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The impact of social media on the choice of incoming tourists to Egypt for tourism and hospitality service suppliers

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة مدى تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي علــى عمليــة اتخاذ القرار لدى السائحين الذين يزورون مصر، وتحديدًا في اختيار موردي خدمات السياحة والضيافة. يستخدم البحث منهجًا وصفيًا تحليليًا لدراسة كيفية تفاعل السائحين مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، ومشاركة تجاربهم، وتقيــيم الخدمات التي يتلقونها. تجمع الدراسة بين أساليب جمــع البيانــات الكميــة والنوعية وتركز على ٣٨٠ سائحًا قادمًا إلــى مصـــر. تظهــر النتــائــج أن منصــات التواصــل الاجتمــاعي مثــل Facebook و YouTubeو WhatsAppو Twitterتؤثر بشكل كبير علــى قـــرارات وإجـــراءات السائحين فيما يتعلق بخطط ســفرهم وجمـــع المعلومـــات. إن المراجعـــات الإيجابية والسلبية لهذه المنصات لها تأثير ملحوظ على اختيارات السائحين. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على الأهمية المتزايدة لوسائل التواصل الاجتمــاعي في تشكيل تصورات السائحين، وتوجيه قراراتهم، والتأثير علــى تجـــاربهم الشاملة في صناعة السياحة في مصر. ومن خلال استخدام البيانات الكميــة والرؤى النوعية، تساهم الدراسة في فهم أفضل لكيفية تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على اختيار هؤلاء السائحين لمقدمي خدمات السياحة والضــيافة خلال رحلتهم إلى مصر.

Abstract

This study explores how social media affects the decision-making process of tourists visiting Egypt, specifically in choosing tourism and hospitality services. The research uses a descriptive analytical approach to examine how tourists engage with social media, share their experiences, and evaluate the services they receive. The study combines quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and focuses on 380 incoming tourists to Egypt. The findings show that social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter significantly influence tourists' decisions and actions regarding their travel plans and gathering information. Positive and negative reviews on these platforms have a noticeable impact on tourists' choices. The study highlights the growing importance of social media in shaping tourists' perceptions, guiding their decisions, and impacting their overall experiences in Egypt's tourism industry. By using both quantitative data and qualitative insights, the study contributes to a better understanding of how social media affects these tourists' choice of tourism and hospitality service suppliers during their trip to Egypt.

Keywords

Social Media, Tourism and Hospitality Services, Egypt, Incoming Tourists, Service Suppliers, Decision-Making.

Introduction

According to the latest available statistics, the active number of users on social media platforms reached 4.91 billion users worldwide in 2022, representing over half of the Earth's population, with an annual increase of 10.3% compared to the previous year (Nyst, 2023). Additionally, the average time individuals spent using social media

platforms worldwide is two hours and fifty minutes daily, with a new user joining every 13 seconds (KEMP, 2021). Regarding internet users in general, 59.5% of the global population uses the internet. The continents of Europe and Asia - which incidentally include the primary tourism markets for Egypt (Aboushouk and Elsawy, 2020, p.12) - rank at the top for internet usage. Asia leads with 2.89 billion users, followed by Europe with 773 million users, North America with 397 million users, South America with 363 million users, Africa with 302 million users, and Oceania with 41 million users (Ruby, 2023).

Speaking of tourism, a study conducted by Khalid bin Walid and Fatoom (2019) indicates that more than 3.5 million people around the world use the internet to make their travel and hotel reservations. The average regular traveler visits approximately 22 websites online before making a purchasing decision. Globally, around 40% of bookings for tourism-related components are made online. Furthermore, approximately 59% of Asian tourists book their trips online. Moreover, 60% of leisure travelers and 41% of business travelers make their travel arrangements online. A general trend reveals that 65% of tourists initiate their travel-related decisions, including booking and destination selection, through online searches. This number continues to increase steadily. Additionally, 70% of travelers update their social media profiles during their journeys, which is a natural phenomenon given that travel is inherently a social activity (Yuan et al., 2022).

In 2023, the number of international tourists is expected to reach 1.5 billion people. The online tourism market is growing rapidly and is projected to reach $1.8 trillion by end of 2023. 80% of travelers use the internet to search for

accommodation, restaurants, and activities. 60% of travelers read online reviews before booking a trip. 70% of travelers share content online while traveling. Online content influences travel decisions by 82%. Online tourism has become more important than ever, as travelers now search for information and recommendations online before making their decisions (Statista, 2023).

The emergence of social media platforms has revolutionized the way travelers discover, plan, and share their experiences. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube have become integral parts of the travel decision-making process. Travelers are increasingly turning to social media to search for destinations, seek recommendations, view user-generated content, and connect with like-minded individuals. With the continuous rise in the number of social media platform users worldwide, these platforms have become reference points for millions to gain experiences and general information. They are also used extensively for information about tourist destinations and specific services, especially in the hospitality and tourism sector. (Adeyinka & Abdullah, 2021).

However, the study addresses the need to explore how effectively service providers in Egypt's tourism and hospitality industry utilize these platforms to reach potential tourists and influence their decisions regarding planning trips to Egypt. Failures in effectively utilizing these platforms could leave room for a multitude of experiences, comments, and interactions, which might not always be positive. Moreover, service providers could lack accurate market positioning and miss out on valuable customer feedback about their products. Additionally, they risk losing

a significant share of potential customers to competitors who effectively engage on these platforms.

The study problem focuses on understanding the role of social media in influencing tourists' decisions, particularly in the context of Egypt's tourism industry. With the rise of social media, the way people make travel decisions has changed. Instead of relying on traditional sources like guidebooks and travel agencies, tourists now turn to social media platforms for information and recommendations. Social media's influence can be seen at every stage of the decision-making process, from inspiring travelers to providing valuable insights and recommendations. User-generated content plays a significant role in influencing tourists, as it is seen as more authentic and trustworthy. Additionally, social media influencers have become influential in promoting destinations, accommodations, and experiences.

This study focuses on examining the influence of social media platforms, like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter, on tourists' planning process for trips to Egypt. It will investigate how these platforms impact the content of posts, comments, and interactions, as well as tourists' impressions and decisions regarding service providers in Egypt's tourism industry. Additionally, the study aims to understand how service providers in the tourism and hospitality sector effectively use social media to reach potential tourists and enhance their visibility and engagement. Overall, the research aims to investigate the impact of social media on tourists' choices, perceptions, and decision-making process when visiting Egypt.

The literature review
Social Communication:

Social communication is the exchange of information, ideas, emotions, and opinions between individuals in a social setting. It involves using both verbal and nonverbal methods to convey messages and establish connections. It is an essential part of human interaction and plays a crucial role in building relationships, sharing knowledge, expressing emotions, and maintaining social bonds. This includes both face-to-face interactions and various forms of communication through social media platforms (Pradhan et al., 2023). Social media and networking have evolved over time, starting with platforms like classmates.com by Randy Conrads in 1995, which aimed to connect schoolmates and eventually grew to have millions of users. (Al-Rafaai & Arikat, 2019).

Social Media:

According to Obar & Wildman (2015), Social media refers to online platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange content in a virtual social environment. These platforms facilitate interactions and connections between individuals, often allowing users to engage with content through comments, likes, shares, and other forms of engagement. Social media has transformed how people communicate, interact, and consume information, transcending geographical boundaries and enabling instant global connectivity, Manning (2014) defined social media as new forms of media that involve interactive sharing (Manning, 2014, p.1158). It can also be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to create a general or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share

a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.244). Taha and Ragab (2021), citing Alarcóna et al. (2018), described it as links connecting the internet to channels of instant communication, allowing people to collectively express and share their ideas (Alarcóna et al., 2018, p.104).

Sahin and Sengün (2015) saw it as a broader term that encompasses writings on blogs, forums, images, audio recordings, videos, links, and profile pages on social media sites, along with various content that forms various other social networks. In general, besides providing users with a diverse source of information (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), social media platforms, in their commercial form, offer a space for customers to interact, exchange opinions, and freely discuss experiences. Undoubtedly, this leads to a fundamental change in communication between brands and customers (Seo et al., 2020) through a variety of user interaction methods, such as email, text messages, voice and video chats, discussion groups, and file sharing (Sri et al., 2011), as similarly highlighted by Boz & Unal (2011). Furthermore, the social media strategy is the process of formulating and implementing plans and tactics to harness its power optimally for marketing and promotional purposes. In other words, it is the action plan for effectively utilizing and improving social media for commercial marketing (Saeed et al., 2018).

Social Media Properties:

Social media platforms have unique characteristics that set them apart and make them powerful in the world of communication and interaction. Social media platforms rely on content created by users and encourage two-way

communication. They have a global reach, provide real-time updates, and support various types of multimedia content. Personalization is used to enhance the user experience, and users can choose to remain anonymous or reveal their identity. Privacy concerns have emerged due to the collection of personal data. Social media also allows for networking, community building, and the rapid spread of viral content. Businesses use social media for marketing and customer engagement, and influencers have gained significant authority and influence (Sepehr et al., 2023).

Social media platforms possess important characteristics both in terms of communication and marketing. Many of these platforms operate entirely free, enabling users to share and interact with content without any financial cost. They rely on highly intelligent software that assists users in connecting with friends who share common attributes and accessing content within their areas of interest. Additionally, social media platforms gather information about all users and their activities, allowing them to understand users' interests. This knowledge aids them in achieving their advertising and content-related goals. Moreover, they provide advertising spaces that advertisers can use in exchange for specified monetary amounts (Al-Rafaai & Arikat, 2019, p.17). These platforms also offer features such as interactivity and an active audience. Users have the ability to choose from a variety of platforms that suit their preferences, allowing for selectivity. Furthermore, platforms provide an asynchronous experience, as users can receive and engage with messages and content at their own convenience (Al-Tamimi, 2015, p.113).

Types of Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms can be classified into several categories based on accessibility, ranging from closed-group sites focused on specific goals and affiliations to open sites available to all internet users. They can also be categorized based on their format, including electronic Web-Blogs, Social Blogs, Micro-Blogs, podcasts, and wikis. Additionally, they can be classified by their interactive features, encompassing text-sharing sites, image-sharing sites, video-sharing sites, and social networks (AbdulSamed, 2012, p.11; Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p.21; Angella and Eunju, 2011, p.1-7; Berthon, Pitt and Shapiro, 2011, p.55, 261—271). Moreover, Al-Sayed et al. (2015) divided them into three categories: publishing platforms like Twitter, sharing platforms like Newsvine, and networking platforms like Facebook. However, user needs and competition among these platforms have led each platform to incorporate broader advantages and functionalities related to publishing, sharing, and networking, making each platform continuously update and expand its features.

According to various sources including Soteriades & Zyl (2013), Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), O'Connor (2008), Solis (2010), and Wunsch & Vickery (2007), Social media can be divided into different categories, including blogs, social networking sites, collaborative projects, content community sites, and commenting sites. Blogs are websites where individuals can share personal experiences and ideas, while microblogs focus on text content within a character limit. Social networking sites allow users to create profiles, connect with others, and build relationships. Collaborative projects rely on user collaboration for content creation and

can be divided into wiki sites and social bookmarking sites. Content community sites are designed for sharing various types of content, such as text, images, and videos. Commenting sites allow users to share, read, and discuss a variety of topics.

In this study, we will discuss the influence of four major social media platforms on the decisions made by tourists visiting Egypt. These platforms include Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter, which are currently the most popular worldwide according to the number of active users as of January 2023 see Figure 1:
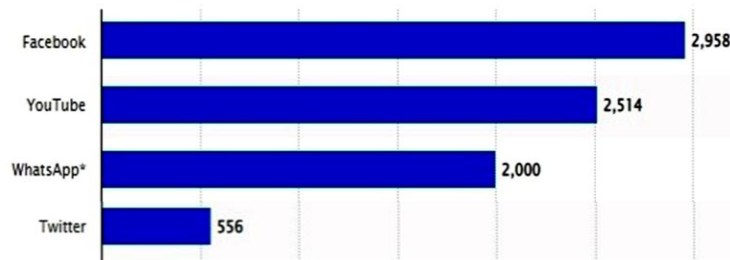

Figure (1): Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter among the most widely used social media platforms worldwide (in millions)
Source: Dixon, S. J. (2023)
Facebook
Facebook is a popular social media platform that was created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Originally intended for college students, it quickly expanded to a wider audience. Users can create profiles with personal information and connect with others through friend requests. The main feature of Facebook is the News Feed, which shows posts, photos, and videos from friends, pages, and groups. Users can also create pages and groups for

businesses and shared interests. Additionally (Bellucci and Manetti, 2017), Facebook supports various media formats and has a separate messaging app called Messenger. The idea for Facebook originated from the Facemash website, which was associated with Harvard University and was created by Zuckerberg, along with his roommates Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. (Alba & Others, 2008, p.6). The site quickly gained popularity and expanded to become the leading social media platform today. Undoubtedly, it is one of the most user-friendly platforms currently available, with over 2.9 billion active users and an annual growth rate of about 6%. Notably, 60.6% of internet users use Facebook, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all online individuals. Facebook's global engagement is highest on Thursdays and Fridays, averaging around 18%.

Its worth mentioning that entertainment seekers constitute 33% of Facebook's total usage, followed by news at 23%, brands at 17%, professional networking at 11%, and other users at 16%. Globally, females make up 43.5% of Facebook users, while males represent 56.5%. Additionally, 74% of users searching for diverse products to purchase on Facebook belong to the higher income category, earning at least $75,000 monthly (Ahlgrenand, 2022). The utilization of Facebook by tourist destinations and tourism and hospitality service providers is particularly important, given that the elements of the tourism product cannot be experienced before purchase. Observing and exploring these elements through platforms like Facebook is crucial for travelers.

YouTube

YouTube is a popular video-sharing platform that allows users to upload, watch, and share videos on various topics. Users can subscribe to channels, leave comments, and engage with creators. Creators can make money through ads and other monetization methods. YouTube also uses algorithms to recommend content to users based on their interests and viewing history. Additionally, creators can live stream videos to interact with their audience in real time (Byun et al., 2022).

YouTube is the second most popular social media platform after Facebook. As of January 2021, YouTube generated profits amounting to $19.7 billion. From a technical standpoint, YouTube ranks as the second-largest search engine globally, trailing only Google. Over 2.3 billion people worldwide use YouTube monthly. In 2021, YouTube Premium and YouTube Music combined amassed over 50 million subscribers worldwide. The majority of YouTube users fall within the age range of 15 to 35, with more than 70% of viewing time coming from mobile devices. Notably, India held the highest number of YouTube users in 2021, estimated at around 225 million, with 74% of users being adults.YouTube is the most prominent online platform in the United States. It stands as the primary social medium used for research purposes among B2B decision-makers, accounting for 50.9% of users (Globalmediainsight, 2022).

Reino and Hay (2011) expressed surprise at marketers' delay in recognizing the significance of YouTube as a tool for tourism marketing. Individuals, on the other hand, have embraced it as a platform that grants them visibility and fame. User-generated visual content on video-sharing

platforms like YouTube plays a vital role in shaping tourists' expectations toward tourist destinations and hospitality service providers. This content offers a comprehensive view of offerings from various suppliers, as well as insights from previous tourists who have engaged with these providers. Undoubtedly, technological advancements have altered the way tourist destinations and hospitality providers present themselves to potential travelers. Through YouTube, prospective tourists can virtually explore historical streets of Cairo or the Pyramids, acquaint themselves with airline services, hotels, and restaurants they might encounter during their visit. According to Reinhard (2009), this method is more effective and cost-efficient than using glossy prints and expensive billboards for advertising destinations and hospitality services.

Whatsapp

WhatsApp is a messaging app that was created in 2009 and acquired by Facebook in 2014. It allows users to send various types of messages to individuals or groups, while prioritizing privacy with its end-to-end encryption. In addition to messaging, users can make voice and video calls, share temporary status updates, and access their conversations on a computer through WhatsApp Web (Delam & Eidi, 2020). The founders of WhatsApp were former Yahoo employees, and the app operates using central messaging services and Internet Protocol owned by Meta. (Metz, 2016). It enables users to send text and voice messages (WhatsApp, 2019), make voice and video calls, share images, documents, user locations, and other media (Olson, 2015). It operates on mobile devices but can also be accessed from desktop computers through the WhatsApp

Web feature (Patkar, 2018). By 2015, it had become the most popular messaging application in the world, with over 2 billion users globally. It has become the primary means of electronic communication in numerous countries and regions, including Latin America, the Indian subcontinent, and significant portions of Europe and Africa (Abu Ruman & Alshamayleh, 2020).

In January 2018, WhatsApp released a standalone business application targeting small business owners called WhatsApp Business. This app allows companies to communicate with and engage customers who use it (Armstrong, 2019). Additionally, providers of tourism and hospitality services can leverage the advantages offered by WhatsApp to interact and communicate with tourists before, during, and after their visits to tourist destinations.

Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform where users can post short messages called tweets. These tweets can be up to 280 characters long and can include thoughts, news, links, and media. Users can follow other users, use hashtags to find related tweets, retweet and like tweets, and send private messages (Walck & Scripps, 2013). Twitter was founded in 2006 and has gained popularity, particularly during the 2016 US presidential election. It offers a microblogging service where users can share updates that can be liked and retweeted by others. These updates can be posted on the website or through messaging apps and appear on the user's timeline for others to see. Replies and updates can also be received via email.(Tenkanen et al., 2017). Twitter has been available in Arabic since March 2012.

Kwak et al. (2010) suggest that the proliferation of Twitter has brought significant benefits to tourism and hospitality

service providers. For instance, Twitter is among the top three platforms commonly used by hotels and restaurant operators in the United States (Kim et al., 2013). Additionally, Twitter enables topics related to the tourism and hospitality sector to gather qualitative feedback and establish competitive standards (Xiang et al., 2015). It is also utilized in developing business strategies, planning, and studying tourist decision-making processes. Research on Twitter's use in the tourism sector has significantly increased in the past decade.

Overview of the Role of Social Media in the Travel and Tourism Industry Globally

Social media has had a significant impact on the travel and tourism industry, changing how people plan, experience, and share their journeys. Platforms like Instagram and Pinterest have become showcases for destinations, inspiring travelers with stunning visuals. Social media also serves as a source of information and recommendations, with platforms like TripAdvisor and Yelp offering user-generated reviews. Virtual reality and immersive experiences are being integrated into social media, allowing travelers to explore destinations before booking. Real-time interaction on platforms like Twitter and Facebook improves customer service. Social media influencers have become brand ambassadors, influencing their followers' travel decisions. User-generated content on social media is trusted more than traditional advertising, leading businesses to encourage customers to share their experiences. While social media offers numerous advantages, it also presents challenges. The authenticity of content can sometimes be questionable, as users may manipulate images or reviews. Additionally, the oversaturation of content can lead to

information overload, making it harder for travelers to make informed decisions (Pradhan et al., 2023).

In a survey, it was found that 37% of travelers worldwide get travel ideas from social media. Additionally, 60% use social media to share their travel experiences and 51% use it to research destinations. Another survey revealed that 42% of travelers use social media to plan their trips, and 72% post vacation photos on social media. Furthermore, 78% of travelers said that seeing their friends' vacation photos on social media influenced their own travel plans. Lastly, in the US, 76% of travelers post vacation photos on social media, and 72% update their accounts while on the trip (Yuan et al., 2022).

There are many examples demonstrate how various organizations and destinations utilize social media and innovative campaigns to attract and inspire travelers. Airbnb and Instagram use visually appealing photos to showcase unique accommodations, while the Faroe Islands enlisted sheep with cameras to capture their stunning landscapes. Tourism Australia and New Zealand encourage users to share their experiences and must-do activities on social media, creating a community of travel enthusiasts. Destinations like Iceland and Dubai collaborate with influencers and offer virtual reality tours to showcase their attractions and help potential travelers make informed decisions (Kian, 2023).

The Importance of Social Media in Destination Marketing and Promotion

Social media platforms have a wide reach and provide global exposure for destinations, allowing them to target diverse audiences and showcase their attractions. Visual storytelling through captivating visuals is effective in

enticing potential travelers. Social media facilitates engagement and interactivity, allowing destinations to respond to travelers' comments and build a sense of community. User-generated content adds credibility to destinations, as travelers trust recommendations from their peers. Personalization and targeting tools enable destinations to tailor their content to specific audiences. Influencers play a crucial role in destination marketing by reaching targeted audiences and providing authentic insights. Real-time updates and promotions on social media can drive spontaneous travel decisions. Social media also serves as a feedback channel, allowing destinations to improve their products and services based on visitor feedback. Lastly, social media helps in brand building and creating a consistent identity for destinations (Pradhan et al., 2023)

Through the use of the internet, the balance of power between tourists and tourism and hospitality service providers has shifted in favor of the tourists. The increased awareness and greater variety of options available to tourists have made them the decision-makers regarding when and how to access travel information and related services (King, 2002). To attract new tourists, marketers now face pressure to interact with potential tourists as quickly as possible in the decision-making process by providing more pre-decision information about destinations and tourism and hospitality products. This is in contrast to the declining significance of traditional collective tourism marketing tools such as brochures, television advertisements, and exhibitions (Reino and Hay, 2011). Stelzner (2013) found that successful marketers need to allocate more time to social media marketing, with over

forty hours spent weekly on social media marketing activities by marketers (Fayed et al., 2017).

According to Khalid Bin Walid and Fatoom (2019), for tourism and hospitality service providers to effectively market their products online, they need to have functional websites, offer fast and secure payment options, optimize search engine visibility, use visual and auditory content on their site, provide email follow-up with customers, and have online distribution and reservation systems to increase sales and save time.

Andresen (2012) adds that effective use of social media networks in tourism marketing requires six elements: accessibility through providing links to products and services on social media platforms, the credibility of service providers in marketing behavior and fulfilling commitments to tourists, informative content about tourism and hospitality products, interaction by responding to comments and inquiries, relationship building with tourists who have a wide array of purchasing options, and brand building as social media platforms significantly influence the credibility of tourism and hospitality service providers' brands by facilitating communication during instances of problems, comments, or sharing experiences about the supplied products.

Similarly, Abu Ramman and Alshmaileh (2020) note that the three most common types of YouTube videos used for promoting tourism and hospitality services are: explanatory videos containing news and facts gathered to and from the destination, educational videos demonstrating how to use products effectively and providing real value to potential tourists to remember when making purchases, and entertaining videos showing the destination's facilities in an

entertaining format. These could include games, puzzles, or contests that engage viewers and encourage them to share with their friends. In the end, social media platforms ensure that tourism and hospitality service providers reach a larger customer base, engage around the clock, and save time, effort, and costs.

The Role of Social Media in Travel Planning and Tourists' Decisions:

Overview of the Decision-Making Process for Tourists

The decision-making process for tourists involves several stages, from getting inspired to booking their trip. Social media plays a crucial role in each step of this process. Platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube introduce travelers to beautiful visuals that inspire them to explore new places. Social media also provides travelers with information about destinations, accommodations, and activities through user-generated content, travel blogs, reviews, and interactive forums. It helps them evaluate and compare different options by accessing content from other tourists, influencers, and official destination accounts. Social media also allows travelers to find promotions and deals in real-time, making their bookings more cost-effective. During their trip, tourists use social media to share their experiences, engage with brands, and create a real-time narrative of their journey. After their trip, they share their experiences on social media, contributing to the destination's online reputation and providing recommendations for their networks (Gupta, 2019).

The Impact of Social Media on Travel Planning and Tourists' Decisions

Sources of traveler information about tourist destinations are classified into two types: internal and external. Internal

sources refer to the accumulated traveler knowledge through research and previous experiences, either with the same destination or similar ones. On the other hand, external sources are primary sources such as travel agencies, travel guides, travel agents, brochures, and experiences of friends, relatives, and media such as newspapers, radio, television, and the internet (Bargeman and van der Poel, 2006; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012).

Numerous studies have shown an inverse relationship between customers' previous experience and their need to search for information about tourist destinations. As previous experience increases, the search for information decreases. Conversely, when internal sources are inadequate for travel decisions and destination selection, travelers search for external information sources (Mannaa, 2019).

Many potential tourists visit relevant social media sites before making travel decisions because they believe that virtual evaluations will assist in their purchasing decisions (Sahin and Sengün, 2015). Social media platforms contain comments and ratings about tourism and hospitality service providers and destinations, influencing the creation of the institutional brand, enhancing communication efficiency, marketing goods and services, and increasing brand loyalty for tourism and hospitality service providers (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2011). Increasing consumer awareness, ease of information sharing, and the ability to review numerous comments in the virtual environment make it possible to evaluate destinations or tourism and hospitality service providers by tourists in a cheaper, faster, and easier way. Internet users seeking information about tourist destinations

for the first time are often influenced by comments on social media platforms.

Casalo et al. (2010) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) believe that Web 2.0 in tourism, also known as Travel 2.0, describes a new generation of travel websites with new technologies to encourage and facilitate higher levels of social interaction among technologically limited knowledgeable travelers. Potential tourists consult family, friends, and acquaintances on social media platforms when making independent purchasing decisions for goods and services, leading to unique promotion for hotel management.

Fotis et al. (2012) classified the reasons for using social media in the travel planning process before, during, and after the trip. Before the trip: to search for alternatives when considering a trip to reduce destination preferences, ensure the right destination choice, and gather information about accommodation alternatives and leisure activities. During the trip: to share comments on experiences and stay in touch with friends. After the trip: to exchange experiences and pictures with friends, evaluate and comment on the destination, and obtain opinions about future visits (Lim, 2010).

Influence of Social Media on Tourists' Decision-Making Process

Social media platforms serve as a source of inspiration for travelers, showcasing beautiful destinations and unique experiences. Once inspired, travelers use social media to gather information and research their desired destinations. They evaluate their options based on the content shared by other travelers and influencers. Social media also influences the booking and planning process, as travelers stay updated

on deals and promotions. During the trip, travelers engage with social media by sharing real-time experiences and updates. After the trip, they share their experiences through posts and reviews, which can influence others to consider the same destination. Social media has a lasting impact, as travelers continue to follow and engage with destinations even after their trips, influencing future travel decisions (Gupta, 2019).

Statistics show that a majority of global travelers use social media for travel inspiration and are likely to book trips after seeing friends' travel posts. Additionally, many travelers are influenced to visit destinations after seeing travel-related photos on social media. Authenticity is important to consumers, with user-generated content on social media being perceived as particularly authentic. Furthermore, a significant number of travelers share their travel experiences on social media and use it as a source of travel-related information (Gulati, 2023).

There are many examples of successful marketing campaigns in the travel industry. Contiki partnered with influencers to create content about their travel experiences, Air New Zealand created entertaining safety videos to promote their brand and New Zealand as a travel destination, Visit Scotland encouraged travelers to share their experiences using a hashtag, Airbnb showcased unique experiences on Instagram, Dubai encouraged people to share their experiences with a hashtag, and Destination Canada launched a virtual reality experience to explore Canadian destinations (Jeffery, 2017).

Social Media's Influence on Each Stage:
Social media platforms provide inspiration for travelers by sharing appealing visuals that spark their desire to explore

new places. Users can gather authentic information and recommendations from user-generated content, influencer posts, and official destination accounts to effectively plan their trips. Travelers can compare and evaluate their options using the wealth of content available on social media, leading to more informed decisions. Real-time updates on promotions and deals on social media help travelers plan and book cost-effective trips. During the trip, travelers can engage with brands, document their journey, and share their experiences with friends and followers in real time. By sharing their experiences on social media, travelers contribute to the reputation of the destination and inspire others to consider similar trips. Social media also plays a role in evaluating destinations and making booking decisions, as well as engaging with brands and sharing experiences during the trip. Additionally, travelers often share their experiences, photos, and reviews on social media after their trip, influencing others and contributing to a destination's reputation (Gulati, 2023).

Examples of effective social media strategies employed by other destinations:

These are examples of successful social media strategies used by different destinations. Visit Norway launched a campaign called "Digital Detox" that encouraged visitors to disconnect from their smartphones and enjoy the country's natural beauty (Harrison, 2022). Tourism Australia created the "Best Jobs in the World" campaign, offering dream jobs to promote tourism (Tourism Australia, 2023). Visit Sweden gave control of its Twitter account to different citizens each week, providing an authentic look at the country (Anderson, 2018). Tourism New Zealand encouraged people to share their must-do experiences using

the hashtag #NZMustDo. Visit Iceland allowed travelers to ask questions about the country, with locals named Gudmundur providing video responses. Discover Los Angeles used the hashtag #LAstory to showcase the city's unique experiences. The Japan National Tourism Organization created virtual reality tours to give users a taste of Japan's culture (Guttentag, 2010).

Examples of Effective Social Media Strategies by Destinations:

These examples highlight effective social media strategies used by different destinations. Iceland's campaign encouraged travelers to share their experiences using the hashtag #InspiredByIceland, creating a sense of community. Tourism Australia engaged global audiences by turning travelers into brand advocates through a creative video submission campaign (Tourism Australia, 2023). Visit Sweden handed over its Twitter account to citizens, allowing them to share personal experiences and spark engagement (Anderson, 2018). The Faroe Islands attached cameras to sheep to capture unique visuals, which went viral and promoted off-the-beaten-path exploration (Carey, 2017). Destination Canada utilized virtual reality to offer immersive experiences of Canadian destinations on social media, influencing travel decisions (Wismantoro et al., 2022).

The Importance of Social Media for Tourism and Hospitality Service Providers

In the past, travelers relied on travel agencies to purchase elements of their travel journey. However, nowadays, the range of options for tourist destinations and tourism products has become diverse and accessible through social

media and internet platforms (Tas, 2024). This has led to a rapid increase in cases where travel plans, flight tickets, and hotel reservations are made based on various travel information obtained through social media. For instance, according to Socialbakers statistics on social media usage levels in the aviation industry as of June 2019, Qatar Airways has the largest number of followers globally, with 14 million followers, followed by KLM with around 13 million (Seo et al., 2020).

According to a study conducted by the whatsloop platform, 81% of tourists consider it important for brands to provide customized experiences to their customers through WhatsApp chatbots. Additionally, 84% of travel agencies state that their companies plan to invest more in customization capabilities over the next three years. For travel agencies flooded with booking requests, last-minute questions, and inquiries, being prepared to provide timely answers and responses at any time of day is crucial. Leveraging artificial intelligence through WhatsApp chatbots, which offer guaranteed assistance to travelers from the start of their trip planning to their journey and even post-trip feedback, is a reliable solution available 24/7 (whatsloop, 2021).

Many hospitality establishments around the world strive to promote their products through social media platforms by showcasing products, conducting virtual tours within the facilities, and interacting with both previous and potential customers. This interaction involves addressing inquiries and complaints, ultimately enhancing brand reputation, persuading potential customers, fostering loyalty and belonging among previous customers, and transforming

them into live marketing advocates (Belalia & Nouri, 2014).

In Egypt, many hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and airlines have accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook, Google+, and MySpace, hoping that these tools can effectively enhance awareness of their brand. This trend is also optimized through viral marketing, which, in turn, can lead to interaction, conversions, and profits. However, at the same time, they shouldn't limit themselves to these platforms; they should also turn to media-sharing platforms like YouTube and Pinterest for the opportunity to reach a larger audience and facilitate the dissemination, tagging, and organization of visual content (Hilaly, 2015).

Concluding a study, Reino & Hay (2011) found that incorporating social media tools within the marketing mix of tourism and hospitality service providers often involves a trick: to make tourists believe that what they're witnessing is authentic. This strategy was one of the reasons behind the success of campaigns like GO in Ireland and Scots the Meet in Scotland, where they used real individuals who were genuinely enthusiastic about their experiences in the tourist destination. Likewise, Manap & Adzharudin (2013) suggest that there's a general assumption among the audience that what they see on social media platforms is presented by genuine people who readily share their personal experiences for mutual benefit, and this is the strength of word-of-mouth marketing.

In Egypt, in the year 2020, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities leveraged social media platforms to launch the promotional campaign "Same Great Feelings." The goal was to introduce travelers to the Egyptian tourist destination, reassure and encourage them to visit Egypt.

This campaign was reinforced with various posts and promotional materials on different social media sites, targeting markets such as Ukraine, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Czech Republic, Poland, UAE, Belarus, Germany, and other key markets exporting tourism to Egypt. The campaign included a promotional film titled "A Tourist's Journey in Egypt," aimed at promoting various Egyptian tourist destinations and highlighting the precautionary measures implemented in all facilities the tourist interacts with upon arrival, including airports, hotels, resorts, historical sites, and museums. Worth noting, this film achieved over 160 million views in about a month and received several international awards (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2021).

Perspectives from Tourism & Hospitality Service Suppliers:

How Social Media Has Affected Marketing Strategies and Customer Interactions

Social media has had a significant impact on the marketing strategies of airlines; accommodation services suppliers, travel agencies, and food and beverage service suppliers. These industries use platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to promote their services, engage with customers, and address inquiries in real time. However, they also face challenges, such as the potential for public complaints to escalate quickly if not addressed promptly. Overall, social media provides opportunities for businesses to showcase their offerings, build credibility and trust, and enhance customer engagement (Jamil et al., 2022).

Social media presents both challenges and opportunities for businesses. Negative publicity can quickly spread, impacting a business's reputation. It is important for

businesses to maintain consistency between their online presence and the actual customer experience. The abundance of content on social media can lead to information overload for consumers, making it difficult for businesses to stand out. Balancing engagement with customers while respecting their privacy can be challenging. Additionally, algorithm changes on social media platforms can affect the visibility of content, requiring businesses to adapt their strategies. However, social media also provides opportunities for direct communication with customers, targeted marketing, user-generated content that influences others, storytelling to showcase unique offerings, and real-time engagement through comments and live streams (Dwivedi, 2021).

Case Study: Social Media's Impact on Tourist Choices in Egypt:

In 2022, Egypt saw a significant increase in foreign tourists, with approximately 11.7 million visitors, a 50% increase compared to the previous year. The majority of tourists came from Russia, Germany, Poland, France, Britain, and Italy. This influx of tourists resulted in a revenue of $13.2 billion for the tourism sector, a 68.1% increase from 2021. The Egyptian government plans to further develop the tourism infrastructure and improve security and services to attract more tourists in the future. To overcome challenges caused by political instability and security concerns, Egypt has utilized social media platforms to promote its tourism industry. Platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube showcase Egypt's iconic sites, history, and culture. Social media is also used for crisis management and communication during challenging times. Additionally, virtual tours were

introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow people to explore Egypt's landmarks from home. Successful social media campaigns have highlighted Egypt's diverse attractions, cultural experiences, and historical sites, aiming to change perceptions and inspire travelers. The campaigns also emphasized the warmth and hospitality of the Egyptian people and encouraged previous visitors to share their experiences and influence others to consider Egypt as a destination (Raafat, 2023).

Study Methodology and Procedures:

Study methodology

The research relied on the descriptive analytical approach. The study uses a descriptive analytical approach to understand and describe the impact of social media on tourists' choices for tourism suppliers when visiting Egypt. This approach allows for a comprehensive overview of the topic, capturing its complexity and providing insights for further investigation. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researchers aim to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. The descriptive analysis also serves as a foundation for future research and has practical implications for tourism businesses in Egypt.

Study Determinants:

Temporal Determinants:

The study was conducted in 2022. The data collected focuses on incoming tourists to Egypt in 2022, when there were around 11.7 million visitors.

Spatial Determinants:

The study was carried out in Egypt, focusing on incoming tourists to the cities of Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor.

Objective Determinants:

The study aims to explore the impact of social media on tourists' choices of tourism and hospitality service providers when visiting Egypt. It examines how platforms like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Twitter influence decision-making. The goal is to understand how service providers can effectively leverage social media for marketing.

Study population and sample

The study community refers to the population or group of individuals that the research aims to investigate. In this case, the study community would be incoming tourists considering Egypt as their destination.

The study population consists of tourists coming to Egypt of different nationalities, whose total number in 2022 was about 11.7 million tourists. To determine the optimal size of the study sample, Yamane's formula (Ajay and Micah, 2014) was used as follows:

n = N / (1 + N * e2)

whereas:

N: community size = 11.7 million

e : maximum allowable error difference = 0.05

n = 11.7 million / (1 + 11.7 million * 0.05 ^ 2)

n = 399.9863252538374

So, according to Shakib (2014), the maximum allowable error difference in the separate data is 0.05.

And by applying the previous equation to the data of the study population, the optimal size of the sample is 400 individuals. The survey forms were distributed to a sample of tourists coming to Egypt in the cities of Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor, and 380 correct forms were received, which represents 95%, which is Reliable acceptable rate.

Study tool

In addition to the secondary data, it was relied on the primary data, where the questionnaires were designed as a field study tool, and then the data extracted from them were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences SPSS, understand and describe the impact of social media on tourists' choices for tourism suppliers when visiting Egypt, and the measurement phrases were placed in the questionnaire according to the five-point Likert scale, and the questionnaire consisted of 16 questions.

The survey questionnaire used in the study included a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. This questionnaire collects demographic information from participants and explores how social media platforms influence tourists' travel decisions. It also examines the trustworthiness of social media content, the ease of finding tourism services on social media, the impact of advertisements and offers, and the types of information that social media provides about tourism services. Additionally, participants are asked for suggestions on how to improve the presence of tourism services on social media.

Study Hypotheses:
- *Hypothesis 1*: Inbound tourists to Egypt primarily use social media for planning their trips to Egypt.
- *Hypothesis 2*: Ratings and experiences shared on social media platforms influence inbound tourists to Egypt in their choice of tourism and hospitality service providers.
- *Hypothesis 3*: There is a deficiency in the effective presence of tourism and hospitality service providers in Egypt on social media platforms.

Results and discussion
Reliability and Validity of the Study Tools:
Reliability Measures: The researcher assessed the reliability of the questionnaire by applying it to a sample of (20) participants. Using Cronbach's Alpha equation, the reliability coefficient was found to be (0.95), indicating a high level of reliability for the tool.

Self-Validity: Self-validity was calculated as an indicator of the questionnaire's validity by computing the square root of the reliability coefficient, resulting in a value of (0.97), which signifies a high level of self-validity for the questionnaire.

Statistical Procedures Used:
The statistical software "SPSS" was employed for the analysis, using the following statistical procedures:
- Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to calculate reliability.
- Square root computation for self-validity.
- Frequencies and percentages.
- Weighted mean.
- Rank.
- Pearson correlation coefficient to determine relationships between variables.
- Arithmetic mean.
- Standard deviation.

Description of the study sample:
Table No. (1) The description of the variables of the study sample

study sample variables		Frequency	Percentage
sex	male	٢٤٠	%٦٣.٢
	feminine	١٤٠	%٣٦.٨
	Total	٣٨٠	%١٠٠

Age group	Less than 25 years old	١٠٥	%٢٧.٦
	Between 26 and 35 years old	١٣٥	%٣٥.٥
	Between 36-45 years old	٧٠	%١٨.٤
	Between 46-55 years old	٥٠	%١٣.٢
	Over 56 years old	٢٠	%٥.٣
	Total	٣٨٠	%١٠٠
Average monthly income (in US dollars)	less than 2000	١٨٠	%٤٧.٤
	From 2000 to 5000	١٢٥	%٣٢.٩
	More than 5,000	٧٥	%١٩.٧
	Total	٣٨٠	%١٠٠
education level	High school or less than a bachelor's degree	١١٥	%٣٠.٣
	Bachelor's degree or diploma	١٦٥	%٤٣.٤
	Master's	٤٥	%١١.٨
	Ph.D	٥٥	%١٤.٥
	Total	٣٨٠	%١٠٠

From the table, it is evident that all the variables for which the study data were collected have been represented across various categories. Starting with the variable of age, it

included both males and females. The male proportion accounted for 63.2%, while the female proportion was 36.8%. Similarly, the variable of age groups indicated that the age group (26 to 35 years) held the highest rank with a percentage of 35.5. Regarding the variable of monthly income, the income range (between 2000 and 5000) dollars ranked first with a percentage of 32.9. Finally, the educational level variable showed that the category of (Bachelor's or Diploma) degree holders ranked first with a percentage of 43.4%.

The overall study results and their interpretations:

Table (2) illustrates the most beneficial social media platforms for the research sample when planning their tourist trips to Egypt

Social Media Platforms	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Facebook	٢٦٠	٦٨.٤	١
YouTube	٢٢٥	٥٩.٢	٢
Whatsapp	٧٥	١٩.٧	٤
Twitter	١١٥	٣٠.٣	٣

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.

It is evident from the table: that the social media platforms that provided the most benefit to the research sample during their tourism trip planning to Egypt were represented by (Facebook) in the first rank with a percentage of 68.4%, followed by (YouTube) in the second rank with a percentage of 59.2%, and then (Twitter) in the third rank with a percentage of 30.3%. Lastly, in the last rank, (WhatsApp) was represented with a percentage of 19.7%.

Figure (2) illustrates the social media platforms that provided the most benefit to the research sample during their tourism trip planning to Egypt.

Table (3) presents the social media platforms through which the researchers obtained useful information about tourism and hotel service providers in Egypt.

Social Media Platforms	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Facebook	٢١٥	٥٦.٦	٢
YouTube	٢٦٠	٦٨.٤	١
Whatsapp	٦٥	١٧.١	٤
Twitter	٩٥	٢٥.٠	٣

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.
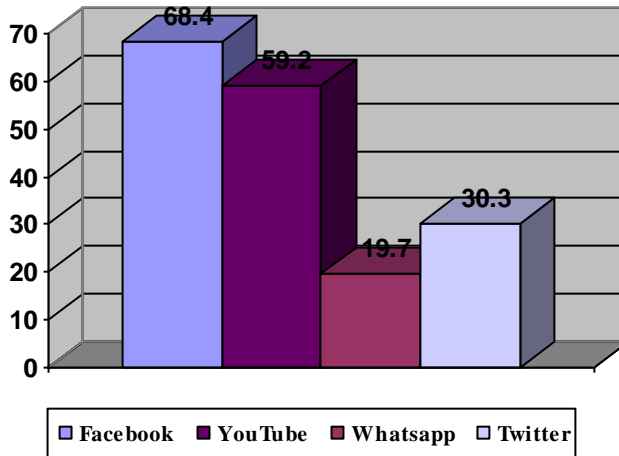It is evident from the table that the most utilized social media platforms by the researchers to obtain useful

information about tourism and hotel service providers in Egypt were as follows:

1. YouTube, ranking first with a percentage of 68.4%.
2. Facebook, ranking second with a percentage of 56.6%.
3. Twitter, ranking third with a percentage of 25%.
4. WhatsApp, ranking last with a percentage of 17.1%.

Figure (3) illustrates the most utilized social media platforms by the researchers to obtain useful information about tourism and hotel service providers in Egypt.
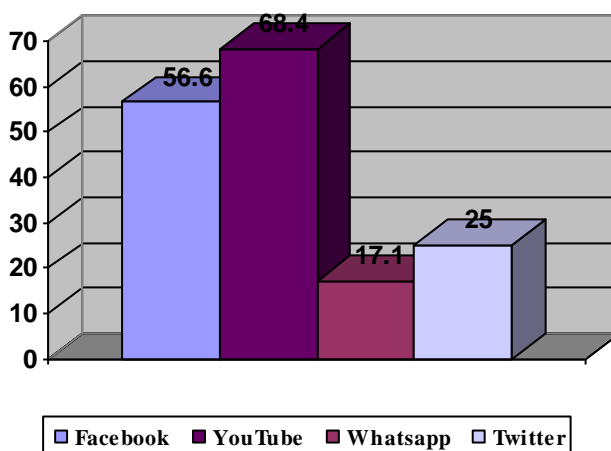

Table (4) illustrates the viewpoint of the research sample regarding the effectiveness of utilizing social media compared to traditional methods in planning their visits to Egypt.

alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Strongly Agree	١١٠	٢٨.٩	٢

alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Agree	٢١٠	٥٥.٣	١
neutral	٣٠	٧.٩	٣
not agree	١٥	٣.٩	٤
Strongly Disagree	١٥	٣.٩	٤
Total	**٣٨٠**	**١٠٠**	

It is evident from the table that:
- 55.3% of the research sample (Agree) that utilizing social media is more effective than traditional methods in planning their visits to Egypt, ranking first.
- 28.9% of the research sample (Strongly Agree) with the same viewpoint, ranking second.
- 3.9% of the research sample (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) with this viewpoint, ranking last.

Table (5) presents the extent of the research sample's participation in sharing their experiences and opinions on social media regarding the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers.

alternatives	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Strongly Agree	١١٠	٢٨.٩	٢
Agree	١٤٥	٣٨.٢	١
neutral	٩٥	٢٥	٣
not agree	٢٠	٥.٣	٤
Strongly Disagree	١٠	٢.٦	٤
Total	**٣٨٠**	**١٠٠**	

It is evident from the table that:

− 38.2% of the research sample (Agree) with sharing their experiences and opinions on social media regarding the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers, ranking first.
− 28.9% of the research sample (Strongly Agree) with the same viewpoint, ranking second.
− 2.6% of the research sample (Strongly Disagree) with this viewpoint, ranking last.

Table (6) illustrates the extent of the impact of positive reviews, comments, and experiences shared on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers.

Tourist services	The total sample							
	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Disagree			
Airlines	١٤٠	١٩٥	٤٥	٠	٠	٣٢٣	٨٥٫٠	١
Accommodation services	١٣٥	٢٠٠	٤٥	٠	٠	٣٢٢	٨٤٫٧	٢
travel agencies	١٣٠	١٩٠	٦٠	٠	٠	٣١٨	٨٣٫٧	٣
Food and beverage services	١٠٠	١٩٥	٦٠	٢٥	٠	٣٠٢	٧٩٫٥	٤
Total						١٢٦٥	٨٣٫٢%	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the impact of positive reviews, comments, and experiences on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers varied between (85: 79.5). Airlines ranked first as the most influenced by reviews, while Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table and its overall percentage indicate a significant influence of positive reviews, comments, and experiences shared on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers.

Table (7) illustrates the extent of the impact of negative reviews, comments, and experiences on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers.

Tourist services	The total sample							
	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Disagree			
Airlines	١٦٥	١٠٥	٥٥	٤٠	١٥	٣٠١	٧٩.٢	١
Accommodation services	٧٥	١٨٠	٦٥	٤٥	١٥	٢٧٩	٧٣.٤	٢
travel agencies	٤٥	١٩٠	٨٥	٤٥	١٥	٢٦٩	٧٠.٨	٣
Food and beverage services	٧٠	١٤٥	١٠٠	٥٠	١٥	٢٦٩	٧٠.٨	٤
Total						١١١٨	%٧٣.٥	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the impact of negative reviews, comments, and experiences on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers varied between (79.2: 70.8). Airlines ranked first as the most influenced by negative reviews, while Travel Agencies and Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate a significant impact – albeit to a lesser

extent than positive reviews – of negative reviews, comments, and experiences shared on social media on the research sample's choice of tourism and hotel service providers.

Table (8) illustrates the extent of trust by the research sample in the reviews, comments, and experiences shared on online social media platforms about tourism and hotel service providers.

Tourist services	The total sample							
	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Disagree			
Airlines	١٥٥	١٥٥	٧٠	٠	٠	٣٢١	٨٤.٥	١
Accommodation services	١٦٠	١٤٥	٦٥	١٠	٠	٣١٩	٨٣.٩	٢
travel agencies	١١٥	٢١٠	٥٠	٥	٠	٣١٥	٨٢.٩	٣
Food and beverage services	١١٥	١٦٥	٨٥	١٥	٠	٣٠٤	٨٠.٠	٤
Total						١٢٥٩	%٨٢.٨	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the research sample's trust in the reviews, comments, and experiences shared on online social media platforms about tourism and hotel service providers varied between (84.5: 80). Airlines ranked first, while Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate a high level of trust in the reviews, comments, and experiences shared on online social media

platforms about tourism and hotel service providers by the research sample.

Table (9) illustrates the research sample's perspective on the ease of finding tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms.

Tourist services	The total sample							
	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Agree			
Airlines	١٥٠	٢٠٠	٣٠	٠	٠	٣٢٨	٨٦.٣	١
Accommodation services	١٨٠	١٠٥	٦٥	٢٥	٠	٣١٧	٨٣.٤	٢
travel agencies	١٠٥	٢٠٥	٥٥	١٥	٠	٣٠٨	٨١.١	٣
Food and beverage services	١٠٠	١٧٠	٩٥	٤٥	٠	٢٨٧	٧٥.٥	٤
Total						١٢٤٠	٨١.٥	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the research sample's perspective on the ease of finding tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms varied between (86.3: 75.5). Accommodation services ranked first, while Food and Beverage services ranked last. The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate the ease of finding tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms from the perspective of the research sample.

Table (10) illustrates the research sample's perspective on the impact of advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms on their travel planning to Egypt.

Tourist services	The total sample							
	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Agree			
Airlines	١٨٠	١٥٠	٤٥	١٠	٠	٣٢٦	٨٥.٨	١
Accommodation services	١٤٠	١٦٠	٨٠	٠	٠	٣١٦	٨٣.٢	٢
travel agencies	١٣٥	١٧٥	٥٥	١٥	٠	٣١٤	٨٢.٦	٣
Food and beverage services	١١٠	١٣٥	٨٥	٥٠	٠	٢٨٩	٧٦.١	٤
Total						١٢٤٥	%٨١.٩	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the research sample's perspective on the impact of advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms on their travel planning to Egypt varied between (85.8: 76.1). Airlines ranked first, while Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate an impact of advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms on travel planning to Egypt from the perspective of the research sample.

Table (11) illustrates the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms.

Tourist services	The total sample

	Repetition					relative weight	%	Ranking
	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Agree			
Airlines	١٦٥	١٥٠	٥٥	١٠	٠	٣٢٢	٨٤.٧	١
Accommodation services	١٦٠	١٢٥	٨٥	١٠	٠	٣١٥	٨٢.٩	٢
travel agencies	١٠٠	٢٠٥	٦٥	١٠	٠	٣٠٧	٨٠.٨	٣
Food and beverage services	١١٥	١٠٥	١٣٥	٢٥	٠	٢٩٠	٧٦.٣	٤
Total						١٢٣٤	٨١.١%	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms varied between (84.7: 76.3). Airlines ranked first, while Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms.

Table (12) illustrates the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms.

Tourist services	The total sample				
	Repetition			relative	%	Ranking

	Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	not agree	Strongly Agree	weight		
Airlines	١٦٥	١٥٠	٥٥	١٠	٠	٣٢٢	٨٤.٧	١
Accommodation services	١٦٠	١٢٥	٨٥	١٠	٠	٣١٥	٨٢.٩	٢
travel agencies	١٠٠	٢٠٥	١١٥	١٠	٠	٣٠٧	٨٠.٨	٣
Food and beverage services	١١٥	١٠٥	١٣٥	٢٥	٠	٢٩٠	٧٦.٣	٤
Total						١٢٣٤	%٨١.١	

It is evident from the table that the percentage ranges of the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms varied between (84.7: 76.3). Airlines ranked first, while Food and Beverage services ranked last.

The scores in the previous table, along with the overall percentage, indicate the research sample's confidence level after their visit to Egypt in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms.

Table (13) illustrates the extent of benefit from social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of travel agencies.

alternatives	relative weight	%	Ranking
Brand awareness	١١٥	٣٠.٣	٤
credibility	١٤٠	٣٦.٨	٣
Prices for the services provided	١١٥	٣٠.٣	٤
Quality of services provided	١٨٠	٤٧.٤	٢
Location	٢٤٠	٦٣.٢	١

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.

It is evident from the table that the most beneficial aspect of social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of travel agencies, was represented by (Website) ranking first with a percentage of 63.2%, followed by (Quality of Provided Services) ranking second with a percentage of 47.4%. The aspects of (Service Prices, Brand Awareness) ranked last with a percentage of 30.3.

Table (14) illustrates the extent of benefit from social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of airlines.

alternatives	relative weight	%	Ranking
Brand awareness	١٣٠	٣٤.٢	٤
credibility	١٢٥	٣٢.٩	٥
Prices for the services provided	١٦٠	٤٢.١	٣
Quality of services provided	١٩٥	٥١.٣	٢
Location	٢٠٥	٥٣.٩	١

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.

It is evident from the table that the most beneficial aspect of social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of airlines, was represented by (Website) ranking first with a percentage of 53.9%, followed by (Quality of Provided Services) ranking second with a percentage of

51.3%. The aspect of (Credibility) ranked last with a percentage of 32.9%.

Table (15) illustrates the extent of benefit from social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of accommodation services.

alternatives	relative weight	%	Ranking
Brand awareness	١٤٥	٣٨.٢	٤
credibility	١٣٥	٣٥.٥	٥
Prices for the services provided	١٥٠	٣٩.٥	٣
Quality of services provided	٢٤٠	٦٣.٢	١
Location	٢٢٥	٥٩.٢	٢

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.

It is evident from the table that the most beneficial aspect of social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of accommodation services, was represented by (Quality of Provided Services) ranking first with a percentage of 63.2%, followed by (Website) ranking second with a percentage of 59.2%. The aspect of (Credibility) ranked last with a percentage of 35.5%.

Table (16) illustrates the extent of benefit from social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of food and beverage services.

alternatives	relative weight	%	Ranking
Brand awareness	٥٥	١٤.٥	٥
credibility	٨٥	٢٢.٤	٤
Prices for the services provided	١٧٥	٤٦.١	٣
Quality of services provided	٢١٠	٥٥.٣	٢
Location	٢٢٥	٥٩.٢	١

(*) Respondents can write more than one alternative. The number of respondents for this question is 76.

It is evident from the table that the most beneficial aspect of social media platforms for the research sample in finding tourism and hotel service providers, specifically in the context of food and beverage services, was represented by (Website) ranking first with a percentage of 59.2%, followed by (Quality of Provided Services) ranking second with a percentage of 55.3%. The aspect of (Brand Awareness) ranked last with a percentage of 14.5%.

As for the most prominent suggestions provided by the participants, they mainly revolved around one key suggestion: the necessity for tourism service providers to focus more on tourism promotion and advertising through social media platforms in a more professional and extensive manner than what is currently being done.

The results of testing the study hypotheses:
Verification of Hypothesis 1:
There is a statistically significant relationship between the engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social media platforms and their sharing of experiences on these platforms regarding the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers.

Table (17) illustrates the correlation coefficients between the engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social media platforms and their sharing of experiences on these platforms regarding the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers.

Variables	Tourists to Egypt share their experiences on social media		
	R value	significance level	significance type
Follow-up of social media among tourists coming to Egypt	**٠.٤١****	٠.٠١	**Statistically significant**

It is evident from the table that the hypothesis has been confirmed, as a statistically significant positive correlation exists between the engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social media platforms and their sharing of experiences on these platforms regarding the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers. This finding underscores the importance of social media for tourists and highlights how they primarily use these platforms for planning their trips to Egypt and sharing their experiences and opinions through them.

Verification of Hypothesis 2:
There is a statistically significant relationship between the engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social

media platforms and their evaluation of the provided tourism services.

Table (18) presents the correlation coefficients between the engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social media platforms and their evaluation of the provided tourism services.

	Variables	Follow-up of social media among tourists coming to Egypt		
		R value	significance level	significance type
Tourist services	**Airlines**	**٠.٤٣** **	٠.٠١	**Statistically significant**
	Accommodation services	**٠.٢٨** *	٠.٠٥	**Statistically significant**
	travel agencies	**٠.٤٠** **	٠.٠١	**Statistically significant**
	Food and beverage services	**٠.٢٨** *	٠.٠٥	**Statistically significant**

(**) Significant at the 0.01 level (*) Significant at the 0.05 level

The table shows that the hypothesis was confirmed, as there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between the follow-up of tourists coming to Egypt on social media and their evaluation of the tourism services provided.

Verification of Hypothesis 3:

There is a statistically significant relationship between the reviews and experiences available on social media platforms and the selection of tourism and hotel service providers by incoming tourists to Egypt.

Table (19) illustrates the correlation coefficients between the reviews and experiences available on social media platforms and the selection of tourism and hotel service providers by incoming tourists to Egypt.

Variables	Selection of tourists coming to Egypt for tourism and hotel services suppliers		
	R value	significance level	significance type
Ratings and experiences of tourists arriving in Egypt on social media	**٠.٦٢****	٠.٠١	**Statistically significant**

(**) Significant at the 0.01 level (*) Significant at the 0.05 level

It is evident from the table that the hypothesis has been confirmed. A significant positive correlation has been established between the reviews and experiences available on social media platforms and the selection of tourism and hotel service providers by incoming tourists to Egypt.

From the previous results and discussions, several key insights can be deduced:

− **Social Media Usage for Trip Planning:** The majority of incoming tourists to Egypt rely heavily on social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter when planning their trips. This indicates the significant role these platforms play in influencing travelers' decisions.

− **Preferred Social Media Platforms:** Among the various social media platforms, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are the most beneficial for tourists when planning their trips and seeking information about tourism and hospitality services in Egypt.

− **Effectiveness of Social Media:** A substantial portion of the research sample agrees that utilizing social media is more effective than traditional methods when it comes to planning their visits to Egypt. This highlights the

growing influence of social media in travel decision-making.

– **Influence of Reviews and Comments:** Positive reviews, comments, and experiences shared on social media platforms significantly impact tourists' choices of tourism and hotel service providers. This demonstrates the power of user-generated content in shaping perceptions and decisions.

– **Trust in Social Media Content:** Tourists generally trust the reviews, comments, and experiences shared on social media platforms about tourism and hotel service providers. This suggests that social media has gained credibility as a source of information.

– **Ease of Finding Services on Social Media:** Tourists find it relatively easy to discover tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms, with accommodation services being the most accessible.

– **Impact of Advertisements and Offers:** Advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms have a significant impact on travel planning decisions, especially for airlines.

– **Confidence in Advertisements and Offers:** Tourists tend to have confidence in the advertisements and offers provided by tourism and hotel service providers on social media platforms, indicating that these platforms influence their perception of services.

– **Preferred Aspects on Social Media:** Different aspects are valued by tourists when using social media to find service providers. For travel agencies, the website and

quality of services matter most, while for airlines, the same applies along with service credibility.

− **Suggestions for Improvement:** Participants suggest that tourism service providers should invest more in professional and extensive promotion and advertising through social media platforms.

From the results of testing the study hypotheses and examining the correlation coefficients, several conclusions can be drawn:

− **Hypothesis 1 Confirmed:** The engagement of incoming tourists to Egypt with social media platforms is positively correlated with their sharing of experiences and opinions about the services provided by tourism and hotel service providers. This confirms that tourists are actively using social media not only for trip planning but also for sharing their experiences, thus establishing the significance of social media as a platform for communication and information exchange in the context of tourism.

− **Hypothesis 2 Confirmed:** There is a positive and statistically significant correlation between tourists' engagement with social media platforms and their evaluation of the provided tourism services. This indicates that tourists who actively engage with social media tend to have a more positive perception of the services they receive. Social media may influence how tourists perceive and judge the quality of services, potentially due to exposure to positive reviews and experiences shared by others.

− **Hypothesis 3 Confirmed:** The reviews and experiences available on social media platforms have a significant positive correlation with the selection of tourism and

hotel service providers by incoming tourists to Egypt. This finding reinforces the impact of user-generated content on tourists' decision-making. Positive reviews and experiences shared on social media platforms likely contribute to the preferences and choices of tourists when selecting service providers.

Study Findings

1. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have a significant impact on tourists' behavior when it comes to planning trips to Egypt. Tourists use these platforms to gather information, compare options, and evaluate tourism and hotel services. Positive reviews and experiences shared on social media greatly influence tourists' decisions on which service providers to choose.

2. The study emphasizes that user-generated content, such as reviews and experiences shared on social media, has a significant impact on tourists' decision-making. Positive user-generated content can create a better perception of service quality and credibility for providers.

3. Tourists have a strong trust in the content they find on social media platforms regarding tourism and hotels, especially when it comes to airlines, which are considered the most reliable.

4. Tourists can easily find information about tourism and hotel services through social media platforms, making it convenient for them to compare and assess different options.

5. Advertisements and offers on social media platforms from tourism and hotel service providers greatly influence travel planning to Egypt, especially when it

comes to airlines. This suggests that promotions and deals are highly effective in attracting travelers.

6. Tourists continue to trust advertisements and offers on social media platforms even after their trip to Egypt, indicating that social media content still has an impact on their decisions even after experiencing the services.

7. Tourists use social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter to plan their trips to Egypt and share their experiences and opinions. This shows that social media plays a crucial role in facilitating communication between tourists and service providers.

8. The study highlights the importance of tourism businesses having a strong and professional presence on social media. Active engagement on these platforms can improve brand awareness, credibility, and customer satisfaction.

9. Participants recommend that tourism service providers increase their promotional activities on social media platforms in order to improve their marketing efforts.

Implications and Recommendations:

Discussion of the Implications of the Study's Findings for Tourism and Hospitality Stakeholders in Egypt

This article emphasizes the importance of social media for tourism stakeholders and provides several strategies for effectively utilizing it. Stakeholders should recognize that social media is a necessary tool for influencing tourists' choices and engaging with them throughout their journey. They should prioritize showcasing the diverse range of experiences Egypt offers beyond its historical attractions and focus on authenticity. It is crucial for stakeholders to actively engage with tourists on social media platforms by responding to inquiries and sharing valuable insights.

Encouraging visitors to share their experiences using specific hashtags can amplify the destination's appeal. Investing in data analytics tools can provide valuable insights into travelers' preferences and behaviors, which can be used to tailor marketing strategies and refine offerings. Stakeholders should have robust crisis communication strategies in place to address concerns and disseminate accurate information during challenging times. Collaborating with travel influencers who align with Egypt's unique offerings can be advantageous. Integrating virtual and augmented reality experiences into social media strategies can provide immersive previews of attractions. Hospitality service providers should ensure that their staff is well-trained in managing customer interactions on social media platforms.

Recommendations for Tourism Boards, Service Providers, and Policymakers on Leveraging Social Media Effectively in Egypt

For Tourism Boards:

1. Integrated Social Media Strategy: Develop a comprehensive social media strategy that aligns with the destination's goals, highlighting its diverse attractions and experiences. Integrate visual content, user-generated posts, and interactive elements to engage potential travelers.

2. Collaborate with Influencers: Partner with travel influencers who resonate with Egypt's target demographics. Influencers can create authentic content that showcases the destination's unique offerings and influences their followers' travel choices.

3. Destination-specific Hashtags: Create and promote destination-specific hashtags that encourage travelers to

share their experiences on social media. Monitor and engage with posts using these hashtags to foster a sense of community.

4. Virtual Reality and 360-Degree Content: Utilize virtual reality and 360-degree content to provide immersive previews of attractions. This technology can captivate potential travelers and motivate them to explore Egypt in person.

5. Crisis Communication Plan: Develop a crisis communication plan that outlines how social media will be used to address traveler concerns during challenging times. Transparent and timely communication can mitigate negative perceptions.

For Service Providers (Airlines, Accommodations, Travel Agencies, F&B Services):

1. Engagement-driven Content: Create content that encourages engagement, such as interactive polls, quizzes, and contests. This approach enhances customer interaction and builds a loyal online community.

2. Personalized Responses: Train staff to provide personalized responses to inquiries and comments on social media. Positive and prompt engagement can lead to positive word-of-mouth and repeat business.

3. Showcase Local Experiences: Highlight partnerships with local businesses and experiences that offer an authentic taste of Egypt. Collaborative content can enhance the overall travel experience for visitors.

4. Social Media Customer Support: Establish a dedicated customer support team for social media platforms. Ensure that they are well-trained to address inquiries, resolve issues, and provide exceptional service.

For Policymakers:

1. Digital Literacy Programs: Implement digital literacy programs to enhance social media skills among tourism and hospitality stakeholders. This ensures that businesses effectively leverage these platforms to their advantage.
2. Infrastructure and Connectivity: Invest in reliable internet infrastructure to ensure seamless connectivity for tourists. This is crucial for travelers to access social media platforms, share content, and stay connected.
3. Data Privacy and Security: Develop guidelines and regulations to safeguard travelers' data and privacy on social media platforms. This fosters trust and ensures responsible usage of personal information.
4. Support for Innovation: Provide funding and support for innovative projects that leverage technology, such as virtual reality experiences and interactive travel apps, to enhance the overall visitor experience.
5. Capacity Building: Organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions to educate stakeholders on the potential of social media and digital marketing. Empower local businesses to effectively use these tools to attract tourists.

Consideration of Ethical Concerns and Responsible Social Media Usage in Egypt

To ethically and responsibly use social media for promoting Egypt's tourism industry, certain considerations should be kept in mind. These include accurately representing Egypt's destinations and culture, respecting cultural sensitivities, obtaining consent for featuring travelers in promotional content, properly crediting user-generated content, collaborating with ethical influencers, promoting

responsible tourism practices, communicating accurately during crises, reviewing content to ensure ethical standards, engaging respectfully with users, prioritizing data privacy and security, supporting local communities, being transparent in sponsored content, and prioritizing long-term sustainability. Following these guidelines will contribute to a positive reputation and sustainable growth.

Future Research Directions:

The following areas of study are proposed: examining how social media influences Egypt's image as a tourist destination and how user-generated content, influencers, and official accounts contribute to creating a consistent and appealing brand; exploring the use of social media in promoting sustainable tourism practices and minimizing negative impacts on the environment and local communities; analyzing the strategies used by Egypt's tourism authorities on social media during crises to maintain the destination's reputation; investigating the potential of emerging social media platforms and technologies in influencing tourist choices and enhancing the tourism industry; analyzing traveler behavior on social media to inform targeted marketing strategies and personalized experiences; exploring how social media can facilitate cultural exchanges between tourists and locals in Egypt; and examining strategies for managing online reputation and handling negative reviews on social media platforms to protect Egypt's tourism image.

Conclusion

In the realm of Egypt's dynamic tourism industry, this research sheds light on the profound impact of social media on incoming tourists' choices of service providers. By adopting a descriptive analytical approach and integrating

both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study comprehensively explored the multifaceted influence of social media. The findings reveal that platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are pivotal tools for tourists when planning their trips and obtaining information. Notably, positive and negative reviews shared on social media hold sway over tourists' decisions, reflecting the significance of user-generated content. As a consequence, Egypt's tourism industry must proactively engage with social media platforms to effectively manage and optimize their online presence. To maintain a competitive edge in the ever-evolving landscape of tourism, stakeholders should leverage the insights gained from this study to shape strategies that cater to the preferences and behaviors of the contemporary digital traveler. In doing so, Egypt's tourism industry can harness the potential of social media as a powerful catalyst for enhancing visitor experiences and bolstering the nation's position as a globally renowned destination.

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