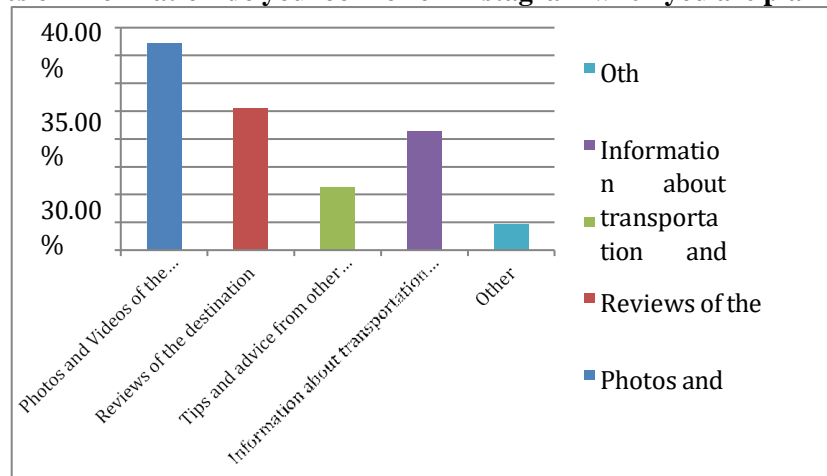
Most of the participants are active Instagram users. According to the uses and Gratification theory which states that people use media to satisfy their needs and wants. In the case of Instagram, people use the platform to satisfy their need for travel inspiration, information, and connection. The received responses were comprised of 97 males and 94 females from the survey generated on Google Forms. Based on the survey Following result has been found with Excel.



Graph 1: How often do you use Instagram to Learn about Travel Destinations?

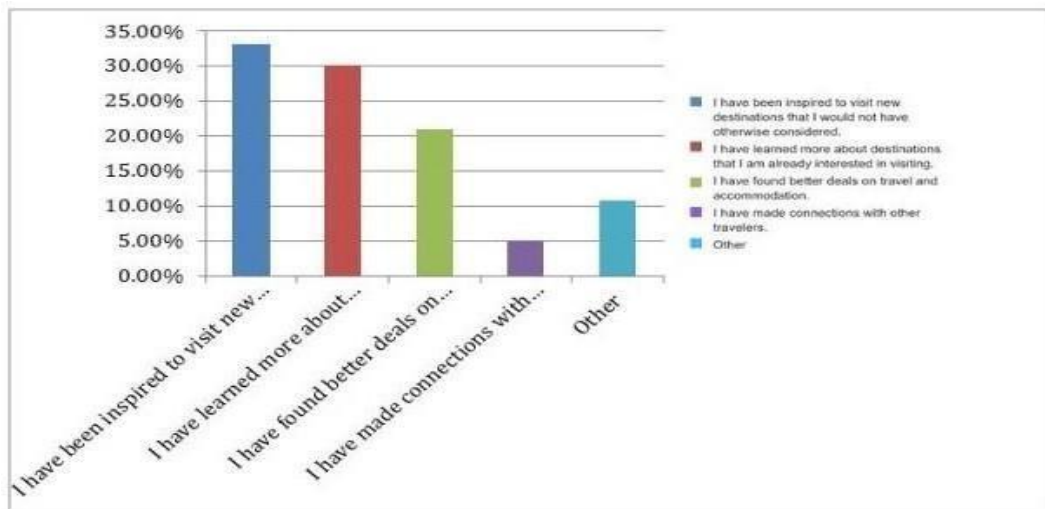
The most common response was "sometimes," with 31.6% of people saying they use Instagram to learn about travel destinations "sometimes." This proposes that many people use Instagram for travel motivation, but they don't depend on it as their only source of information. The second most popular answer was "rarely," with 27% of respondents stating they use Instagram to research potential vacation spots. This implies that a small percentage of users may use Instagram as a source of travel inspiration. The least popular answer was "never," with only 5.6% of respondents claiming to use Instagram to research potential vacation spots. This implies that even if they don't use Instagram frequently, the majority of individuals are at least somewhat receptive to utilizing it as a source of travel inspiration.

Graph 2 What types of information do you look for on Instagram when you are planning a trip?



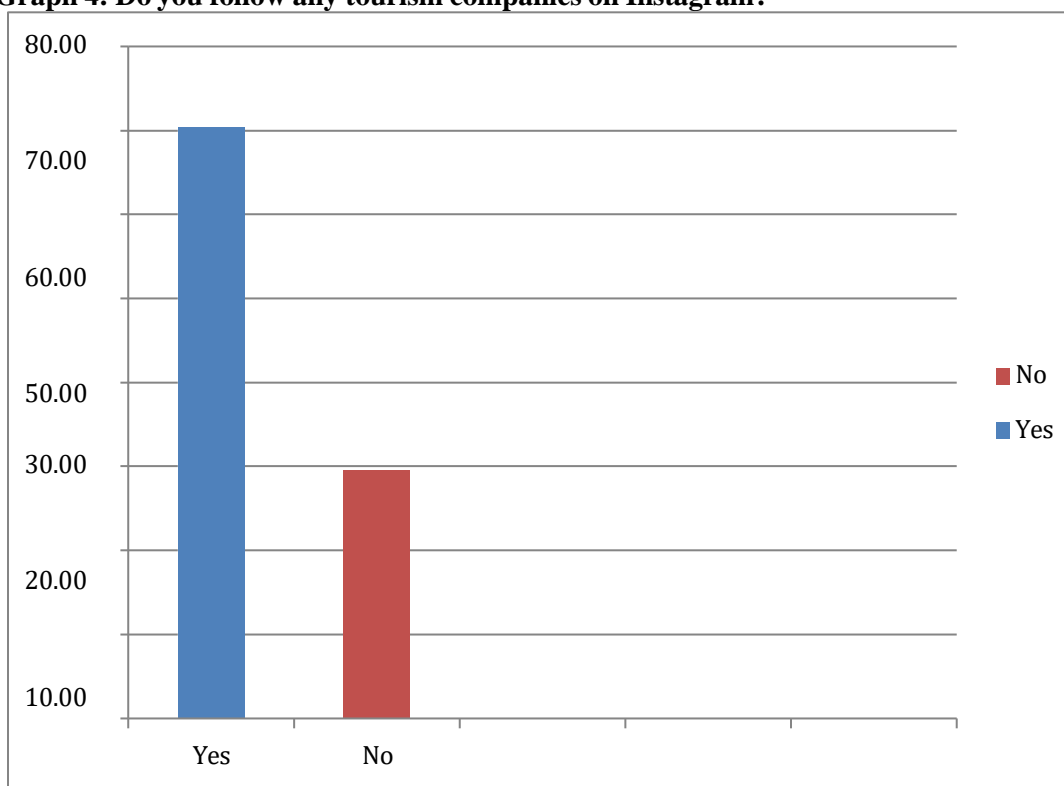
The data shows that the most common types of information people look for on Instagram when planning a trip are photos and videos of the destination and 37.2% , reviews of the destination 25.5% here people want to hear from other travelers about the destination before they plan to visit, 11.2% tips and advice from other travelers and 4.6 % people does not consider Instagram as a reliable source of information for travel.

Graph 3: How has using Instagram influenced your travel plan?



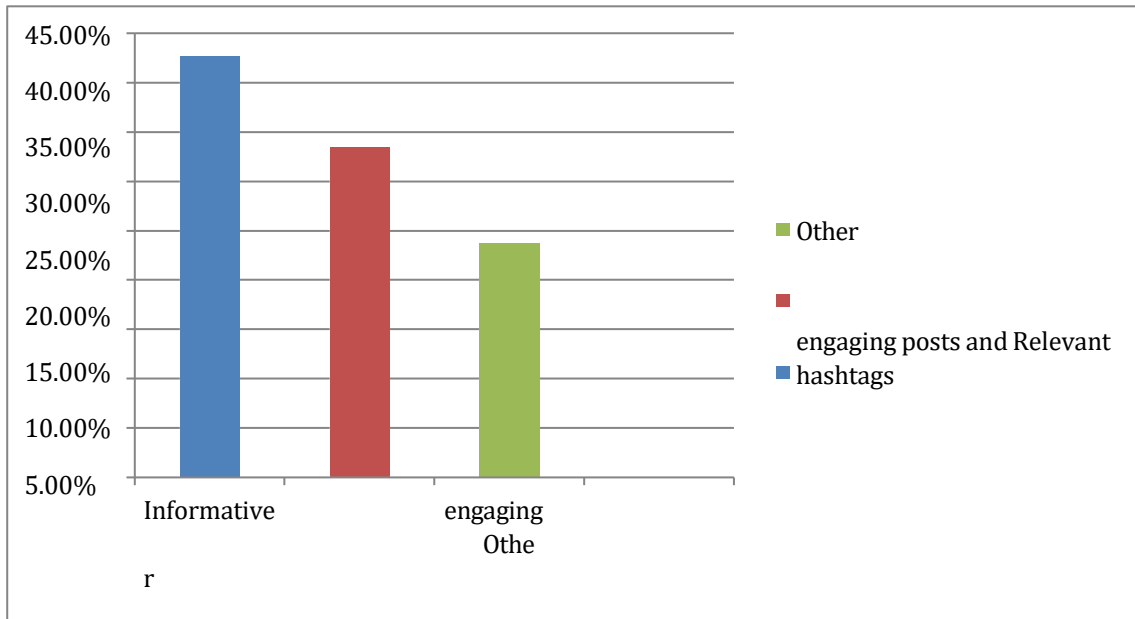
33.2 % Inspiring people to visit new destinations, Instagram is a visual platform, and people are drawn to seeing photos and videos of beautiful places. This can inspire people to visit new destinations that they might not have otherwise considered. Gained more knowledge about the places By 30.1% Instagram is a fantastic tool for researching a place before you go. You may, for instance, follow an Instagram account dedicated to destination-specific travel pictures. You can gain an impression of the location and activities available by reading this account. People (29.9%) discovered more affordable travel and lodging options Instagram is a fantastic resource for finding discounts on travel, lodging, and excursions. 10.7% of respondents reported experiencing additional ways that Instagram has impacted their trip plans, and 5.1% of respondents said they have connected with other travelers.

Graph 4: Do you follow any tourism companies on Instagram?



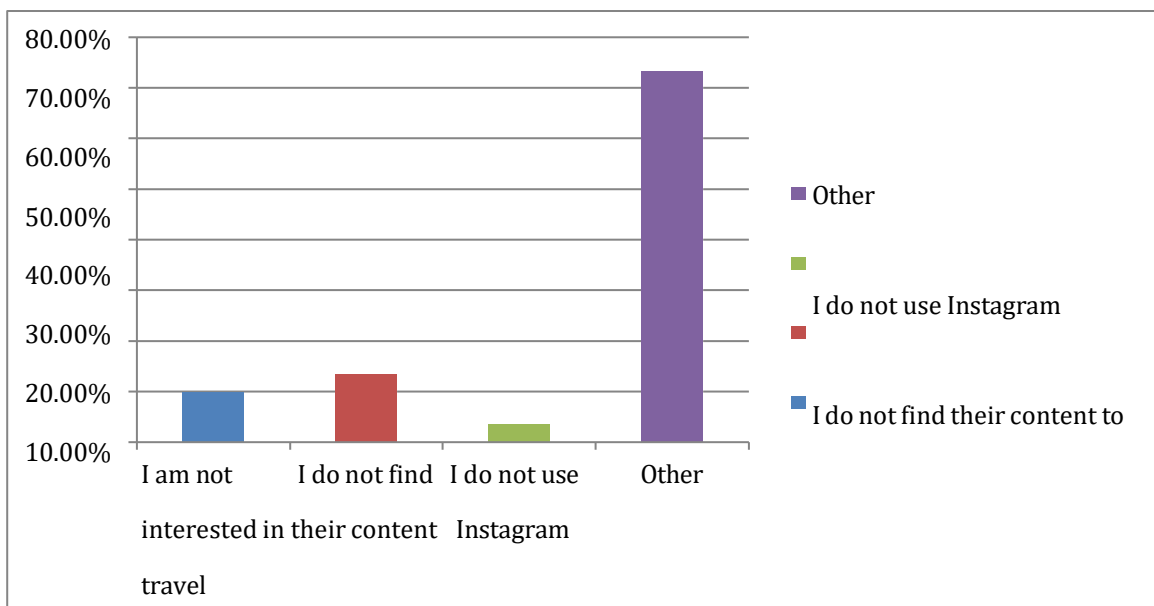
According to the data, 70.4% of users follow travel-related businesses on Instagram. This is probably a result of Instagram's widespread use as a medium for sharing images and videos from vacation. Travel enthusiasts may discover inspiration, new places to visit, and offers on airfare and lodging by following travel agencies on Instagram. There might be several explanations for the actions of the 29.6% of individuals who do not follow travel-related businesses on Instagram.

Graph 5: If yes, what do you like about their content?



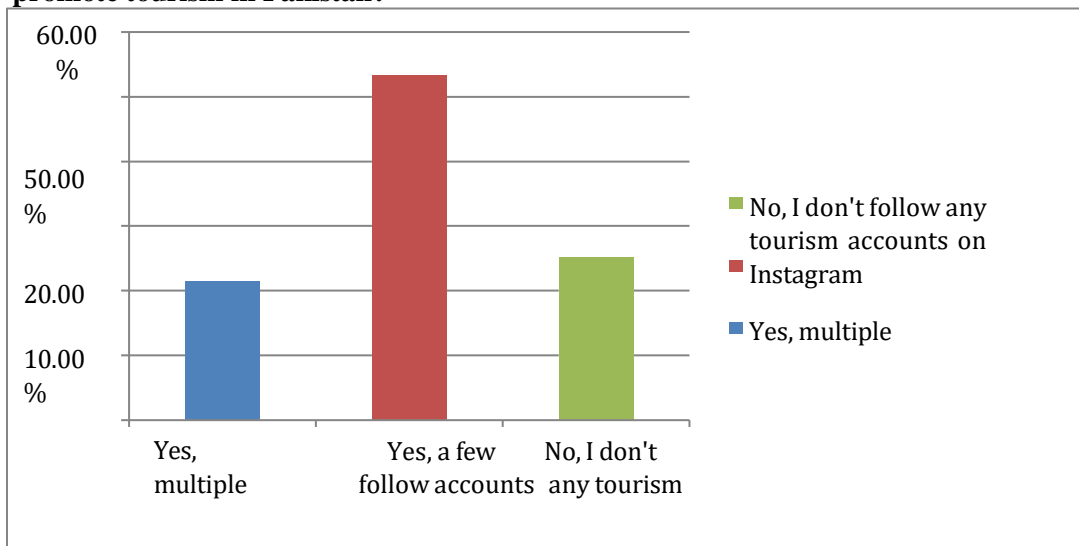
Informative posts are the most popular type of content, with 42.7% of people saying they like them. These posts provide information about the company's destinations, such as what to see, do, and eat. Informative posts are popular because they can help people plan their next trip. 33.5% of people say that they get engaged with engaging posts and relevant hashtags and 23.8% of people are saying that they like other content.

Graph 6: If no, why not?



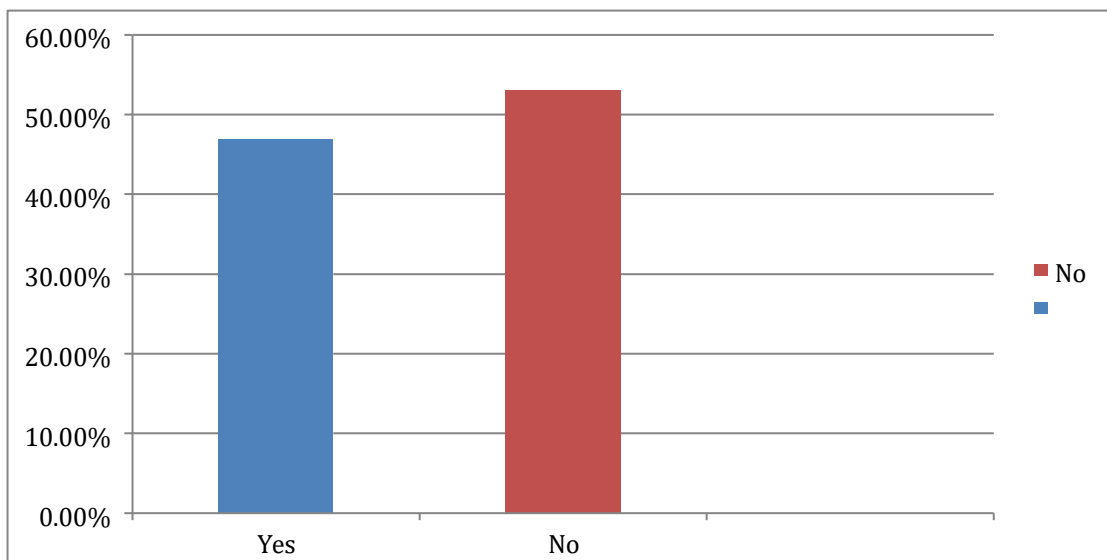
This data shows that (73.3%) of people might not follow tourism companies on Instagram, the reasons maybe they do not find the destinations to be interesting or might be they have had bad experiences with travel companies in the past. This data shows there are a variety of reasons why people might not follow tourism companies on Instagram. (9.9 %) people who are not interested are not interested in travel because some people simply do not enjoy travel, (13.4 %) Do not find their content to be informative or engaging because the content posted by tourism companies to be boring or repetitive. (3.5 %) people do not use Instagram maybe they are using other social media platforms.

Graph 7: Do you follow any tourism companies or organizations on Instagram that promote tourism in Pakistan?



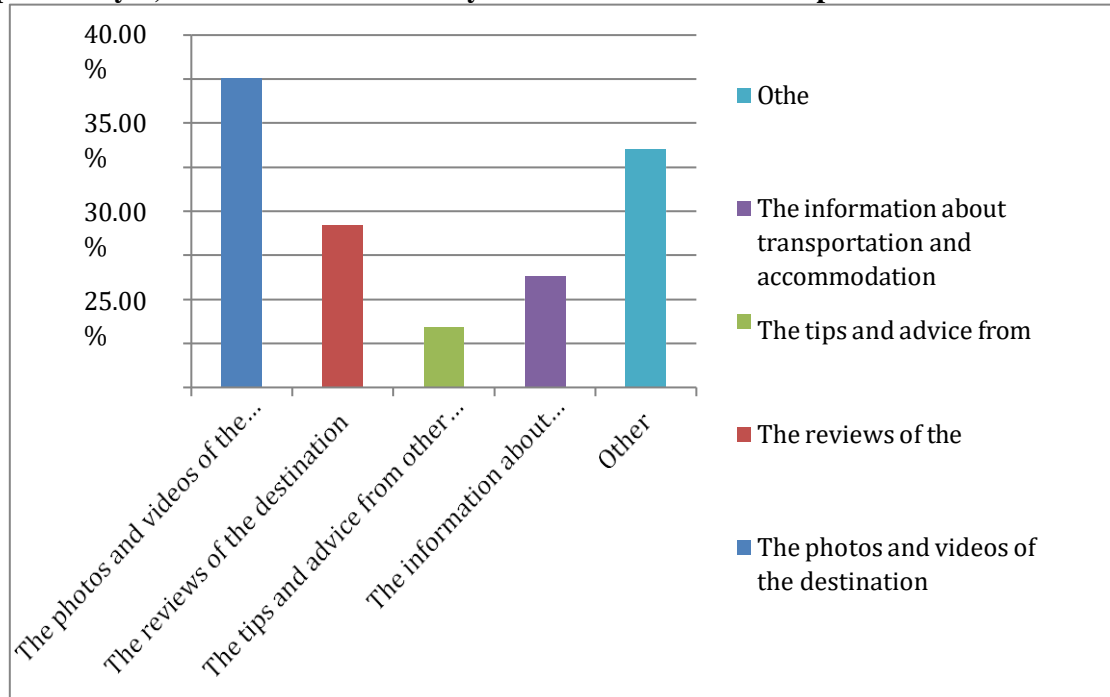
(53.3 %) the data shows that the majority of people follow at least one tourism company or organization on Instagram that promotes tourism in Pakistan. (21.5%) Of those who follow tourism accounts, most follow multiple accounts and (25.1 %) don't follow any tourism accounts on Instagram, it shows that they are not interested in traveling. Overall, the data shows that people are interested in learning more about Pakistan and its tourism industry. Tourism accounts on Instagram can play a role in promoting Pakistan as a travel destination and encouraging people to visit.

Graph 8: Have you ever booked a trip after seeing a post on Instagram?



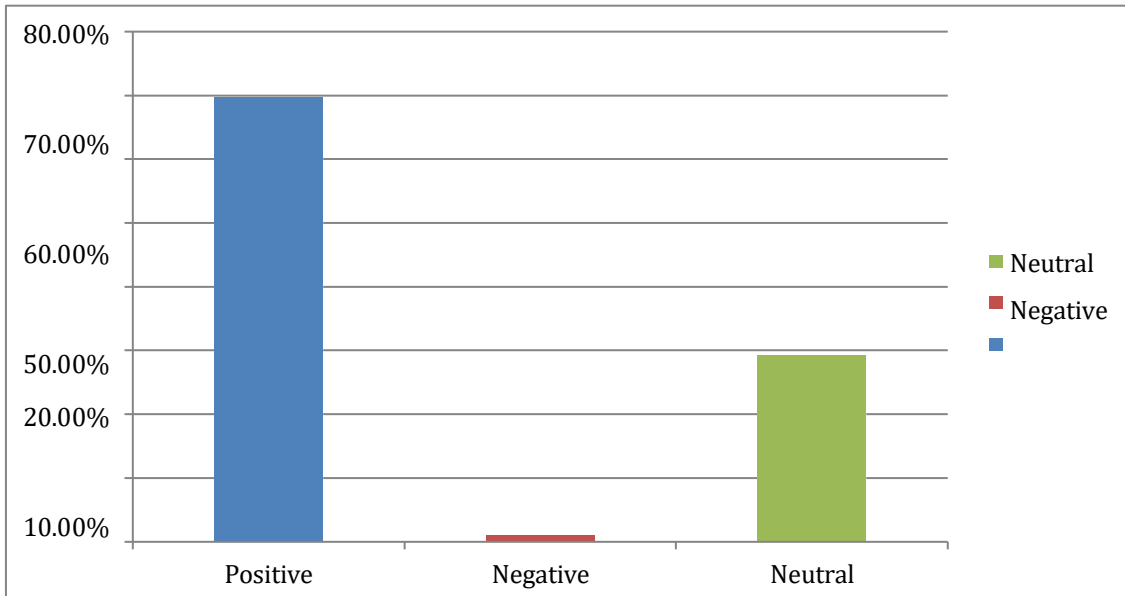
The Data shows that 46.9% of people have booked a trip after seeing a post on Instagram, while 53.1% have not. This suggests that Instagram can be a powerful tool for travel inspiration and bookings. There are some reasons that why people book a trip after seeing a post on Instagram, it means that it can be very effective at capturing people's attention and imagination. Of course, not everyone who sees a post on Instagram will book a trip. There are several factors that can influence whether or not someone books a trip, such as their budget, their travel interests, and their travel plans.

Graph 9: If yes, what factors influenced your decision to book the trip?



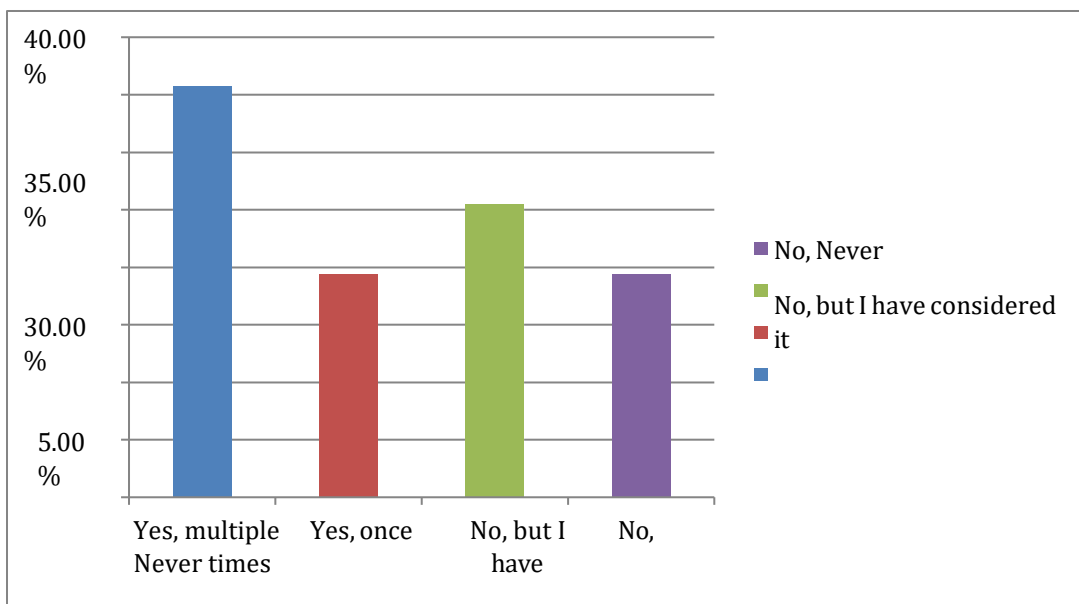
As you can see (35.1 %), the most common factor that influenced people's decision to book a trip after seeing a post on Instagram was the photos and videos of the destination. This suggests that people are visually motivated when it comes to travel. They want to see what a destination looks like before they book a trip. (18.4 %) the reviews of the destination. This suggests that people trust the opinions of other travelers when making travel decisions. They want to know what other people have experienced at a destination before they book a trip.

Graph 10: Do you think that Pakistani Tourism Company on Instagram has a positive or negative impact on tourism?



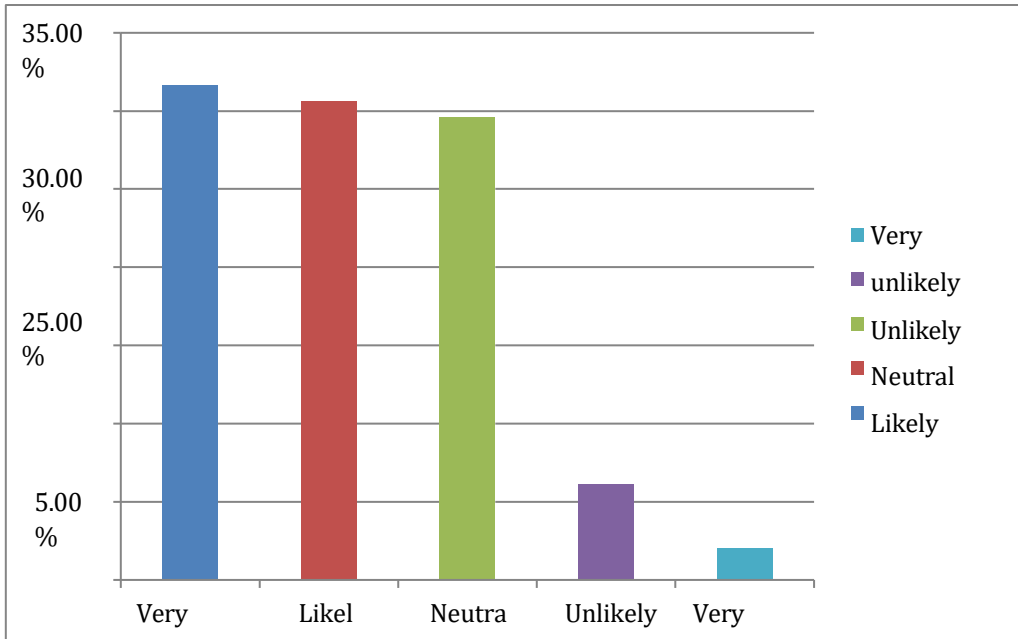
The vast majority of people (69.7%) believe that Pakistani tourism companies on Instagram have a positive impact on tourism. This suggests that people find these accounts to be informative, inspiring, and helpful when planning a trip. Only (1%) of people think that information posted by tourism companies is inaccurate. 29.2 % are neutral these people may be concerned about the accuracy or quality of the information posted by these companies, or they may have had negative experiences in the past.

Graph 11: Have you ever visited a destination solely because you saw it on Instagram?



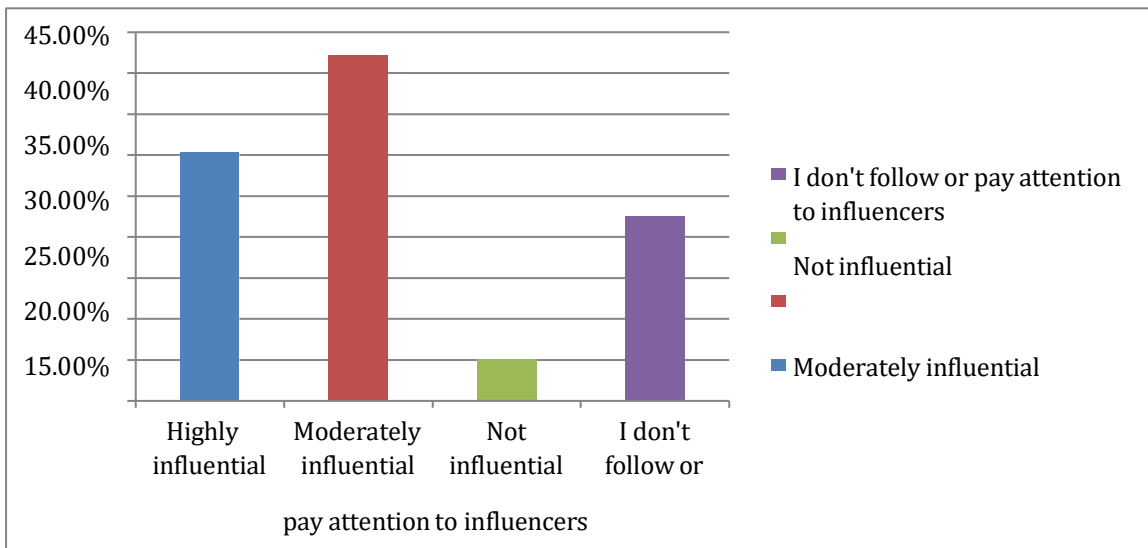
As you can see, 35.7% of people have visited a destination solely because they saw it on Instagram. This suggests that Instagram is a powerful tool for inspiring travel. The remaining 64.3% of people have not visited a destination solely because they saw it on Instagram. However, 25.5% of these people have considered it. This suggests that Instagram is a valuable tool for travel inspiration, even if it's not the only factor that people consider when making travel decisions.

Graph 12: How likely are you to engage with tourism-related content on Instagram by liking, commenting, or sharing posts?



As you can see, the majority of people (30.6%) are likely or (31.6 %) very likely to engage with tourism-related content on Instagram by liking, commenting, or sharing posts. This suggests that people are interested in seeing and sharing content about different destinations. Neutral 29.6% of people are neutral about engaging with tourism-related content on Instagram. This means that they are neither likely nor unlikely to like, comment, or share posts. 6.1% of people are unlikely to engage with tourism-related content on Instagram. This means that they are not interested in seeing or sharing content about different destinations. 2% of people are very unlikely to engage with tourism-related content on Instagram. This means that they are not interested in seeing or sharing content about different destinations and may even find it annoying.

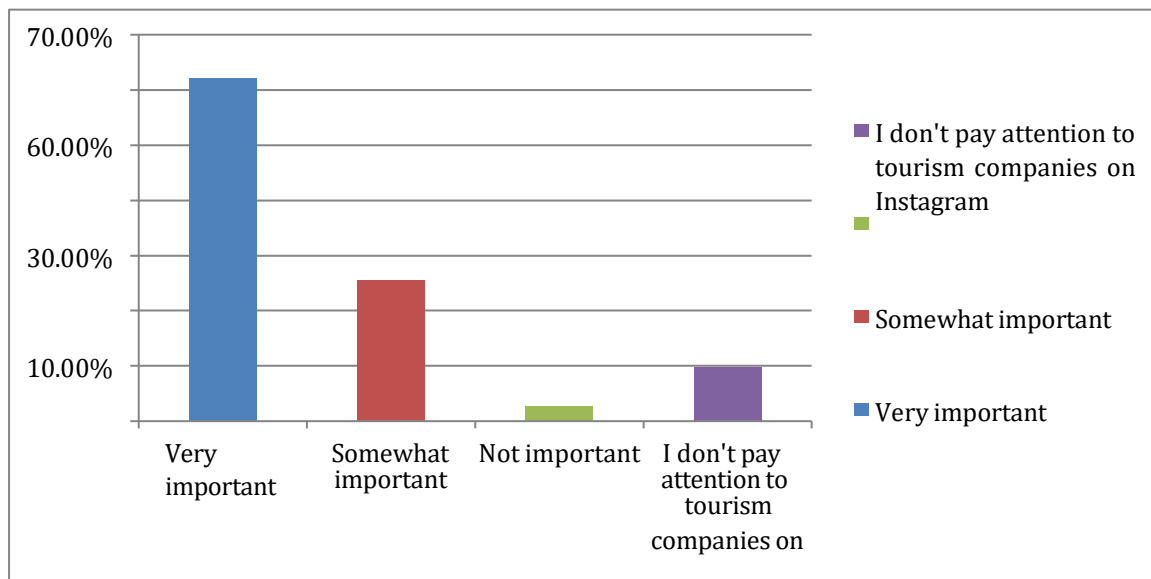
Graph 13: How influential are Instagram influencers or travel bloggers in shaping your travel preferences and choices?



As you can see, the majority of people (42.1%) find Instagram influencers or travel bloggers to be at least moderately influential in shaping their travel preferences and choices, and (30.3 %) people

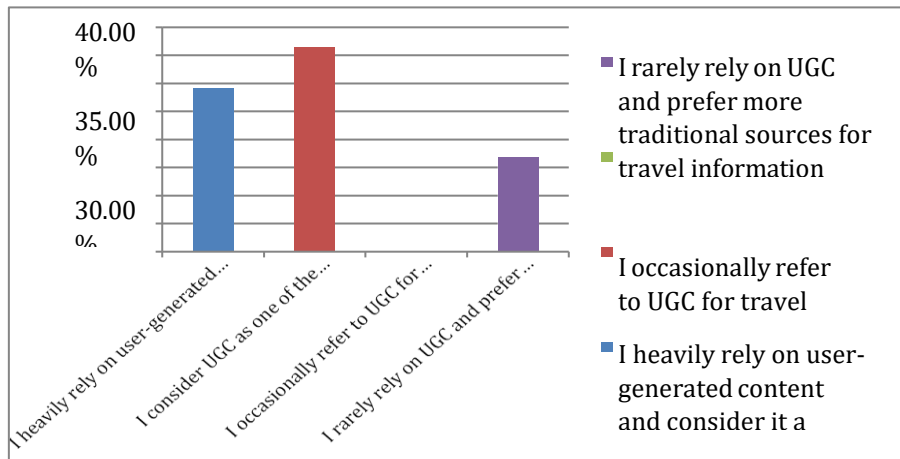
believe influencers are highly influential. This suggests that people are increasingly turning to social media for inspiration and information when planning their travels. (22.6 %) people believes do not follow any influencer they find Instagram influencers or travel bloggers to be not influential at all in shaping their travel preferences and choices. 5.1% of people find Instagram influencers or travel bloggers to be not influential at all in shaping their travel preferences and choices.

Graph 14: How important is it for tourism companies to have an active presence on Instagram to attract your attention and interest?



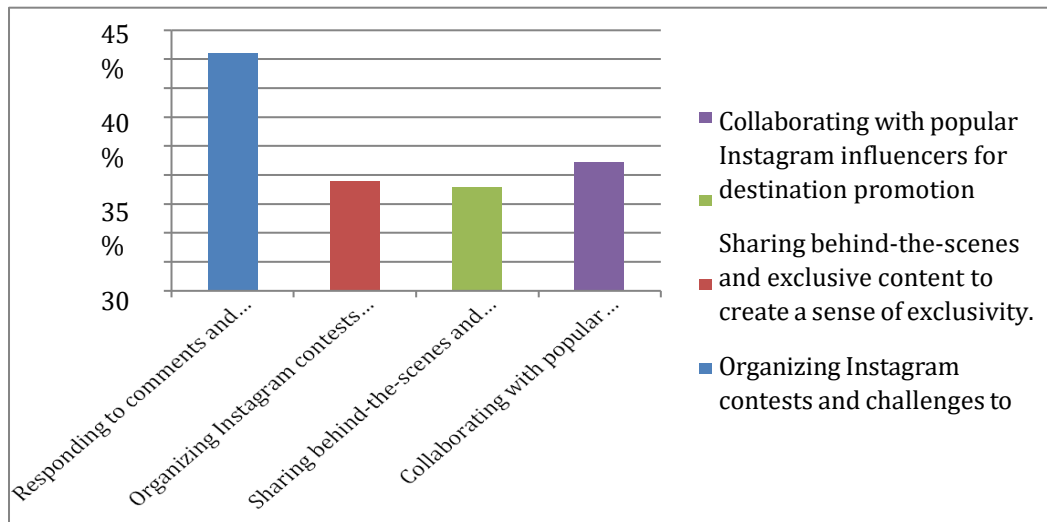
(62.1%) of people find it very important for tourism companies to have an active presence on Instagram to attract their attention and interest. (25.6%)of people find it somewhat important for tourism companies to have an active presence on Instagram. This means that they believe that tourism companies should be using Instagram, but it is not the most important way for them to reach potential travelers. (2.6%)of people find it not important for tourism companies to have an active presence on Instagram. 9.7% of people do not pay attention to tourism companies on Instagram. This means that they are not interested in the content that tourism companies post on the platform, or they do not believe that the content is valuable or helpful.

Graph 15: To what extent do you rely on user-generated content (UGC) for travel inspiration and decision-making?



29.2% of people find that UGC is a major influence on their travel decisions. This means that they often use UGC to research destinations, find inspiration for their trips, and make decisions about where to go and what to do. 36.4% of people find that UGC is one of the factors they consider when making travel decisions. This means that they use UGC alongside other sources of information, such as travel guides, travel blogs, and word-of-mouth recommendations. 17.4% of people find that UGC is not a major influence on their travel decisions. This means that they may occasionally look at UGC for inspiration, but they don't rely on it heavily when making decisions about where to go and what to do. 16.9% of people find that they rarely rely on UGC for travel information.

Graph 1: What strategies and techniques do tourism companies in Pakistan employ to engage and interact with Instagram users effectively?



41% of respondents said that this is the most important strategy for engaging with Instagram users. People appreciate it when companies take the time to answer back to their feedback and questions. 19% of people assumed that this is the most important strategy for engaging with Instagram users. This illustrates that people enjoy taking part in contests and challenges, and it can be a great way to create engagement. 17.9% of the people think that this strategy is very important for engaging

with the users. 22.1% of people said that this is the strategy for engaging with Instagram users. This shows that people are influenced by what influencers say, and collaborating with influencers can be a great way to reach a larger audience.

5 Discussion

It is obvious from the results that the role of Instagram in promoting tourism in Pakistan has become very important, with active users. Pakistan has come across on an increase in interest from travelers in recent years. This is because of referable to the purpose of travel agencies, which have been promoting Pakistan's tourist forthcoming on social media sites like Instagram. This study found that Instagram users are worthful assets for tourism companies. They show interest in learning about Pakistan's tourism potential and are willing to share their experiences with other travelers. This study also found that Instagram has been used very effectively by tourism companies to promote tourism. Mostly they use high-quality photos and videos, and relevant hashtags to reach a wider audience. 83.7 % are active Instagram users who use Instagram. The bulk of people follow tourism companies on Instagram, demonstrating a high level of interest in travel content and the aspiration to find inspiration, learn about new destinations, and discover travel arrangements.

Conversely, some people choose not to follow tourism companies on Instagram for many reasons, like finding the destinations tedious or having had bad experiences with travel companies earlier. It is seen from the results the majority of people find it essential for tourism companies to have a dynamic occurrence on Instagram to grab attention and interest. This shows that Instagram is a valued platform for travel companies to engage with potential travelers and showcase their destinations. A quantitative method has been utilized to see how Instagram users in Pakistan use the platform to learn about and plan travel users' perceptions of tourism in Pakistan and the role of tourism companies in Pakistan in promoting their destinations on Instagram. Closed-ended questions have been asked from Pakistani Instagram users. The majority of respondent has proved a higher level of trust in the material provided by Instagram while planning their future tours. This indicates that Instagram plays a positive role by posing correct and genuine destination information over posted views and pictures. The charm of a place's beauty serves as the main encouragement for potential tourists.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the "Promoting Tourism via Instagram; A study of Instagram Users and the Role of Tourism Companies in Pakistan. The study proved the importance of tourism companies in taking an active existence on Instagram. The bulk of Pakistani respondents (62.1%) deliberated that it very important, signifying that an active Instagram presence is decisive for drawing attention and interest. On the other hand, a small percentage (2.6%) did not find it important and put emphasis on the need for a differentiated marketing strategy outside Instagram. Instagram works as a powerful tool for stimulating travel and influencing travel decisions. A substantial percentage of people have reserved trips after seeing posts on Instagram, signifying the platform's value in apprehending people's attention and resourcefulness. Elements that influenced people's choice to book a trip after watching an Instagram post include the photos and videos of the destination and the reviews from other travelers. Furthermore, the importance of Pakistani tourism companies have an active presence on Instagram, most respondents find it very important for these tourism companies to get engaged with the users on the platform. In conclusion, Instagram has emerged as a powerful tool in the Pakistan travel industry, impelling travel decisions and exciting people to explore new destinations. Tourism companies, influencers, and user-generated content (UGC) all play vital roles in shaping travel inclinations and choices. To connect the perspective of Instagram, Pakistani tourism companies need to have an active presence, provide informative and engaging content, and leverage the influence of influencers and user-generated content. By doing so, they can effectively promote destinations, attract travelers, and contribute to the growth of the tourism industry.

References

- Ahmed, I. G. (2020). The Role of Social Media in Destination Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges for Tourism Companies. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 9, 101-108.
- Atske, S. (2022). Social Media Use in 2021. Atske, S. (2022b, May 11). Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. [No DOI provided]
- Babakus, E. (2019). The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty. *Marketing Management*. [No DOI provided]
- Baloch, Q. A. (2015). Regional Integration of Pakistan Tourism: Exploring Prospects. *Abasyn University Journal of Sciences*. [No DOI provided]
- Barbe, D. N.-G. (2020). Understanding the Driving Force behind Following Travel Accounts on Instagram. *e-Review of Tourism Research*. [No volume or issue number provided]
- Baruah, S. (2023). How Instagram Is Reshaping Travel into a Billion-Dollar Industry? *CNBC TV18*. [No DOI provided]
- Buhalis, D. (2018). Progress in Tourism Management: 30 Years of Research and Development. *Tourism Management*. [No DOI provided]
- Casaló, L. V.-S. (2019). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and Consequences of Opinion Leadership. *Business Research*. [No DOI provided]
- Chen, Y. L. (2021). *Social media in travel, tourism and hospitality: Theory, practice and cases*. Routledge. [No DOI provided]
- Chung, N., & Yeon, S. (2015). The influence of tourism websites on tourists' behavior to determine destination selection: A Case study of creative economy in Korea. *Telematics and Informatics*. DOI: 10.1016/j.tele.2015.04.002
- Dark and Bright Side of Social Media in Current Normal. (n.d.). *Frontiers*. [No DOI provided]
- Dolnicar, S., & Zare, S. (2015). Social Media and Tourism: A review of research. *Procedia-Social Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 3-11. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.1218
- Duffett, R. (2017). Instagram advertising: The effects of ad-type and persuasion knowledge on consumer responses. *Interactive Advertising*. DOI: 10.1080/15252019.2016.1272918
- Emotional Labor in the Tourism Industry. (2021). *Course Hero*. [No DOI provided]
- Fatanti, M., & O'Cass, A. (2015). Beyond User Gaze: How Instagram Creates Tourism Destination Brand? [No journal provided]
- Find My Adventure. (n.d.). *Instagram*. [No DOI provided]
- Gordon, J. (2022). Uses and Gratification Theory - Explained. *The Business Professor*. [No DOI provided]
- Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C. (2015). Smart tourism: Foundations and developments. *Electronic Markets*, 25(3), 179-188. DOI: 10.1007/s12525-015-0182-0
- Han, H. K. (2020). The impact of Instagram use on travel intentions: The case of university students in South Korea. *Travel Research*. [No DOI provided]
- How to Use Instagram for Tourism Marketing by Regiondo. (2022). *Regiondo Blog*. [No DOI provided]
- Hudson, S., Roth, M. S., & Madden, T. J. (2020). The effects of social media on emotions, brand relationship quality, and word of mouth: An empirical study of music festival attendees. [No journal provided]
- Hussain, K. (2020). Social media impact on tourism in Pakistan. *Bulletin of Business and Economics*. [No DOI provided]
- Instagram partner to help Destinations Recover and Rediscover. (2021). *UNWTO*. [No DOI provided]
- Jutbring, H. (2014). Encoding destination messages in media coverage of an international event: A case study of the European athletics' indoor championships. [No journal provided]
- Kaplan, A. M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003
- Mazhar, R., & Butt, A. (2019). The impact of social media on the tourism industry in Pakistan. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*. [No DOI provided]
- Moreau, E. (2022). What Is Instagram, and Why Should You Be Using It? *Lifewire*. [No DOI provided]

- Munar, A. M. (2013). Trust and involvement in tourism. [No journal provided]
- Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC). (n.d.). Instagram. [No DOI provided]
- Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. (2020). Tourism Statistics. [No DOI provided]
- Ramos, C., & Ribeiro de Almeida, C. F. (2020). Handbook of Research on Social Media Applications for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector. [No journal provided]
- The Transformative Impact of Instagram on the Tourism Industry. (2023). Indian Eagle. [No DOI provided]
- Toohy, W. D. (n.d.). Visions in Leisure and Business. [No DOI provided]
- Travel and tourism economic impact 2019. (2019). World Travel and Tourism Council. [No DOI provided]
- World Tourism Organization. (2021). World Tourism Organization. [No DOI provided]
- World Travel and Tourism Council. (2022). Economic impact reports. World Travel and Tourism Council. [No DOI provided]
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2015). A comparative analysis of major online review platforms: Implications for social media analytics in hospitality and tourism. [No journal provided]