

THE INFLUENCE OF TRAVEL VLOGGERS ON TOURIST BEHAVIOUR: STUDY OF DESTINATION CHOICES AND TRAVEL PLANNING DECISIONS

*** Apoorv Jadhav, **Shambhavi Balse & ***Prof. Farheen Sayyad**

Research Students, *Research Guide, R. A. Podar College of Commerce and Economics (Empowered Autonomous), Matunga, Mumbai*

Abstract:

Travel vlogging has emerged as a significant influencer in the tourism industry, shaping consumer behaviour and decision-making. This study explores the impact of travel vlogs on tourists' destination choices by analysing the relationships between trust in vloggers, frequency of content consumption, and subsequent travel behaviour. A mixed-method approach was employed, incorporating surveys of 95 participants aged 18 and above, to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights. Results reveal a strong correlation between frequent consumption of travel vlogs and the likelihood of visiting promoted destinations. Trust in vloggers plays a pivotal role in shaping travel intentions, although scepticism towards sponsored content persists. The findings highlight the effectiveness of travel vlogs in destination marketing and their potential to spotlight offbeat locations, benefiting local economies and fostering cultural appreciation. The study highlights the importance of authenticity and sustainability in vlogging, offering actionable insights for content creators and tourism boards to leverage this medium responsibly.

Keywords: Travel vlogs, Tourist Behaviour, Trust in vloggers, Influence of Travel Vloggers

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Introduction:

In the growing era of Information Technology, the tourism industry is experiencing a transformative shift driven by emerging digital trends. One such trend gaining momentum is travel vlogging, which sets new expectations and ideas about tourism and travel destinations. Travel vlogs have become a dynamic medium for vloggers to connect with travel enthusiasts and potential travellers, establishing a mutual relationship built on trust and shared experiences. These connections often influence key decisions related to transportation, accommodation, dining, and other aspects of tourism, positioning vlogs as a crucial part of the decision-making process for many viewers. This research paper delves into the perceived impact of travel vlogging on tourists' decision-making, analysing the specific elements of travel vlogs that shape viewers' perceptions of destinations. By

blending entertainment with authentic storytelling and practical advice, travel vlogs inspire potential travellers while creating emotional connections through relatable content. They not only guide viewers with practical insights but also establish trust and credibility, encouraging them to rely on vloggers' recommendations when planning trips.

The study emphasizes the significant role of travel vloggers in destination branding, showcasing their ability to promote lesser-known destinations, enhance brand awareness, and appeal to global audiences. Through engaging narratives and visual storytelling, vloggers provide emerging markets with a platform to highlight their unique offerings, creating new opportunities to attract international tourists. Furthermore, the research underscores the influence of travel vlogs in reshaping the tourism landscape, offering valuable insights into how digital content

creators are redefining marketing strategies in the evolving digital era. By examining these trends, the study sheds light on the growing importance of travel vlogging as a powerful tool for inspiring travel and transforming consumer behaviour.

Literature Review:

Travel vlogs are emerging as influential tools in shaping tourists' destination choices and travel planning decisions. The probability of the travellers booking a trip to a tourist destination after watching a vlog becomes quite high (*Oscar-Luis Gutiérrez-Aragón et al., 2024*). This makes vlogs attain a certain importance in the tourism marketing and consumer behaviour. Travellers can get a brief knowledge about the tourist destination before visiting the actual destination first hand. This information includes accommodation choices, places to visit in the locality, cultural norms and diversity, transportation within the locality and many other factors which can be best suited to the traveller as per the financial position of the traveller.

Vloggers', particularly their sincerity, professionalism, and attractiveness, positively affects viewers' inspiration and subsequent travel planning behaviour (*P. Nguyen et al., 2023*). As compared to traditional blogs which comprise texts and images, travel vloggers use a storytelling approach in the form of audio visuals, which can better communicate the travellers' honest review about the tourist destination. This impacts the credibility and the trust in the vlogger helping the potential travellers make informed decisions about their trips. Travel vlogs are considered efficient informative tools for decision-making, a trend expected to increase in the future (*Oscar-Luis Gutiérrez-Aragón et al., 2024*). Due to the rise in the trends of travel vlogging, many tourist destinations use paid promotions to promote the destination which plays an important role in tourism marketing and consumer behaviour. Additionally, vlogs shape destination

credibility and strengthen perceived destination image, influencing cognitive, emotional, and epistemic values in travel-related decisions (*Princess Elisha S Abad & Noelah Mae Dimayuga Borbon, 2021*). This study will explore the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel related decisions influenced by the content and the frequency of consuming travel vlogger's content and the likelihood of the travellers visiting the tourist destinations promoted by the vloggers. The findings will also help tourism destination marketing organizations better understand the influence and underlying mechanisms of Vlog videos, providing useful guidance for shaping effective marketing strategies.

Research Methodology:

Over the past decade, passionate travellers have converted their love for travelling into a full-time profession or livelihood by sharing their travel experiences with other fellow travellers. Therefore, this study answers questions about the significant correlation between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel-related decisions influenced by their content and the frequency of consuming travel vlogger's content and the likelihood of the travellers visiting the tourist destinations promoted by the vloggers. This study adopts a mixed approach combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques with a major focus on quantitative questions for the target audience. The data from the target population is collected by circulating a survey form among the population aged 18 and above. For testing the correlation between variables Pearson's Correlation is utilized, with significance value 0.05.

1. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To evaluate the relationship between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel-related decisions influenced by their content.
- To investigate the correlation between the

frequency of consuming travel vlogger content and the likelihood of tourists visiting destinations promoted by vloggers.

- To explore how trust in travel vloggers and engagement with their content influence tourists' travel planning and destination choices.
- To ensure a comprehensive and thorough understanding of how travel enthusiasts engage with vlogs.

The target population for this study consists of travel enthusiasts aged 18 years and above, representing diverse backgrounds and interests. Random sampling technique was employed to ensure an unbiased representation of participants. This method was selected to avoid skewing the results towards any specific demographic, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour. The sample size includes 101 responses, collected through an online survey distributed via personal contacts and social media out of which 6 were eliminated due to incomplete and inappropriate responses. This approach was efficient for reaching a wide range of participants while maintaining accessibility and inclusivity. The survey design incorporated both closed-ended questions with one open-ended question to capture quantitative data and qualitative insights, refining the analysis with nuanced perspectives.

2. The Limitation of this study are as follows:

The study's limitations include a restricted geographical scope, which may have an effect on the generalizability of findings, potential biases due to varying participant engagement, and the evolving nature of social media and travel trends, which could impact the long-term relevance of the insights of the study.

3. The Hypotheses of this study are as follows:

1. *Correlation between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel related decisions influenced by their content*

Trust in travel vloggers plays a crucial role in shaping travel intentions and purchase behaviours throughout the customer journey (Pop *et al.*, 2021). Level of trust in travel vloggers represents the audience's belief in the accuracy, honesty, and reliability of the content shared by travel vloggers. The trustworthiness of SMIs is a key factor in successfully influencing tourists' destination decision-making (Pop *et al.*, 2021). Whereas frequency of travel related decisions refers to how often viewers use the recommendations, tips, or reviews provided by travel vloggers when making travel-related decisions. This hypothesis studies the correlation between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of the travel decisions taken by fellow travellers. If viewers have a high level of trust in a vlogger, they are more likely to follow their recommendations or use their content to make travel decisions. Whereas low level of trust in a travel vlogger can restrict the traveller from following the recommendations given by the travel vloggers as the viewers may doubt the authenticity of the reviews or recommendations, perceiving them as biased, exaggerated, or motivated by sponsorships. In cases of low trust, viewers are more likely to rely on trusted alternatives like reviews from established platforms (e.g., Google Reviews, TripAdvisor) or recommendations from friends and family. For young travellers, especially students, travel blogs and vlogs serve as important online sources of information, with their characteristics and perceived trustworthiness playing a significant role in

shaping travel decisions (*Shankar & Hampesh, 2023*).

H1: There is a significant correlation between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel-related decisions influenced by their content.

2. **Significant correlation between the frequency of consuming travel vlogger content and the likelihood of visiting destinations promoted by vloggers** :Recent studies have demonstrated a significant correlation between travel vlog consumption and destination choice. *Dahiya & Ranjan (2024)* found a strong relationship between viewing travel vlogs and decisions to explore off-beat locations in Uttarakhand, India. Undiscovered destinations such as Varkala, Meghalaya and other parts of India are also gaining popularity lately due to the recommendations by travel vloggers. *Rellores et al. (2022)* observed that travel vlogs positively affect travel behaviour intent and play a crucial role in developing online destination images. If travel enthusiasts are more likely to consume frequently travel related content, they are likely to develop trust in the recommendations provided by the travel vloggers and are also influenced to visit the destinations promoted by them. This hypothesis suggests that the more

often people watch travel vlogs, the more likely they are to choose to visit the destinations promoted by the vloggers. This highlights the relationship between the frequency of consuming travel related content and the likelihood of visiting a particular destination. Furthermore, *Jog & Alcasoas (2023)* observed a strengthened preference for user-generated content like blogs and vlogs over traditional destination marketing organization content.

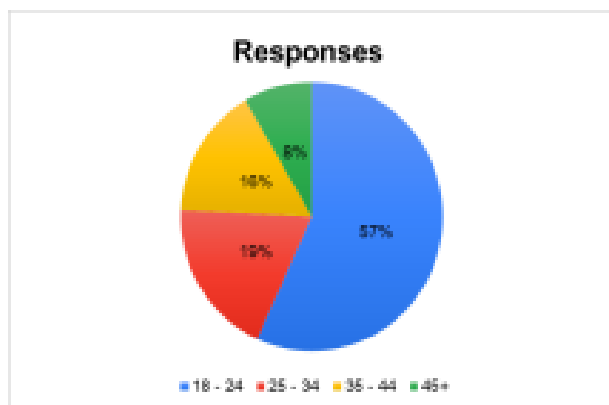
H2: There is a significant correlation between the frequency of consuming travel vlogger content and the likelihood of visiting destinations promoted by vloggers.

4. **Research design and data collection:** The survey objects are users who have and do watch travel vlogs on social media. To understand the viewership of the users, the questionnaire begins with the question: ‘How frequently do you watch travel vlogs?’ This question helps understand the frequency of the consumption of travel vlogs between the users. This data was collected using an online form which was circulated among 150+ users with a total of 101 responses. All the data was thoroughly scrutinized and all the inappropriate and inaccurate data was deemed invalid in the final screening of the data. A total of 95 responses were deemed valid.

Table 1: Research variables

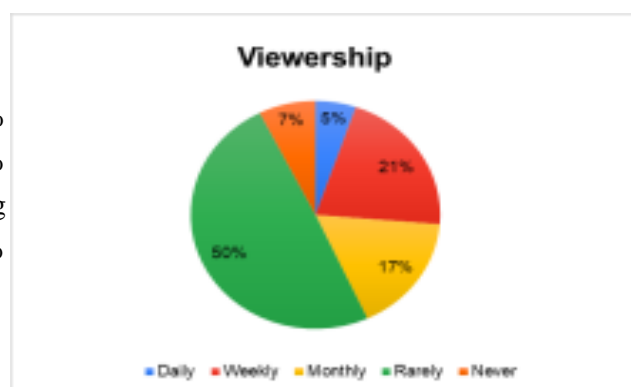
Module	Variable	Definition
Predictor variable	Frequency of watching travel vlogs	This is likely a variable that predicts other behaviours, such as trust in the vlogger or likelihood of visiting a destination.
Independent variable	Level of trust in travel vloggers	Trust in the vlogger is an independent variable that might influence both the likelihood of visiting a destination and the actual visit.
Dependent variable	Likelihood of visiting the destination	This is dependent on factors such as trust in the vlogger and frequency of watching travel vlogs.
	Actually, Visiting the destination	This is an outcome variable dependent on the likelihood of visiting and other influencing factors.

Source: Author's Compilation

Data analysis :

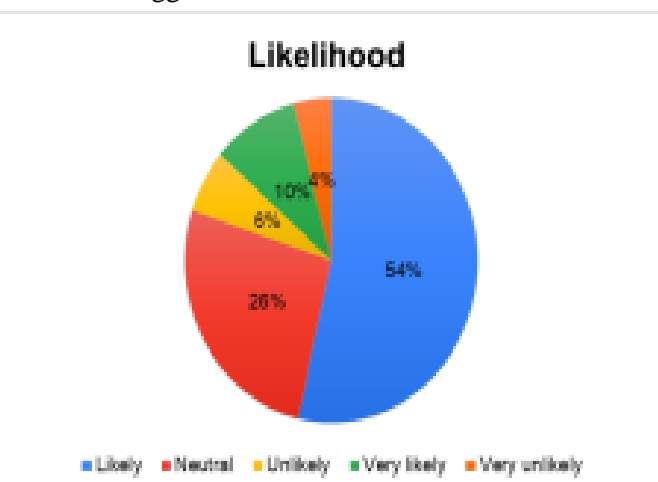
Among the collected effective samples, the age range 18 - 24 accounted for the largest proportion in the data accounting to 57%, 19% were in the age range 25 - 34, 16% were in the age range 35 - 44 and the smallest proportion in the data accounted to age above 45 accounting to 8%.

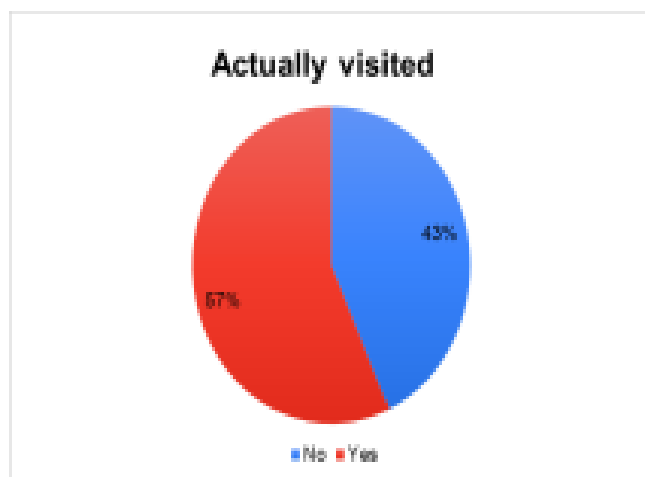
In context of frequency in the viewership of the content, 50% of the samples account for watching the content rarely, 21% account for watching it weekly, 17% account for watching it monthly, 7% account for never watching it and only 5% account for watching it on a daily basis.



In terms of the trust shown within the content creators, the majority of the samples account for somewhat trusting the vlogger which accounts to 43% of the total responses, 39% accounting for no change in the trust variable at all, 9% accounting for rarely trusting the vloggers, 7% accounting for trusting the vloggers completely and only 2% of them not trusting them at all. This data helps in understanding that only 2% of the users do not trust the vloggers which infers, majority of them trust the vlogger to some extent.

In terms of the likelihood of visiting a destination after watching a travel vlog, the majority of responses are likely to visit the destination, accounting to a total of 54% of the total sample size, 26% of them accounting to be neutral with having no effect of likelihood of visiting the destination, 6% of them unlikely to visit the destination, 10% accounting for very likely to visit the destination and 4% of them very unlikely to visit the destination. The information inferred from this data is that the majority of the sample size are likely to visit the destination after watching travel vlogs.





In terms of people who visited a destination after watching a travel vlog, 57% agreed that they have visited a destination and 43% disagreed on visiting a destination.

The sample data collected helps to infer that majority of the people who watch travel vlogs are in the age group of 18 - 24, 50% of the users watch travel vlogs rarely, majority of them trust the vloggers and their content, 54% of the users likely to visit the destination after watching the vlog, and 57% of the total users have visited a destination after watching a travel vlog. Therefore, this infers that travel vlogs do have a lot of influence on the decisions made by the travellers. Table 4.1 showcases the research variables.

1. Hypotheses Testing:

To judge the overall correlation of data, Pearson correlation coefficient is used. The two out of the four variables account for a statistically moderately positive correlation. H1 shows a moderate positive correlation with a value of 0.333 correlation ($r=0.333$, $p<.001$) between Frequency and Decisions made. Table 2 showcases the moderately positive correlation between the level of trust and travel-related decision-making.

H1: There is a significant correlation between the level of trust in travel vloggers and the frequency of travel-related decisions influenced by their content.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix			
Level of trust Decisions made			
Level of trust	Pearson's r	-	0.333
	Df	-	93
	p-value	-	<0.001
Decisions made	Pearson's r	0.333	-
	df	93	-
	p-value	<0.001	-

Source: Author's Compilation

The other two variables, frequency of watching travel vlogs and the likelihood of actually visiting them indicate a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.237$) between the likelihood of visiting a destination and the frequency of watching travel vlogs. With a p -value < 0.001 , the result is statistically significant, suggesting frequent vlog viewing may slightly influence travel intent, though other factors likely play a role. Table 3 showcases a weak positive relationship between the frequency of watching travel vlogs and the likelihood of actually visiting the destinations.

H2: There is a weak positive correlation between the frequency of consuming travel vlogger content and the likelihood of visiting destinations promoted by vloggers.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix			
		Likely to visit destination	Frequency of watching travel vlogs
Likely to visit destination	Pearson's r	-	0.237
	df	-	98
	p-value	-	<0.001
Frequency of watching travel vlogs	Pearson's r	0.237	-
	df	98	-
	p-value	<0.001	-

Source: Author's Compilation

Findings:

- Travel vlogs resonate most with young adults aged 18-24, which highlights their preference for consuming audio-visual content to explore destinations. This group forms the largest audience, reflecting their inclination toward digital platforms to make travel decisions.
- The data reveals the relationship between viewers and vloggers. While most viewers trust vloggers to some extent, the low percentage of complete trust (7%) hints at a critical or selective consumption of content. Viewers are willing to rely on vloggers for inspiration but maintain a degree of scepticism. This shows that people do not fully trust the travel vlogs as a primary source for making travel decisions. The trust in travel vloggers is positive but not universal.
- A significant portion of the audience expresses a willingness to visit destinations after watching vlogs, showing how these videos create impact in the life of the watchers. However, the neutral and unlikely segments highlight that not all viewers are easily influenced, possibly because of their

personal preferences or resource constraints.

- Travel vlogs have emerged as a dynamic source for making travel related decisions because of their unique storytelling approach and the level of trust between the viewers and vloggers. This highlights the growing role of digital media in shaping modern travel behaviours and the future of the tourism industry.

Suggestions

- To mitigate the negative impacts of travel vlogging on the tourism industry, vloggers should prioritize authenticity and sustainability, while maintaining transparency and honesty in their travel experiences. This includes sharing both positive as well as negative parts of their travel experiences.
- Vloggers can partner with local communities to promote responsible tourism that benefits both travellers and the environment. This can include waste management programs, carbon offset initiatives, and promoting lesser-known locations to reduce over tourism in one particular destination.

- Vloggers should recommend more budget friendly and sustainable travel recommendations to cater to a large audience of solo travellers which is growing lately.
- Vloggers and tourism businesses can partner together to create long term relationships which can lead to increased funding, promoting lesser-known destinations
- Future studies in the tourism industry can include: the long-term environmental impact of destinations popularized by vlogs and the effectiveness of sustainable travel vlogging practices.

Conclusion:

Travel vlogs are transformative in tourism, shaping decision-making and destination marketing. Research also shows that many factors such as the level of trust in the travel vlogger, frequency of consuming travel related content affect the likelihood of visiting travel destinations. Because of travel vloggers, many offbeat locations are also gaining popularity thereby increasing the scope of tourism in the unnoticed locations in India as well as benefiting the local communities in those areas by boosting their economy and raising awareness about their cultural and natural offerings. Travelling is truly an enriching experience which allows for meaningful interactions between people of different cultures, fostering understanding, empathy, and appreciation for diversity. Thanks to travel vloggers today, tourism is beyond just visiting popular destinations; it has become a journey of discovery, where hidden gems and offbeat locations gain the spotlight. Vloggers inspire travellers to step off the beaten path, explore unique cultures, and experience destinations in a more authentic and personal way. Their content has transformed the tourism industry by making it more accessible and engaging, offering a platform for local communities and lesser-known places to shine. This shift not only benefits travellers with fresh experiences but also

contributes to the growth and sustainability of tourism in previously overlooked areas.

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