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An Experimental Investigation of the Travel and Tourism Sector in Nepal: The Effects of Social Networking Management on Hospitality Industries

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look into, analyze, and evaluate the social media marketing strategies employed by the travel and tourism sector in Nepal. The study looks at the current state of social media advertisement in Nepal in relation to travel middlemen and focuses on the main areas: (a) social media use in travel middleman business; (b) social media's impact on prospects and how they respond to social media sites (SMSs). Using a mixed study strategy, the paper combined the initial inquiries with additional information from searches from the former's SMSs. The intermediates, or principal travel-tourism industry hub of Nepal, were selected through an easy sampling method. According to the report, travel professionals are using social media more frequently to communicate with clients about prices and products—information that consumers are particularly interested in and responsive to. The most popular social media platforms among middlemen and consumers were Facebook by itself and Facebook in conjunction with other platforms, and SMSs had a significant impact on the majority of customers' purchases of mixed-category travel products. The most important thing that SMSs give consumers is helping them remember the product details, reviews, and

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recommendations they were looking for. Travel managers may find the insights helpful in bolstering their social media advertisements.

Keywords: Social media, YouTube, Facebook, Google, Instagram, NTB, SMS, E-commerce, Travel consumers, Travel intermediary organizations

INTRODUCTION

Nepalese online advertisement:

When we heard the word "social media," Facebook used to be the initial entity that immediately came to mind. We previously asked our collegues a brief inquiry on social media, asking who the social media king is, and they all gave the same answer, even though all of them were now uniform. The fact that they all responded with "Facebook" didn't surprise me. We decided to look into it out of sheer boredom and found that, as of June 2019, there were 64 lakh active Facebook members in Nepal and over 200 active communication websites.

In 2020, these numbers are anticipated to increase even more. With a user base so vast that it has become embedded in society, Facebook is without a doubt the social media king (Facebook has 91.6% prevalence in Nepal, followed by Twitter at 2.4%, Instagram at 2.22%, YouTube at 2.22%, and so on). In our opinion, the primary goal of these social media platforms was not only networking, but also creating anything that would advance humanity and use it for betterment of humanity. The social network notion was formed out of the idea. The internet has expanded into numerous fields since its creation, but advertising is the most important one.

Social media use has increased in Nepal in the past few decades. 13.50 million people in Nepal are anticipated to be active social media users (GSMS, 2024). There is an increasing tendency in the use of social media channels, as evidenced by the number of clicks and likes both leisure and business travelers make on sites like Facebook, Google+, and YouTube each year. Most tourists look for data and feedback on social media platforms before deciding which landmarks in Cambodia to visit. The quantity of websites has been rising significantly as of late due to technology developments and the possibility for passengers to choose multiple sites to look up data or to leave feedback (see [2]).

Even though we've been an effective marketer for a while, social media's impact on the modern marketing landscape continues to astound me. It wouldn't be incorrect to argue that it has developed into a marketing treasure trove. Now, allow us to talk about the current state of social media promotion in Nepal.

Businesses that can provide customers with goods that best suit their needs and can compete with international brands are proliferating in Nepal. These companies have also experienced prosperity. Gone are the days when Nepal-Made was only available as souvenirs sold to travelers. With businesses extending their reach throughout borders worldwide in a way which assists them, the future is now more definite and hopeful.

According to my research, Nepal established and implemented a number of fantastic businesses that are currently flourishing! Nepal is using social media networks for promotion in a way that is comparable to other global leaders. A lot of companies and brands in the electronic commerce, food, fashion, handicrafts, and accessory sectors exclusively use social networks.

They have effectively used the power of social media for themselves. Many Nepali companies that specialize in clothes, accessories, arts and crafts, and other goods rely solely on social media, with Facebook and Instagram being their busiest platforms. The use of social media should be considered by any company hoping to make any kind of gain from advertising (see [19]).

Nepal's Hospitality Industry:

In Nepal, advertising for tourism is a relatively recent idea. According to experts, it all started with the effective "word-of-mouth" marketing of Nepalese tourism following the 1950s peak kisses of Mount Everest. That was the day that the success of Everest caused Nepalese tourism to take off around the world. In this sense, marketing is crucial for Nepali tourist attractions. The venue should have all the amenities needed to accommodate visitors, since this will boost the number of travelers even further. The primary driver of inflation and foreign exchange revenues within and outside the nation-state and destinations is tourism. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's "NTB 2023" report, industry directly contributes to 6.7% of GDP and 6.5% to 6.9% of all industry. It is discovered to be a significant source of foreign exchange revenue. Nepal is regarded by numerous travel agencies and tourists as one of the best places to go each year (see [20]).

Social media platforms and the increasing usage of the worldwide web are transforming communication patterns. Social media is now easier to access and a part of a lot of people's lives because to developments in mobile phones (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In 2024, there were more than 5.07 billion users of online social networks globally. It is projected that people used social media networks for over 12 billion hours every day, or more than 1.35 million years into human existence—62.6% of humanity (GSMS, 2024).

The Global Statistics Report estimates that there will be 37.47 million users of mobile internet by 2024. In contrast, one of the sectors in the globe that is expanding the fastest is the tourist sector. The tourist sector is the biggest in the world, and it contributes significantly to Nepal's economy by creating jobs and foreign exchange. $471 million is brought in by tourism to Nepal annually. Although the growth rate was 2.1% in 2019, tourism, together with foreign employment and remittances, is a significant contributor to Nepal's GDP. According to the NTB data, there were 1,197,191 foreign visitors in total by air and land in 2019; this is a decrease of 1,173,072 over 2018 (see [8]).

Objectives

The placement report's primary goal is to give specifics regarding the tasks carried out by promotional devices in the travel and tourism sector. The following is a comprehensive summary of the additional goals:

a. To determine and evaluate how Nepalese travel agencies use social networks for promotion;

b. To evaluate the impact that social media has on travelers;

c. To assess how communication networks are used during travel-related purchases;

d. To investigate the internet features that travelers deem more significant.

METHODS

A research strategy is the setup of parameters for gathering and evaluating data with the goal of balancing procedural efficiency with the significance of the research question. It is the investigation's plan, structure, and approach that are designed to control variance and find answers to investigated concerns. A plan for collecting and analyzing data is called a research design. It offers a number of benchmarks that help the research move forward in the appropriate way and accomplish the objective. The goal of this study is to examine the

social media marketing strategies employed by Nepal's travel industry. For this study project, descriptive-analytical, tabular, and visual data analysis research approaches were employed. There has been usage of quantitative as well as qualitative data. The supplementary sources of data used in this study include websites, survey reports from academics, What's Up, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and Messenger. To gather information about the investigation issue, 100 travel brokers were questioned (see [4]).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of online social media advertising by travel middlemen, its impact on travel consumers, and passenger response to SMMTs of travel agencies in Nepal have all been examined and addressed by the goals of this research.

Travel Agents' Use of Social Media Advertising on the Internet:

The subsections that follow describe how the usage of social media in travel intermediates' promotional efforts has been quantified in terms of tourist hits, pricing social networking sites kinds, and commodity classifications:

Visitors Hits of SMSs:

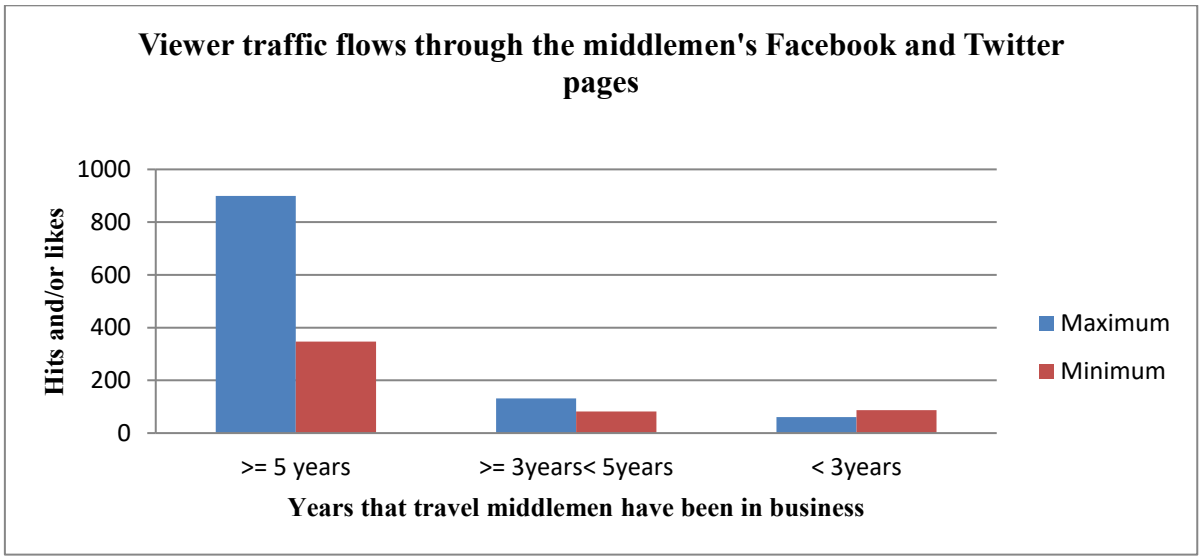
Travel intermediates have seen a significant increase in the number of current and prospective clients using their online social media advertising platforms to research and book travel through them. Based on visitor hits (likes), it is evident that travel intermediates that have been running their social media pages for at least five years—specifically, on "Facebook"—have accumulated a higher number of users (up to 89,953) than those that are comparatively fresher, as shown in Table 1. It was found through an analysis of 100 travel middlemen' SMSs that were sent from the wider Thamel area and its neighboring communities. As a result, the travel middlemen who got an early start on running their online social networking advertising efforts benefited from being first to market (see [3]).

Table 1: Visitor hits on travel middlemen' SMSs.

Hits and/or Likes	**Years of operation of travel intermediaries**		
	>= 5 Years	>=3 years<5 years	<3 years
Maximum(00)	899.53	131.60	60.24
Minimum	347	82	87

Source: Scientists' estimates based on the SMSs from each travel agency, 2024

However, since they started sending out SMSs recently, the travel middlemen have received more likes (hits) from customers. This could be attributed to the fact that their websites have embraced aggressive marketing strategies, providing users with better interaction, instant response times, and accurate data.



Graph 1: Visitor hits on travel intermediary SMSs.

The data display and bar graphs above illustrate the likes on the upper and lower limits on the post of travel intermediates.

Prices Communications by SMS:

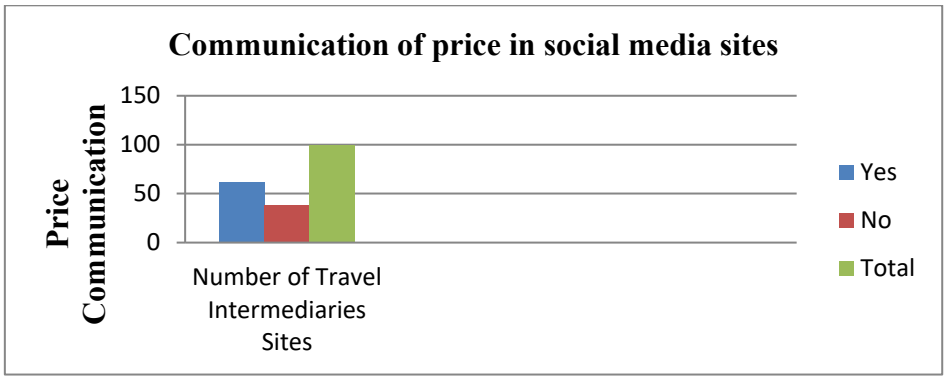
The use of SMSs by intermediaries in travel to inform clients about their pricing tariffs was a further topic important to the investigators. To ensure that there are actual sales and satisfied consumers, intermediates must advise both current and new clients about the prices they are willing to offer for various services and goods.

Table 2: Pricing Transmission via SMS

Communicating of prices	The quantity of travel-related middleman websites
Yes	62
No	38
Total	100

Source: Researcher estimations based on SMSs from specific travel middlemen, 2024

Though price-related knowledge is one of the most sought-after types of information in company promotional activities, Table 2 shows that slightly less than two-thirds of travel advisors have used their SMSs (Facebook and Google+) to communicate with their clients about what needs pricing.



Graph 2: Pricing Transmission with SMS

Social Media Usage by Types such as

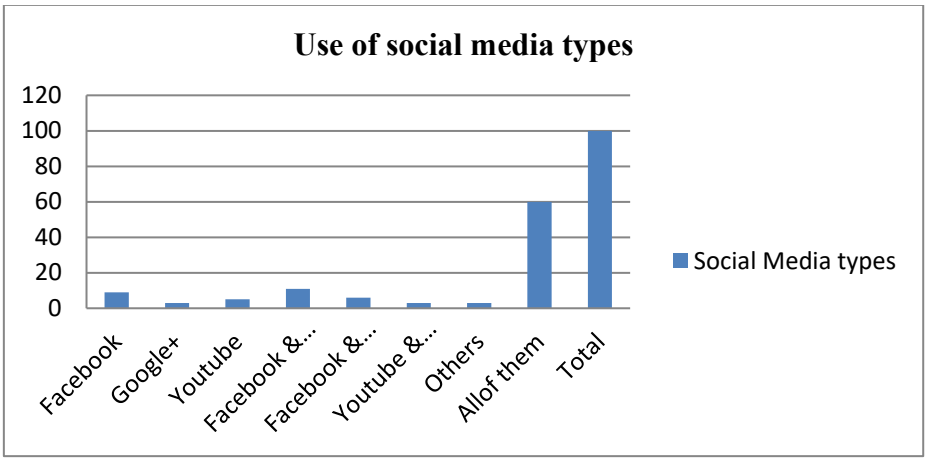
Finding out which social media platforms and how they are combined are among the study interests of Nepali travel intermediate companies.

Table 3: Social Networking Usage by Types

Facebook	Google+	Youtube	Facebook & Google+	Facebook & Youtube	Youtube & Google+	Others	All of them	Total
9	3	5	11	6	3	3	60	100

Sources: Professors' Survey, 2024

Most of the 100 travel intermediates who participated in the poll combined the usage of various social media platforms. Among every accessible social media, nearly two-thirds (65%) used Facebook, Google+, YouTube, and other platforms. While none of the intermediaries used YouTube exclusively, 9% of them used Facebook exclusively for marketing purposes. Table 3 illustrates how popular pairings of Facebook with other SMMTs, such as Google+ and YouTube, continued to be.



Graph 3: Facebook and Twitter Usage by Types

Social Networking Usage by Merchandise Categories:

The middlemen have the privilege of adding value using various products in whichever channel they employ, and social media is no different since the travel and tourist industry is generally recognized for its numerous offerings (see [1]).

Table 4: Merchandise Utilisation of Social Media

Product Categories	**Specific Product**	**No. of Travel Intermediaries**
Extreme Adventure Only	Trekking, Mountaineering and Expedition	24
Adventure + Recreational Products	Trekking, Tour and Travel	26
Recreational Only	Travel and Tour	20
Adventure Fun Only	Rafting only	2
Mixed Categories	Paragliding, bungee-jumping and mixed all of above.	27
Total		100

Source: Scholars' Survey, 2024

After classifying the company's offerings into five groups of goods, the study discovered that travel intermediates had nearly fully marketed their whole product line on social media, with product combinations being particularly well-liked. According to Table 4, social media is used by more than one-fourth of tour operators to market their mixed categories of

goods (27%) and their adventurous and entertainment product combo (26%). Only rafting falls into the adventurous fun grouping, where the usage of SMSs is very low (2%).

Use of Social Media for Commercial Purposes:

Travel middlemen were interviewed using a planned survey to find out which of the seven commercial objectives they recognized and put forward for using social media in the context of marketing they preferred. The people who responded were given five rankings, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest order, for each purpose.

Table 5: Use of Social Media Sites for Companies

Business Purpose	**N**	**Ranking**					**Mean**	**Mean Based Ranking**
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**		
To turn it into a comprehensive data repository	100	-	-	-	9	91	4.91	1
In order to generate client involvement (as a means of amusement and leisure)	100	-	-	2	28	70	4.68	2
To give clients the resources they need to choose a trip	100	-	-	13	38	49	4.36	3
To raise consumer consciousness of the good in question	100	-	6	23	52	19	3.84	4
To generate revenue each time a user clicks	100	36	22	42	-	-	2.06	5
For offering travelers a "not-for-profit" product	100	51	21	20	5	3	1.88	6
To use it as a tool for consumer mindset	100	88	7	5	-	-	1.17	7

Source: Professors' Survey, 2024

According to the survey, the main goal of the travel intermediates' SMMT operations is to use text and graphics uploads, especially audio and video, to provide current and prospective clients with a source of knowledge. The goal of using it as a platform for

customer interaction and giving those tools for making decisions came next. Therefore, these three business objectives ranked highest among travel middlemen.

Ironically, though, their primary goal was to use the SMMTs as a platform for researching consumer attitudes regarding the company's goods and services. This is surprising because marketers find understanding consumer attitudes to be quite valuable.

The impact of social networking sites on consumers who journeys:

The paper has studied not only the seller's (travel intermediaries') aspect but also the customers' dimension to the social media marketing.

People who travel choose to use Facebook and Twitter.

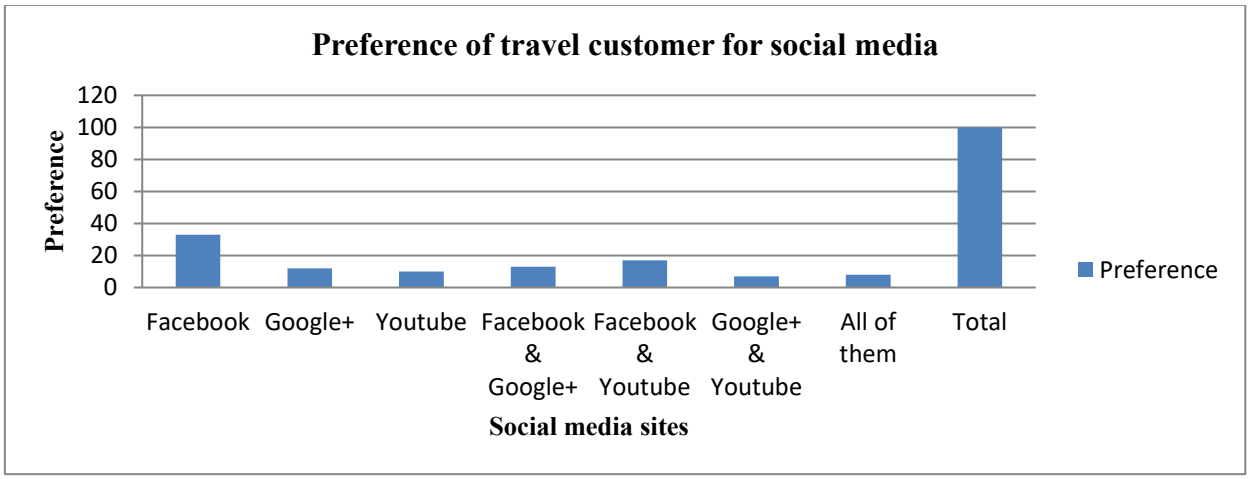
One hundred travelers in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley participated in a primary study to determine whether they preferred receiving SMSs from travel agents before making a purchase. They were given the option to select from Facebook, Google+, YouTube, and the other options they selected in their responses (see [7]).

Table 6: Travellers' Preferences for Social Media

Facebook	Google+	Youtube	Facebook & Google+	Facebook & youtube	Google + & Youtube	All of them	Total
33	12	10	13	17	7	8	100

Sources: Professors' Survey, 2024

Table 6 makes clear how significant the presence of travel intermediate websites is on Facebook: 33% of consumers expressed preferences for the platform alone, while another 30% chose the Facebook pairings (13% with Google+ and 17% with YouTube). A further 8% of consumers said they favored all three SMSs that contained Facebook. Facebook has the most influence on users of travel-related intermediaries via social media, according to this conclusion, which is consistent with research by Monica (2013) and the AET (2013).



Graph 4: Travelers' Preferences for Social Networks

Consumers Make Consumer Selections Based on Social Media:

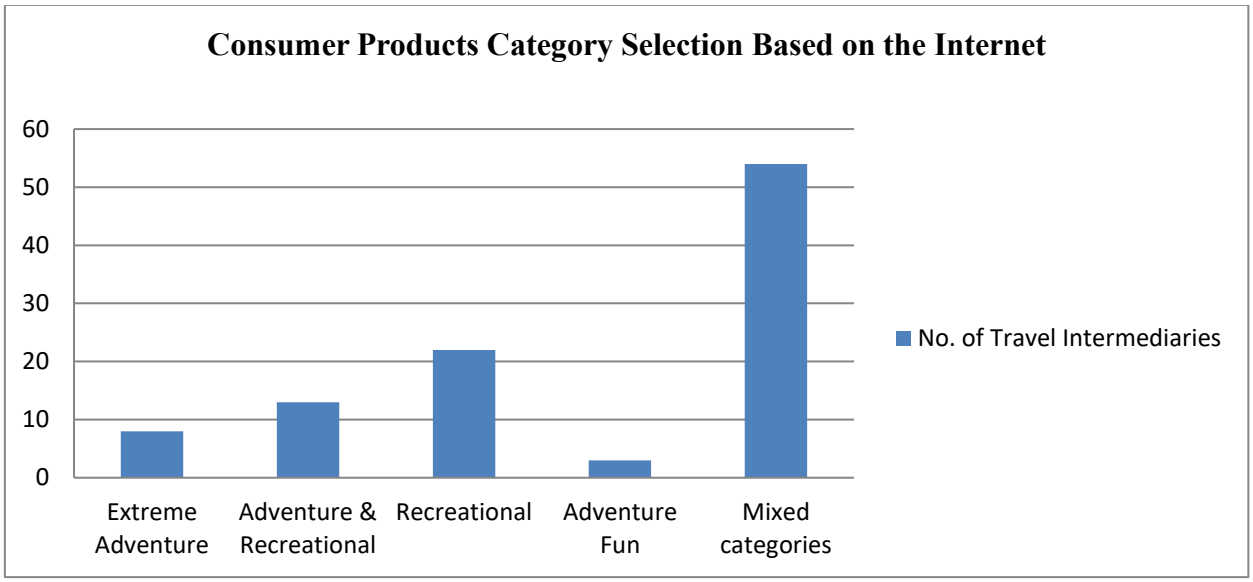
The impact of social networks on travelers' choices to buy the goods provided by travel companies is a topic that warrants for more study.

Table 7: Buying Choices Made by Customers Based on Social Media Category Products

Product categories	Extreme Adventure	Adventure & Recreational	Recreational	Adventure fun	Mixed Category
No. of travel intermediaries	8	13	22	3	54

Source: Scholars' Survey, 2024

When asked to select an item category that they would like to buy from a social media platform, over half (54%) of the participants selected the mixed category, which included, among other things, extreme adventures, leisure activities, adventures, expedition fun, gliding through jumps from bungee cables, and mountain biking. It suggests that consumers in the travel and tourism sector appreciate comprehensive marketing initiatives. Less than one-fourth (22%) of the people surveyed bought amusement goods through the intermediates' SMSs, according to Table 7.



Graph 5: Social Media-Based Product Category Choices Made by Customers

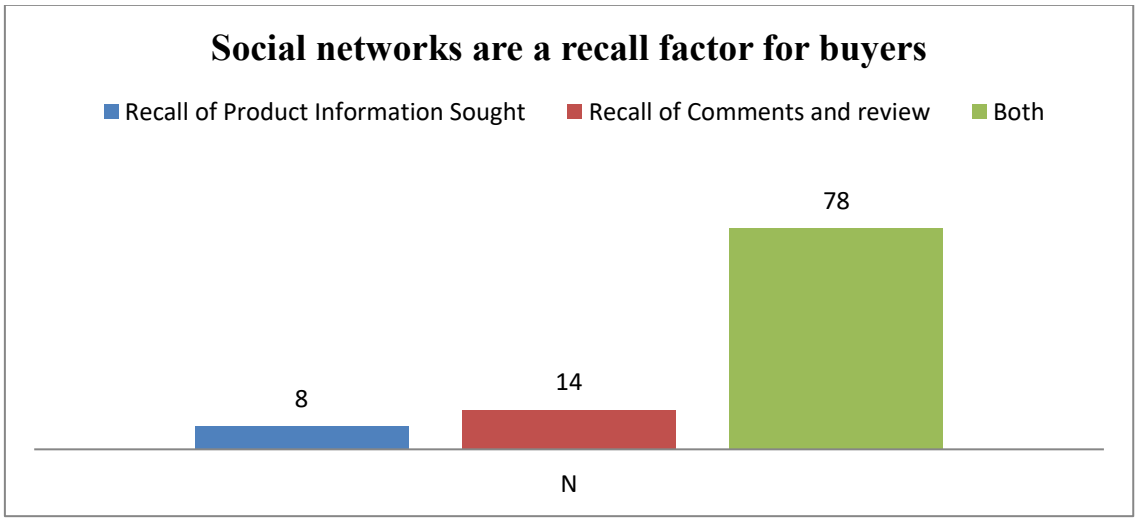
Factor that Clients Remember About Facebook and Twitter:

The study also sought to determine how social media affects travelers, with one way to test this effect being memory of the website by users. Table 8 demonstrates that the majority of consumers (78%) remembered the intermediates' social media pages for the product knowledge they were looking for as well as for their evaluations and comments. When considered separately, the impact of the recall elements is significantly less because less of them remembered the website for what knowledge they were looking for in addition to the reviews and comments.

Table 8: Social Network Recall Factors for Consumers

Response factors	N
Recall of product information sought	8
Recall of comments and reviews	14
Both	78

It is noteworthy from the perspective of advertisers that consumers who travel not only keep an eye out for and take into account details about goods on the social media platforms of travel middlemen, but also give weight to reviews and feedback left by past consumers, since these elements function as buyers' recall factors.



Graph 6: Twitter and Facebook Consumers' Memory Aspects

Motivating Elements in Purchasing Choices:

Unquestionably, a crucial piece of knowledge for an advertising management is what the SMSs have caused the buyers to decide on. Since the price is an important piece of knowledge, customers can only negotiate prices through private communications. The company will be at a serious disadvantage if the rivals find knowledge of the pricing (see [5]).

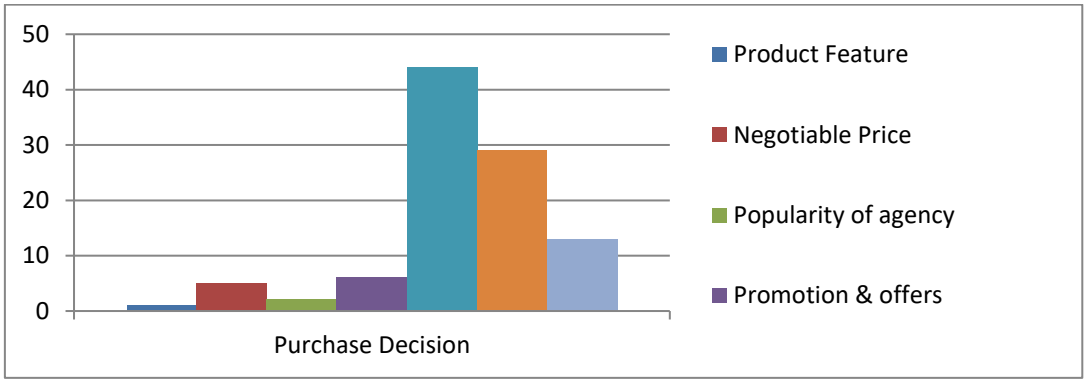
Table 9: Influential Elements in Buying Selections

Product feature	Negotiable price	Popularity of agency	Promotion & offer	Product feature & negotiable price	Product feature , negotiable price and Promotion & offer	All of them
1	5	2	6	44	29	13

Source: scholars' Survey, 2024

Nearly (44%) of the clients stated that the SMSs' offerings of goods, features, and negotiated prices were what ultimately influenced their decision to buy. Table 9 also shows that when it came to making a purchase, three out of every four consumers (29%) were also swayed by the advertisement and other incentives offered on the website.

Nevertheless, by themselves, agency reputation (2%) and item characteristics (1%) could not convince them to buy.



Graph 7: Influential Elements in Buying Purchases

Consumer Reaction to Travel Intermediary' Twitter and Facebook Posts:

The responses that consumers give to the SMMTs provide crucial marketing insights for the travel middlemen. The purpose why consumers choose to visit SMMTs, the knowledge they require and seek, and the kinds and nature of their post-purchase comments regarding SMMTs are all presented in the sentences that follow.

Client Purpose to Access SMSs:

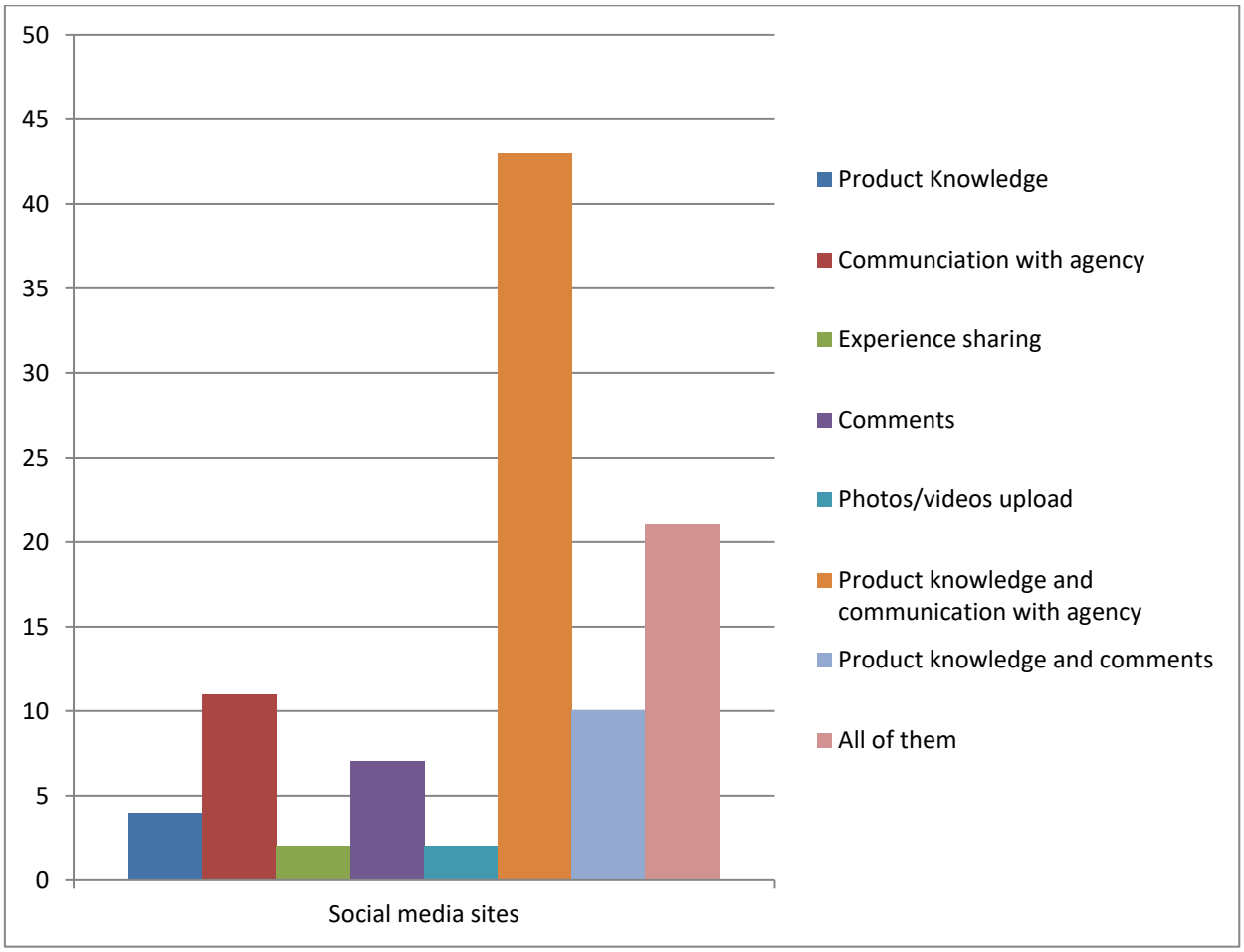
The survey also measured the objective of travel clients to visit certain travel intermediary sites based on their responses to SMMTs. When given the option to visit the sites with a total of five sets of intentions, nearly half (43%) of travel buyers allegedly used social media with the goal of learning more about the products and interacting with the relevant intermediaries.

Table 10: Diverse Consumer Plans to Access SMSs

Product knowledge	Communication with agency	Experience with sharing	Comments /review	Product knowledge communication with agency	Product knowledge & comments	Photo/video upload	All of them
4	11	2	7	43	10	2	21

Source: Scholars' Survey, 2024

Table 10 also shows that a majority of the consumers—more than one-fifth, or 21%—have all five inclinations to visit the social media pages of the service providers.



Graph 8: Diverse Consumer Plans to Access SMSs

Consumer Awareness Requests and Demands on Facebook and Twitter:

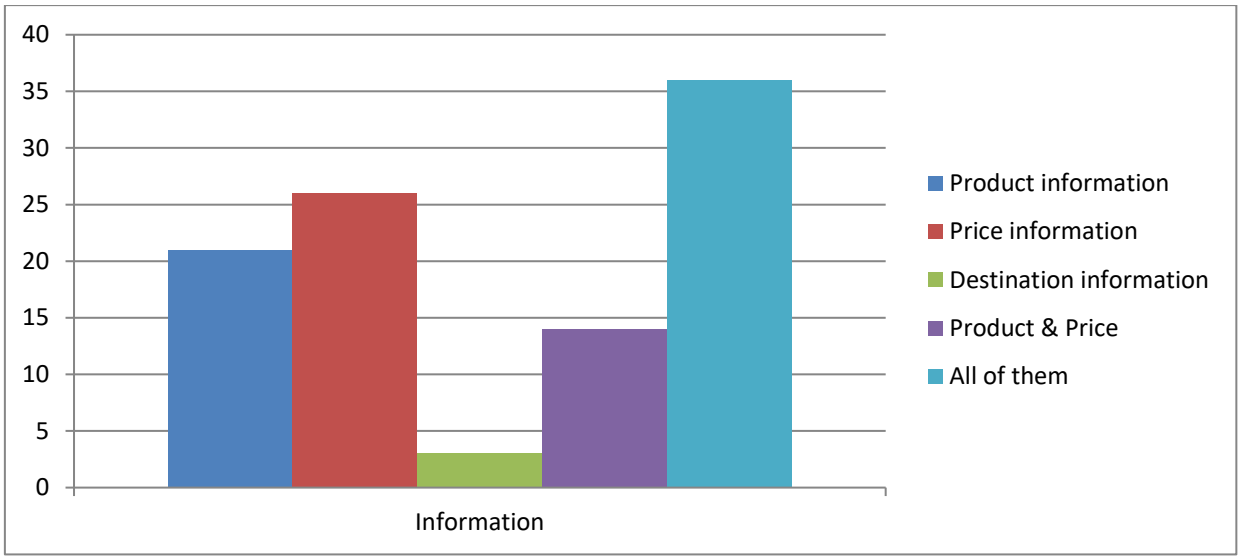
The knowledge that travelers request and look for on such websites was also evaluated based on how they responded to the SMSs sent by travel brokers. Respondents were instructed to select one item each for pricing, product, and other essential elements of the advertising strategy.

Table 11: Data Requested and Acquired by Clients

Product information	Price information	Destination information	Product & price	All of them
21	26	3	14	36

Source: Scholars' Survey, 2024

Table 11 indicates that consumers want and demand data regarding price, product, and destination in addition to all of the fundamental elements of the marketing mix. In order to acquire products from travel middlemen, it is crucial for customers to make judgments about what to buy and to manage their time and finances.



Graph 9: Customers' Requests and Communication Needs

Social Media Posts: Purchasing Review and Comment

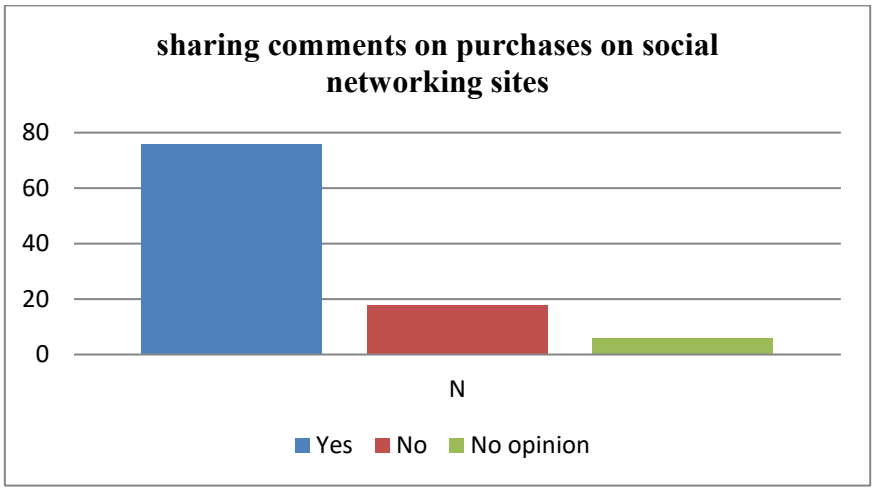
Given the critical relevance of customer input, the investigators additionally asked the participants if they took the time to leave their feedback (reviews and opinions) on the SMSs following their buying and using of the travel intermediates' products (see [6]).

Table 12: Using Facebook and Twitter to Share Afterward Feedback

Post- purchase posting of feedback	N
Yes	76
No	18
No-opinion	6

Source: Professors' Survey, 2024

Three out of every four (76%) of the travel consumers took the decision to publish their thoughts and critiques on the social networking site after making a purchase, indicating that the majority of them were aware of the significance of using individual initiative for offering information to the sellers. Additionally, Table 12 reveals that 6% of those polled hesitated to specify their actions, whilst 18% of participants did not publish it.



Graph 10: Sharing Customer Reviews on Social Media after buying something

Facebook and Twitter Afterward Feedback Types such as

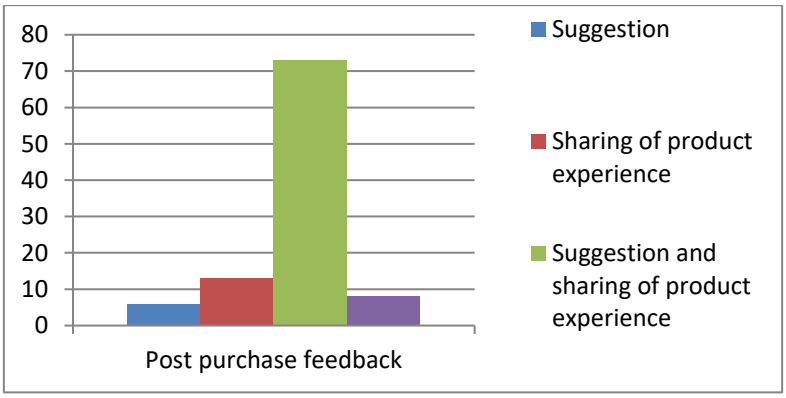
According to reports, the majority of respondents gave both positive and mixed feedback on the tourism product. Specifically, 73% of them shared their experiences and made recommendations/suggestions, 13% also shared their experiences, and 6% made recommendations/suggestions.

Table 13: Social Media Afterward Feedback Types

Suggestion/ Recommendation	Sharing of product experience	Suggestion/ Recommendation & Sharing of product experience	Negative comments
6	13	73	8

Source: Scholars' Survey, 2024

Table 13 indicates that, in contrast to the 6% of consumers who offered favorable recommendations and ideas, the remaining 6% of users allegedly left critical remarks on the SMMTs of the travel middlemen. To improve their success, travel marketers need to consider such input.



Graph 11: Social Network Afterward Feedback Varieties

CONCLUSION

Social media promotion is now the most important economic pillar in Nepal due to the country's rapid development in social media and the emergence of social media platforms. In Nepal, social media marketing was first a risky move, but it has since effectively assisted numerous firms in achieving successful outcomes. Based on an analysis of the strategic effect of social media in the tourist industry, it can be stated that the most influential aspect is reputation, and most social media features, such as sharing, identity, and groups, are not differentiated by visitors. Furthermore, it may be said that by emphasizing service customization, tourism companies can develop a successful value-creating strategy and hence raise the price of switching. However, when it comes to organizing and traveling, the sample views social media sites as useful, interesting, enlightening, accessible, trustworthy,

and valuable. Although Nepal is thought to be a highly prospective tourism their final destination, we are unable to expand the number of visitors to the nation due to inadequate preparation and knowledge. Therefore, the public and commercial sectors should collaborate to develop efficient marketing plans, and appropriate coordination between the relevant entities should be upheld. To draw in more tourists, Nepalese travel firms must to keep up with client data and launch social media marketing. In order to promote tourism-related goods and services, the Nepal Travel Board ought to push university scholars to delve deeper into the field of social media research. It is recommended that the tourism development organization allocate resources towards social media and digital marketing in order to enhance the visibility of Nepali tourism offerings. The most important thing to remember is that marketing Nepal as a travel destination and advertising its products to prospective travelers won't improve without effective advertising and social media use. While travel companies are undoubtedly helping to promote Nepal as a tourism destination, and while their level of Internet literacy appears to be adequate, their use of the platform for marketing appears to be quite limited.

It is imperative for travel agents to acknowledge the emergence of a novel trend in global travel. Travelers are more concerned about the activity and security of a destination than anything else before visiting. Websites are the primary source of every piece of data, and travel firms have a wide range of products to choose from. The only issues at hand are the inadequate security measures for travelers and the improper methods of online advertising. The number of travelers will increase if the current issue is resolved and travel agencies use the internet as SMMTs. Nearly all of those surveyed expressed satisfaction with the benefit provided by the internet; nevertheless, they were not operating as SMMTs effectively due to a lack of cash and understanding. They frequently use email to communicate with their clients, and they frequently hear comments about its benefits, which include cost- and time-saving, efficacy, and communication with the outside world. All of the respondents agreed that internal issues including the blockage caused by natural disasters, unstable governments, the Maoists, the state of law and order, and rumors circulated by the foreign media about Nepal being a dangerous place for travelers to visit are the main causes of the current tourism slump. The industry of tourism will flourish to a greater level than previously if the current crisis is resolved and these travel businesses also take into consideration using high-tech marketing techniques to promote tourism. After doing all of the research, I've come to the conclusion that the majority of travel companies understand

the value of the internet as an advertising avenue because most of them have a website and use email frequently. However, because of a lack of understanding, resources, or awareness, they are not taking their marketing internally seriously enough.

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