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## The Role of Social Media Marketing in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: A study on Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT

At present, the hospitality industry has started to follow a social media marketing strategy as part of its marketing promotion to improve its brand value. This paper aims to find the various social media sites available in the hospitality industry. This paper seeks to identify the appropriate social media as well as suggest its benefit in the context of Bangladesh. It also aims to identify the importance of tourism marketing to reach actual and potential consumers. A mixed (qualitative and quantitative) method was used in the collection of primary data, whereas the random sampling method was used to obtain such data. This study also included elicited qualitative questions so as to accommodate understanding of the customer psychographics factors. The study will also determine the role social media marketing plays and how it operates in the tourism and hospitality arena, using a wide range of literature from academic articles, journals, and books. The research sample size is 270. The results of the study show that Facebook is one of the most favorable media for promoting the hospitality business. The study also tried to find out various aspects of respondent's basic information as well as their personal choices and views.

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is a mean, on how people communicate with one another, create a unique tie, and last share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and cyberspaces. Product and service marketing has been facilitated for the hospitality industry by different platforms provided by social media networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The way these portals have been created, such as with LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, is a massive opportunity for quality entries into the guest (Lanz *et al.*, 2010). This means that social media can penetrate more into the domains of cost and make it quite easy for any business, even one in hospitality, to really create brand awareness while collecting feedback straight from its customers. This was very much how things were done: at present, making a destination brand image, reaching out to a much wider audience at a low cost (Leung *et al.*, 2013). It is among the popular means of modern promotion for businesses, especially the hospitality industry, to penetrate the world market through the use of social media (Alves, 2016). By all means social media is that tool with a positive application for all age categories. The effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting tourism destinations is shown by a study conducted by (Lim *et al.*, 2020), especially among young people who believe in influencer's recommendations. On a daily basis, millions of people visit these social media platforms. With the new subscription-based social media sites, hotel brands are now upgrading their mechanisms to instil improved and more efficient communication across social media as they are no longer in competition. An active social media presence today determines a hotel's client base or clientele-it is simply going to run the risk

of losing a lot in both clients and business. Customers can be lost by hotels, and it is normally difficult for them to get them back. Hotels have a social media team that makes the necessary connections for their companies in keeping them relevant in the industry (Erdoğmuş, 2010). Such marketing social media platforms expand the users of the application sites available, look for products offered online or virtually and improve sales, advertise hotel services in the marketplace and provide social platforms for facilitating and improving business social networking. With social media, there is very little time for facility improvement. In fact, using them makes social vision very possible, as reaching the maximum number of targeted audience members is made possible through social media marketing that incorporates podcasts, wikis, vlogs, virtual videos, snap sharing, bulletin sharing, communication boards, and updates about hotel or business promotion on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc (Bashar, 2012). Modern hospitality has the fastest rate of progress among the industries. Impact of PNRs has on each step of the travel planning process from dreaming and planning to booking and experiencing (Fotis *et al.*, 2012). In the 18th century, huge numbers traveled around the world to go on pilgrimages; by the 19th and 20th centuries, pilgrimage had turned common, and people thereafter began moving from place to place for pleasure purposes. Easy access to distant places was indeed aided by wonderful things done in the advancement of technology and transport. Some technological advancements in the new century altered human existence, but these past ten years have transformed consumer behavior and corporate working processes with new technologies. Right now, millions

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of retail fronts can be accessed online; the impact of using social networking sites is felt in the hospitality industry (Curley, 2014). As stated by research conducted by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009), he identified that personalized marketing via social media gives more engagement and conversions in the travel sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Using social media as an advertising platform for a product or service is known as social media marketing. It is basically creating and sharing content so that customers would visit the website, increase brand awareness, and engage them. It is fast becoming an integral part of the hospitality business; this allows these enterprises to engage customers and build customer loyalty towards one's lodging or restaurant (Sotiriadis *et al.*, 2019). The interaction between businesses and clients could happen on such online platforms in many ways, such as posting pictures and videos of their facilities and services, responding to reviews, and providing tailored recommendations. The hotel sector is no exception to the evolution of customer interaction with corporations through social media marketing. In addition to improving engagement with guests, it improves the power of hotels and restaurants in increasing awareness among consumers and sales (Alawan *et al.*, 2017). Social media can be used for organizing promotional competitions that encourage people's participation with the company and share their experiences with others. This is one of the most important tools in hospitality businesses today, helping companies connect with consumers, listen to feedback, and use that to create innovative new offerings to the said improved consumer demands (Ye *et al.*, n.d.). With growing access to the Internet and information communication technology, social networking sites redefine ways people relate to each other, particularly in hospitality and tourism (Assenov & Khurana, 2012; Clark & Roberts, 2010). These web-generated ads are more credible than traditional media ads such as those on television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, because people from social networking sites sponsor these. In addition, social networking sites have enabled the collection of customers' data in an easily retrievable manner (Li & Darban, 2012). Social networking sites provide social media services that can assist a business in developing brand awareness and a positive image. People use social media, particularly networking, against getting into contact with friends or family. One could easily know what's up in the world, hands on top of the keyboard, sitting comfortably (Bilgihan, *et al.*, 2014). It is important for the tourism industry to grab this golden opportunity that social networks provide for bringing customers in by showing beautiful photos and videos. Loyal customers visiting a travel website upload on their personal Web pages (like Facebook) images of hotels, restaurants, and destinations that connect directly to the website. Now those who follow them and visit their Web pages may read what was found by the customers (Yazdanifard &

Yee, 2014). In this sense, online reviews as word of mouth or WOM act as the main attraction among customers. Attract or repel them: they help to envisage themselves at their preferred destination (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). A social site, therefore, communicates. More opportunities have resulted from easier access to social networking sites through mobile applications for the industry, such as maintaining contact, building brand awareness, and retaining customer loyalty (Bredican & Vigar-Ellis, 2014). Customers may talk to each other, trade stories, and express themselves, which can either pull in new people or keep them turned away from the industry, but it is good to know that many hotels really grasp how important visibility on social media platforms is for improving brand awareness (Assenov & Khurana, 2012). You need to keep on alerting yourself since you, along with many other people, use social networking sites to get to know it better in the hotel and tourist sectors. "However, hotels are working to invest more on spending of human resources and time into social media, as it's not a very big investment for them at this time" Assenov & Khurana (2012). At the same time, using social networking sites in terms of time and resources is considered low-cost, but it generates successful and effective marketing. Better communication technologies enable suppliers to work more efficiently, communicate more effectively, and more versatile (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). But now as social networking sites become an ultimate trend, they keep streaming in more number of hotels that add to their brands and promote their properties (Yazdanifard & Yee, 2014).

## Research Gaps

Social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn draw a huge crowd of potential customers for the hospitality industry. Good social media content can connect businesses with customers all over the world. Besides very much focused advertising and messaging, it allows direct worldwide targeted marketing such as specific demographics, geographic areas, and interest groups for more effective marketing budget utilization. Reviewing research papers, one observes that much has been said concerning social media use in the hospitality industry. However, most of those studies did not talk about the core role of social media, its advantages, its impact on the tourism industry, and clear definition of social media, etc. Most previous studies also relied on secondary information and were more of conceptual in nature. The current study is expected to do primary data collection for actual identification of total social media users, most user of social media, and its impact when reservation or booking a hotel, etc.

## Objectives of Research

- To identify the various social media sites used for hospitality industry and total numbers of users from Bangladesh and the World as well.
- To study the impact of social media in tourism and

hospitality industry.

- To understand how tourism marketing becomes relevant to reach new customers.
- To take feedback from different people to enhance customer participation in the hospitality industry.

### **Theoretical Framework of Research**

#### **Tourism**

Tourism today has become one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing industries contributing toward the economic growth of most nations in the world. The industry contributed \$8.9 trillion to world GDP in 2019, which amounted to about 10.3% of the total economy (WTTC, 2020). This means that one out of every ten jobs in this world can be found in the industry. To drive the point home, some pretty damn big numbers apply to just one market. Tourism serves as a key engine in driving foreign exchange income, creating lifeblood from international tourists to the developing countries that lower poverty levels and raise the gross domestic product (GDP) growth. While it has economic advantages, tourism has its disadvantages. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this vulnerability particularly poignant to many economies relying on tourism, as their economic performance is directly linked to the influx of visitors (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). The worst economic contractions experienced by countries for more than fifty years since the time of the Second World War are manifest within the gauges of the contraction studies done by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) between countries and those on travel privilege up to 12% within such GDP-dependent countries. Tourism has an immense environmental impact, going from carbon to pollution and habitat loss due to air travel (Lenzen *et al.*, 2018), accommodation stays and recreation. To put this in perspective, tourism is found to account for the global greenhouse emission on average 8% and predicted to rise (UNWTO, 2018 transportation relates to the bulk).

#### **Hospitality Industry**

Hospitality refers expressly to the relationship that defines that contact between guest and host. Hospitality means an act or practice of being hospitable. It links the travel and hospitality sectors. Describes the phenomenal phenomenon of newly accessible markets which have allowed hospitality companies to succeed at an international level (Smith *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, technology as a whole (for example, online booking systems with AI integrated with customer service) will revolutionize the way operational efficiency is achieved and the way customers interact with brands (Jones & Lockwood, 2020). Using AI and machine learning to enable hyper-personalized customer experiences, creating an instant customer care system using chatbots, market segmentation through data analytics, etc. are just a few examples (Tussyadiah, 2020). The emerging economy-sharing platforms, such as Airbnb, disrupted the traditional models of hospitality, thus needing innovations from time

to time in the industry (Guttentag, 2019). Furthermore, hospitality is the welcoming, receiving, hosting, or entertaining a guest (Yogitha, 2018). Hospitality is all about courtesy and consideration towards the guest. The hospitality industry encompasses local services such as entertainment, accommodation, and tourist catering. It is the business of greeting or receiving guests as well as providing them with accommodation, entertainment, and food services. The hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that include lodging, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise lines, and additional fields within the tourism industry.

#### **Social Media Marketing**

The social media sites used in social media marketing undertake the process of enhancing their online presence and advertising their goods and services. For Yogitha (2018) social networks were important for the structure of business and social networks as well as the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Social media marketing makes use of message boards and wikis, online videos, photo-sharing, news-sharing, and posts on social networking sites to reach a wide or specific audience. It also promotes true-time interactivity, providing switches for brands to enter the chat and one-on-one talking channels thus promoting personalized campaigns toward brand loyalty. Cost effective compared to traditional marketing channels-Popular among social media marketers Social media, for that matter, has brought businesses close to large audiences to connect with them for a fraction of what cost a television or a newspaper and so on (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). One makes their presence visible or aware in the same way that social media marketing is designed. In fact, the analysis of social media revealed that most major businesses had indeed incorporated them into their marketing efforts, thereby strengthening brand communication across territories (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012). It is quite challenging to connect the outcome of social media activities on business performance, e.g., brand loyalty and customer engagement, as the effect, in many cases, is not easily quantifiable and often indirect (Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

#### **Social Media Marketing in Hospitality Industries**

With social media, the best marketing tactic in this hospitality industry will become a reality. It offers the companies a chance to talk with their customers on a more personal level and make this channel much more engaging. Comparing to things like customer satisfaction and loyalty, this channel could prove to be of great importance in an overcrowded hospitality sector (Kaplan *et al.*, 2010). It's really a great platform where the target audience is mostly found on these media (Yogitha, 2018). All activities of people today seem to take place on social networks; their voices can be heard on the networks 24/7 or always. In the hospitality industry, Hotels and Resorts have been marketing their business on social media.

Using social media, the company can communicate with the clients directly, build up a profile for the company, showcase its products and services, and finally boost customer loyalty. The company may increase the value of the volume of its sales by communicating to new clients. The most common of these include social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and Instagram. Additionally, consumers learn more about the hotel sector as to its social media presence, fan base, and guest reviews, among other elements.

### Social Media Users and Growth Rates in Bangladesh and Over The World

Social media growth rates have been a subject of considerable interest and study over the past decade due to the rapid expansion and influence of these platforms in Bangladesh and globally. Due to the increase in social media users, the hospitality industry can promote itself easily. When hospitality industries promote their services and prices, the users of social media can use their services. So, the hospitality industry should know about social media users and growth rates in Bangladesh and around the world is as follows:

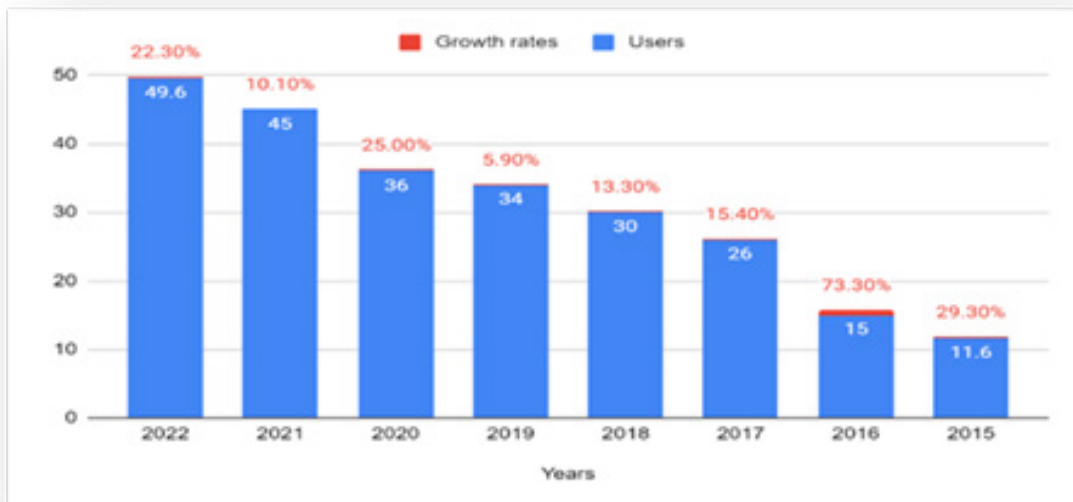


Figure 1: Showing Social Media Users (Million) and Growth Rates in Bangladesh



Figure 2: Showing Social Media Users (Billion) and Growth Rates over the world

Figure 1: According to DataReportal in 2015, there were 11.6 million people actively using social media in Bangladesh, an increased of 29.30% In 2016, using Socail media 15 million and increased of 73.30%. In 2017, using Socail media 26 million and increase of 715.40%. In 2018, using Socail media 30 million and increased of 13.3o%. In 2019, using Socail media 34 million and increased of 5.90%. In 2020, using Socail media 36 million and increased of 25.00%. In 2021, using Socail media 45 million and increased of 10.10%. In 2022, using Socail media 49.6 million and increased of 22.30%.

Figure 2: According to Global Data & Statistics in 2016, there were 2.3 billion people actively using social media in the world, and this was an increased of 11.00% . In 2017, using Socail media 2.79 billion and increased of 21.00%. In 2018, using Socail media 3.19 million and increased of 9.00%. In 2019, using Socail media 3.48 million and increased of 9.20%. In 2020, using Socail media 3.96 million and increased of 13.70%. In 2021, using Socail media 4.48 million and increased of 13.13%. In 2022, using Socail media 4.62 million and increased of 3.19%. In 2023, using Socail media 4.95 million and increased of 7.07%.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population unit is entirely concerned with individuals with authority run in tourism stakeholders' communities (Bhuiyan, 2023). Due to researcher constraints, large numbers of respondents failed to collect the data because of the high cost and time-consuming efforts. Primary data were collected using random sampling method or technique (Akter *et al.*, 2023). Primary data were collected using questionnaire forms using Google form that conducted with tourism students, job holders, general peoples as well as tourists. The researchers used Yes or No questions so that they could understand the opinions of respondents, and the researchers included some questions whereby respondents could measure on a five-point scale, where 1 equals always and 5 equals never. Mostly qualitative and quantitative data are collected through Googles Forms. It also included some secondary studies as the methodological basis for research. The authors plan to review and analyzed various existing literature such as research articles, journals, and books, highlighting the importance of social media in tourism and hospitality practices, especially in Bangladesh.

### Data Analysis

All survey responses transcripts will be keyed into a spreadsheet database using Microsoft Excel (Bhuiyan, 2023). Data analysis will, therefore, be done as it will allow easier manipulation and calculation of statistical measures using Microsoft Excel (Khanom *et al.*, 2022). Data analysis will generally concern the effort to explain the relationships between identifying key findings and addressing research objectives (Mikalef *et al.*, 2020). Survey data will use Microsoft Excel 2016 to create graphical representation. The quantitative illustration will be in forms of bar graphs and pie charts for visual

interpretation and comparison between survey responses. The visualization will accompany the descriptive statistics and offer a visual dimension to the reporting of the survey findings (Milon, 2024).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Figure 3, The sample can be stated to consist of 270 respondents. Of this population majority between 18-25 years 171 (63.3%) and a minimum number above 50 years 10 (3.7%), and others below 18 years 10 (3.7%), 25-35 (18.5%), 35-45(10%).

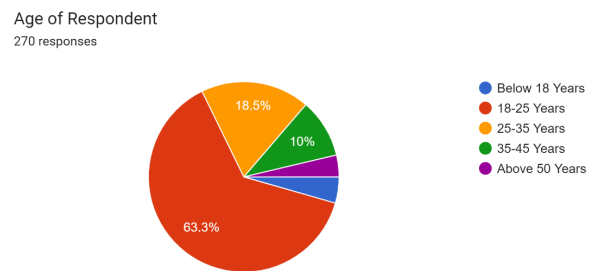


Figure 3: Showing Age of respondents by using Pie Chart

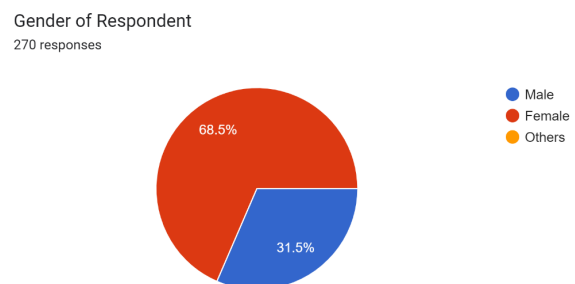


Figure 4: Showing Gender through using Pie Chart

From the Figure 4, Out of the entire population studied, there exists 85 Male (31.5%) and 185 Female (68.5). There was not any other gender which may come under the respondents.

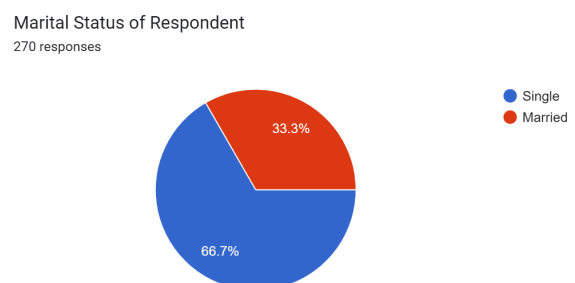
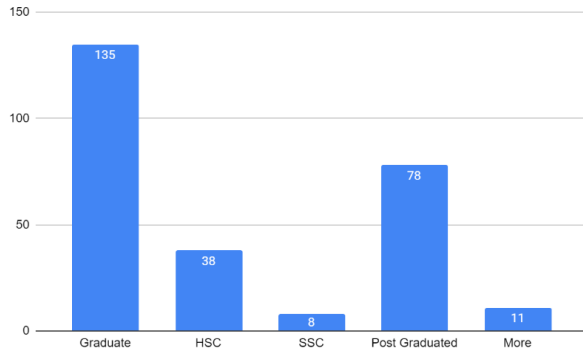


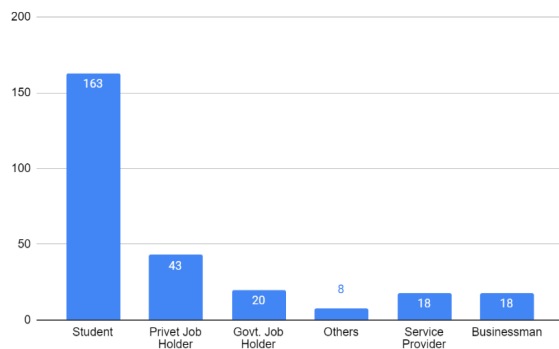
Figure 5: Marital Status of respondentst

From the Figure 5, Among these respondents are 180 single (66.7%) and 90 married (33.3%).



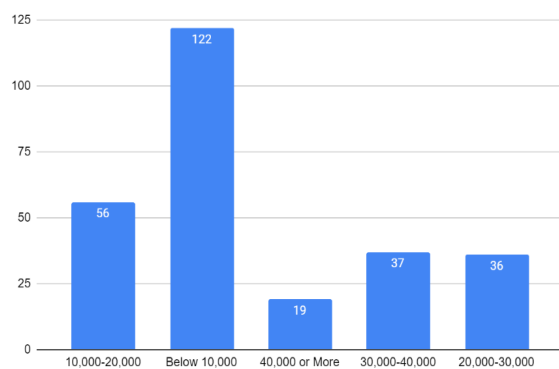
**Figure 6:** Educational Qualification of the respondents

From Figure 6, Among these respondents are graduate 135 (50%), HSC 38 (14.1%), Postgraduate 78 (28.9%), SSC 8 (3%) and more 11 (4.1%).



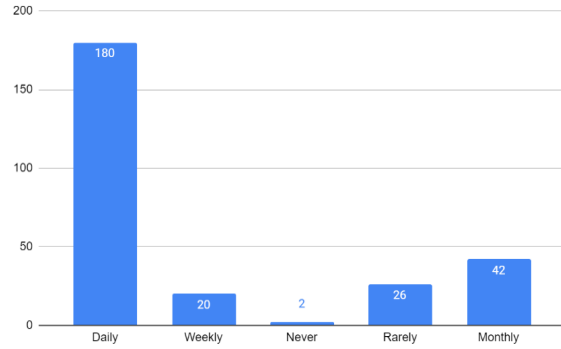
**Figure 7:** Occupation of respondents

From the Figure 7, Among these respondents are student 163 (60.4%), Service provider 18(6.7%), Govt. job holder 20 (7.4%), Private job holder 43 (15.9%) , Businessman 18 and other 8 .



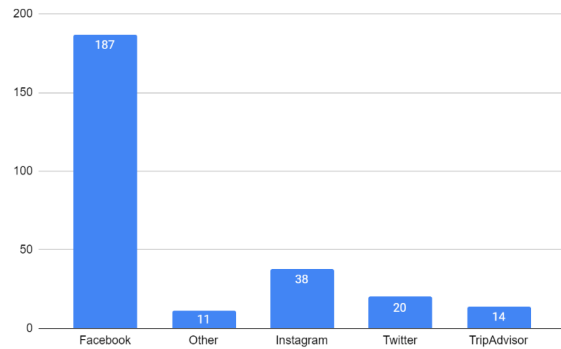
**Figure 8:** Monthly income of the respondents in BDT

From the Figure 8, Among these respondents are income below 10,000 (45.2%), 40,000 or more (7%), 10,000 – 20,000 (20.7%) .



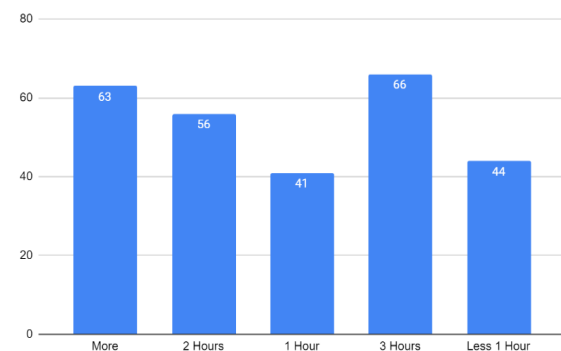
**Figure 9:** How often does S/he use social media

From the Figure 9, Among these respondents are 180 (66.7%) use social media daily, Weekly use 20 (7.4%), Monthly use 42 (15.6%), Never 2 and Rarely 26.



**Figure 10:** Which social media platform does S/he use the most

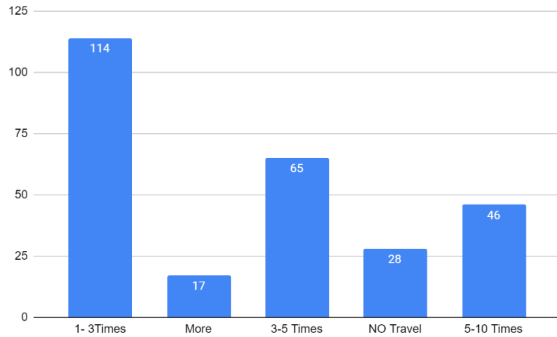
From the Figure 10, Among this respondents 187 (69.3%) use Facebook as a social media, 38 (14.1%) use Instagram as a social media, 20 (7.4%) use Twitter as a social media, 14 (5.2%) use TripAdvisor as a social media, 11 (4.1%) use more. By the data, we can understand that most people use Facebook as social media. So, hospitality industries should promote here and engage customers.



**Figure 11:** How many hours day do they spend on Social media

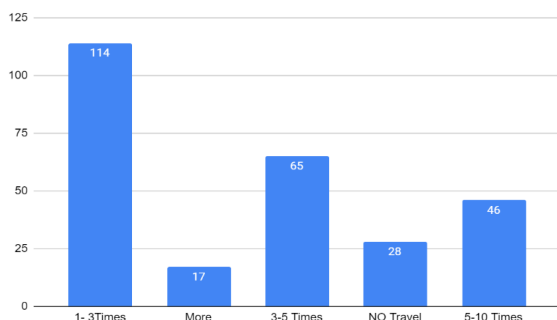
From the Figure 11, Among this respondents 63 (23.3%) use social media 3 hours more, 66 (24.4%) use social media 3 hours , 56 (20.7%) use social media 2 hours , 41

(15.2%) use social media 1 hours more, 44 (16.3%) use social media less 1 hour. By the data, we can understand that most people use social media 3 hours. So, hospitality industries should promote here and engage customers cause they waste their time daily.



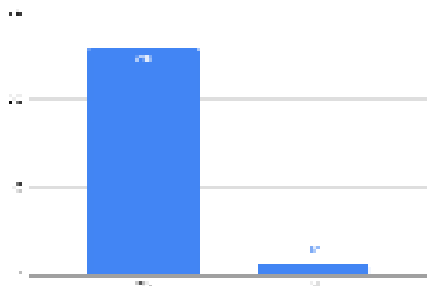
**Figure 12:** How often does travel S/he domestically in Bangladesh

From the Figure 12, Among the respondents travel domestically 1-3 times (114), 3-5 times (65), 5-10 times (46), more (17) and no travel (28). As they visit regularly, hospitality industries should promote regularly so that they can buy/use their services.

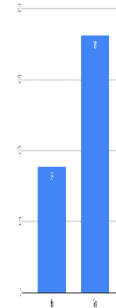


**Figure 13:** How often does one travel S/he internationally

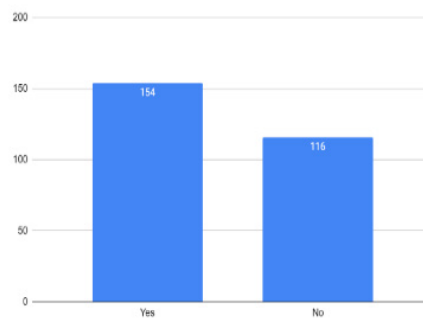
From the Figure 13, Among the respondents travel tour internationally 1-3 times (75), 3-5 times (40), 5-10 times (22), more (5) and no travel (128). It's a very big amount. According to the chart we can understand the lack of money and proper knowledge people lose the interest to visit foreign countries. By above data just 53.6% people completed a tour internationally.



**Figure 14:** Respondents like travel content on social media.

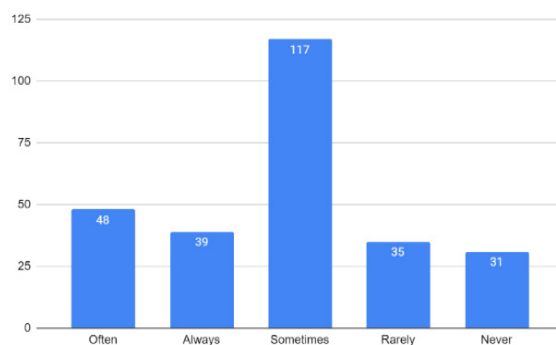


**Figure 15:** Respondents booked a hotel based on social media reviews.



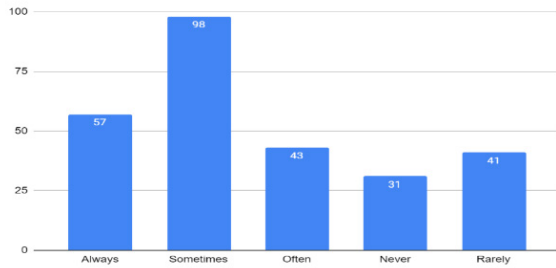
**Figure 16:** Respondents booked a tour package based on social media advertisements.

From the Figure 14, 15 & 16, In figure-12, we can see that 258 (95.6%) like travel content on social media and dislike 12 (4.4%). In figure-13, Respondents booked a hotel based on social media reviews 67%. Moreover, figure 14, Respondents booked a tour package based on social media advertisements 57%. By the data we can understand people (tourists) like travel related content and booked hotel accommodation services.



**Figure 17:** How often does S/he share their travel experiences on social media.

From the Figure 17 & 18, the respondents always share and post experiences 39 & 57, Often share and post 48 & 43, Sometimes share and post experiences 117 & 98, Rarely share and post experiences 35 & 41 and Never share and post 31 & 31. By the above data we can understand that tourists want to share experiences on social media. So, hospitality provider institutions should



**Figure 18:** How often does S/he share their travel experiences on social media.

follow the post of tourist and make decisions on tourist experience so that the hotel, motel, restaurant can engage the potential customer (tourists).

Based on all pie charts and data Graphs, we can summarize the Role of Social Media Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality Sector. The survey also uncovers various unknown viewpoints from the respondents through data analysis. In the charts, this research found that most of the respondents in the age group of 18-25 have the desire to travel to various states under tourism, and their frequency of using social media is about 3 hours, and they travel at home (1-3 times). Possessed probably by a dearth of funds they do not travel internationally. This study has also revealed the fact that between the ages of 25-35 have a desire to travel abroad, and most are employed people (govt. or private). This research also shows that now most of the people are using Facebook or other social media and publicly sharing. This research has also included some qualitative questions to know how respondents feel, and the huge suggestions that were provided by the respondents could bar the obstacles of engaging customers in Social media, increasing the brand awareness, and revenue.

## CONCLUSION

This research is all about understanding the perception and importance of social media in the hospitality industry. In today's world, business is not as easy as it used to be, and there is even more need for an active social media presence in hospitality. Then, as we know, the broader your visibility, the more powerful you become in the market and the further your business goes. So, we should go ahead with the promotional instruments such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TripAdvisor. Promotional media/instruments can build business and grow brand value. Without a doubt, engineering social media is vital for maintaining a company in the marketplace. The hospitality industry has to provide an option for their customers to book everything online. Using social media channels allows the hospitality sector to direct and improve brand image, reputation, retention, and loyalty with customers and raise sales. During data analysis, he finds out that most people use Facebook and realize that most people want to visit a tourism

destination. So, the regulatory authority of the hospitality sector should make the accounts and then fill it with all the posts so that tourists can understand the present quality and price of service.

## Recommendations

Some of the suggestions for hotelier and marketing teams collected from the findings and discussions in this paper on importance and impacts of social media advertising in hospitality industry include the following:

### Utilize Multiple Social Media Platforms:

- Facebook and Instagram: Utilize the two platforms because they have many users and they are visual. Share incredible photos and amazing videos of hotel facilities, rooms and surrounding places.
- Twitter: Use it for real-time updates, customer service, and engagement through trending topics and hashtags.
- LinkedIn: It is also important to connect with professionals and corporate customers by highlighting any business facilities in use, event spaces or industrial expertise.

### Create Engaging Content:

- Develop a content calendar that will help you post different types of content including guest stories, user generated contents, special offers, local events etc. on a regular basis.
- Use interactive materials such as polls quizzes contests to increase its involvement rate.
- Share some customer reviews or testimonials in order to build trust in your brand.

### Work with Influencers:

- Associate with travel bloggers, influencers, or local celebrities that can honestly advertise the hotel to their fans.
- Offer free stays or events in exchange for mentions on social media platforms and analyses.

### Track and Respond to Customer Feedback:

- Listen to other people's opinions online through such tools as social media monitoring software that could help them follow up on what is said about them.
- Respond quickly to comments, messages, and reviews which will go a long way in showing customers that their concerns are being addressed.

### Offer Exclusive Social Media Promotions:

- Special discounts, packages or promotions just for social media followers.
- Include limited-time offers to give bookings an urgency.

### Contributions Of The Paper

The current study is a comprehensive exploration of the effect of social media marketing on tourism and the

hospitality industry in Bangladesh. This study reveals the ways in which social media sites attract tourists, promote hospitality services, and gain overall visibility for the industry. The study has also tried to bring in the importance of social media marketing strategies that have been effectively discovered in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These tips are useful for any firm in the travel and hospitality sector on how to maximize its social media presence. This research also finds out Social media is good and the best medium for promoting hospitality business and it is also information.

### Limitations And Future Research Directions

There are some most important contributions of current study and also its methodological design in itself is unique, but no study is devoid of scope of improvement of further studies. This indicates that tons of interest have been attached for marketing hotels in social media marketing: the importance of social media, its users and increased growth rate in Bangladesh as well as global. Follow secondary data in the paper. Stewart and Kamins (1993) say that secondary data have its disadvantages in collecting, reporting and interpreting the information; it has its own issues. Also the researcher does not capture all social media platforms and their positive and negative uses in the hotel industry. Future research could further discuss the positive and negative effects of social media on hotel industry practices. Future studies may be undertaken to collect large primary data from sixty-four districts of Bangladesh, thereby rendering the study more applicable for the hospitality industry.

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