

From Intentions to Actions: The Influence of Social Media Tourism Promotion and Travel Motivation on Tourist's Actual Behavior

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to examine the role of social media in tourism promotion and travel motivation within the context of Pakistan. This study investigates the influence of social media tourism promotion and travel motivation on the actual behavior of tourists, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework. A quantitative, descriptive research design with a deductive approach was employed. The population comprised followers of five Facebook pages managed by registered tour operator companies in Pakistan, with a final sample of 375 respondents selected through multi-stage probability sampling. Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study and Cronbach's alpha analysis, with all variables exceeding acceptable thresholds. The findings suggested that majority of respondents were male (59.7%), while females made up 40.3% of the sample. This gender distribution further shows that more male tourists participated in the study than females. The results of the study confirm that social media tourism promotion has a positive and significant impact on the actual behavior of tourists. Additionally, these findings highlight the importance of social media as a tool for influencing tourist behavior. Findings of the study also revealed that behavioral intentions of tourists (BIT) significantly impact the actual behavior of tourists (ABT). In conclusion, this study confirms that social media and travel motivation significantly influence tourists' behavioral intentions and actual travel behavior in Pakistan. The findings validate the Theory of Planned Behavior and highlight the need for strategic, motivation-aligned social media marketing by tourism operators.*

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Tourism Promotion, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Travel Motivation, Tourist Behavior, Behavioral Intention, Actual Tourist Behavior

Introduction

Social media has grown into a potent tool for promoting travel in recent years, greatly influencing both travelers' actual behavior and their reasons for traveling. A combination of psychological factors and digital engagement, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, influence the shift from travel intention to actual visitation (Asri et al., 2024; Wang & Yan, 2022; Tang et al., 2024). Along with offering visual stimulation and destination awareness, these platforms also enable influencer marketing and user-generated content to emotionally engage prospective tourists, encouraging motivation and intention that may result in actual travel behavior. Travel intentions are greatly influenced by social media tourism promotion. According to Asri et al. (2024), youth travel motivation is increased by short-form videos produced by TikTok influencers that showcase genuine and captivating experiences. These visual narratives frequently elicit strong feelings, which strengthen the desire and intention to travel. Similarly, Wang and Yan (2022) emphasized that travel intention is positively impacted by the caliber and reliability of tourism-related content shared on social media. In particular, content that aligns with the user's self-perception fosters trust and raises the probability of action. When deciding whether a tourist will follow through on their intention, travel motivation—which encompasses both internal (push) and external (pull) factors—is essential. Through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—all fundamental components of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)—social media has a

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substantial impact on travel intentions, claim Shang et al. (2021). These elements are influenced by peer pressure and online interaction, which makes social media platforms crucial in shaping travel preferences.

Tang et al. (2024) looked more closely at the impact of online celebrity-driven destination content and discovered that the relationship between social media use and real travel behavior is mediated by place attachment and perceived value. Users are more likely to turn intention into action when they develop an emotional bond with a destination through online content. But not every intention results in action. In this process, emotional involvement and satisfaction act as mediators. According to a study, travelers' satisfaction with online marketing material is crucial in converting their travel plans into actual actions. Additionally, research published in the *Journal of Small Business Strategy* by Jones et al. (2021) highlighted that, particularly for rural destinations, well-targeted social media advertising greatly boosts tourist visitation. In order to effectively impact actual travel behavior, tourism marketers must not only increase awareness but also cultivate emotional engagement, establish credibility, and guarantee consistent, high-quality messaging. Over the past few years, Pakistan has grown in popularity and promise as a travel destination (Arshad et al., 2018; Nazir et al., 2022; Qazi & Baig, 2024). In order to gain market share, developed economies are aggressively growing their tourism sectors, which is advantageous for a nation's economic development (Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016). The study's goal is to investigate how social media can be used to promote travel and tourism in Pakistan. Nevertheless, factors that help travelers plan their trip have rarely been examined in prior research. The main factors that help to influence or alter tourists' behavior will also be covered in detail in this study.

Literature Review

Travelers' decisions, the marketing of destinations and services, and the effects of tourism on both destinations and travelers themselves have all been profoundly impacted by the emergence of social media platforms. Numerous facets of this dynamic relationship are covered in the literature on social media tourism promotion and behavior change, such as how social media platforms impact travelers' decision-making, the function of influencers and user-generated content, the consequences for destination management, and the ensuing changes in travel behavior.

H1: *Social Media Tourism Promotion Positively Impacts the Actual Behavior of Tourists.*

The use of social media in tourism promotion has drawn attention, and research has shown that there is a positive relationship between the two and actual visitor behavior. According to a literature review, social media influences traveler behavior and aids in the promotion of tourist destinations (Armutcu et al., 2023). Because of the wide range of information it offers and the active participation of its users, social media is a powerful tool for destination marketing and influences travelers' choices and actions (Hysa et al., 2022). Similarly, social media and the Internet have a big impact on how tourists behave both in terms of their intentions and their actual behavior, as well as how they search for information and make decisions (Javed et al., 2020). Travelers' use of social media to inform their decisions can also have a significant impact on tourism-related facts and schedules. According to the analysis, tourists' opinions and decisions are influenced by the content created on their friends' and role models' social media accounts (Leung et al., 2013). Tourism providers must develop a strategic tourism management plan in order to address online reviews, particularly to increase their social media presence (Sotiriadis, 2017). Additionally, conventional travelers who are looking for information about travel should focus on the increasing significance of social media in travel-related searches (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

H2: *Travel Motivation Positively Impacts the Actual Behavior of Tourists.*

Tourist motivation is another significant factor that influences actual tourism behavior. The motivation of tourists and their behavior have been found to be directly correlated by researchers. For example, Pereira et al. (2019) demonstrated that travelers' attitudes toward the destination, which influence their behavior, are positively correlated with their motivation to travel (Pereira et al., 2019). Furthermore, Lee (2009) found that motivation is a strong mediator of tourist behavior since it directly affects satisfaction and future behavior. Because travelers will only travel to a specific location based on the impression that social media presents, marketing image is a crucial component of destination marketing. The perception that a

particular image creates plays a major role in the selection of tourist destinations, and social networks continue to play a crucial role in shaping this perception. Therefore, by posting to social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, prospective travelers can draw attention to specific locations and heighten their desire to visit them in order to witness unique attractions (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2015). Furthermore, user-generated content provides accurate and varied information that enhances a destination's appeal.

H3: *Behavioral intentions of tourists will have a significant impact on actual behavior of tourists.*

Majeed et al. (2020) investigated how travelers' behavioral intentions are influenced by their opinions of online content. According to their findings, visitors' satisfaction with online information has a direct impact on their intention to travel and their electronic sharing of their experiences, which in turn affects how they behave as tourists (Majeed et al., 2020). In the context of e-loyalty, Mahadin, Akroush, and Bata (2020) discovered that features of travel websites, like information quality and ease of use, greatly increase visitors' e-loyalty and e-satisfaction. These qualities result in favorable behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, demonstrating the value of trustworthy information in encouraging return business and referrals (Mahadin et al., 2020). The study demonstrated that travelers' purchase intentions are significantly impacted by their trust in digital content and the legitimacy of eWOM, highlighting the importance of trustworthy information when making decisions (Yazgan Pektaş & Hassan, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior serves as the foundation for this study. We can see how behavioral intention influences the relationship between media tourism advertising, social media explorations, and travelers' actions thanks to the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to the TPB, there are three main factors that influence a person's behavior: According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, people behave in ways that reflect their perceptions of their own actions as well as those of others and their sense of control. Our next course of action is determined by factors such as attitudes and social norms. According to our study's analysis, social media tourism promotion and travel motivation have an external impact on travelers' opinions (attitudes), opinions of their friends and peers (subjective norms), and perceptions of their own decision-making power (perceived behavioral control). How well a place is marketed in the media and the desire to travel are the two main factors that affect tourists' plans to visit. Strong travel plans are created when destinations' marketing speaks to tourists' emotions, aligns with their friends' and family's opinions, and gives them the confidence to go. People are more likely to travel to the destination when these factors are in harmony (Mittal et al., 2021). Ajzen's TPB is one of several methods used in the study to analyze visitor behavior. Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Wang & Yan (2022) demonstrate how tourists' interest and sentiments regarding a travel itinerary are influenced by high-quality travel information. Furthermore, as Shang and his team (2021) explain, the Stimulus-Organism-Response model shows how public communications from the media and social media influence travelers' intentions and actual travel behaviors. With the help of this theoretical framework, the researcher can investigate how social media promotes travel and how it influences travelers' motivation to find destinations, particularly in Pakistan.

The interactions within this framework are hypothesized as follows:

H1: *Social Media Tourism Promotion Positively Impacts the Actual Behavior of Tourists.*

H2: *Travel Motivation Positively Impacts the Actual Behavior of Tourists.*

H3: *Behavioral Intentions of Tourists Positively Impacts the Actual Behavior of Tourists*

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach to analyze the study. The research adopts a deductive approach, guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, with variables derived from existing literature. The population consists of Pakistani tourists using social media platforms, specifically Facebook, for planning tours. Due to time and resource constraints, the study focuses on tourists from Facebook pages managed by five registered tour operator companies in Pakistan.

Population and Sample of Study

The Department of Tourist Services, Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, Pakistan, identified the chosen companies' official Facebook pages, and the total number of followers (20,800) was used to calculate the population. Multi-stage probability sampling was used, and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used to determine the sample size of 375 respondents. Five tour operator companies were chosen at random in the first stage. Using a Google survey form, followers of these pages were asked to take part in the study at the second stage, and their consent was acquired. A structured, closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale for scaling. The tool's validity and reliability were confirmed by the completion of a pilot study with 50 respondents and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis.

Data Analysis

As part of this study, different types of analysis have been conducted, such as the following: Demographic analysis (such as gender and age), one way ANOVA, descriptive statistics, reliability tests, correlation analysis, and finally, regression analysis (following Hayes' process) which investigated whether there is any association between variables. Table 1 displays detailed information about tourists' age and gender, revealing that 59.7% of the study's respondents were male and 40.3% were female. Moreover, 82.9% of the respondents fall within the age range of 17–25, 13.9% fall within the range of 26–33, 2.7% fall within the range of 34–42, and 0.3% fall within the age bracket above 42.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Factors	Frequency	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	224	59.7%
	Female	151	40.3%
Age	17–25	311	82.9%
	26 – 33	52	13.9%
	34–42	10	2.7%
	Above 42	1	0.3%
	Missing value	1	0.3%

Table 2

One Way Anova of Gender

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.067	1	.067	.169	.681
Within Groups	148.150	373	.397		
Total	148.217	374			

Table 2 exhibited an insignificant association between gender and the actual behavior of tourism (ABT) (with sig=.681). Similarly, Table 3 shows an insignificant association between age and the actual behavior of tourism (ABT) (with sig=.482).

Table 3

One Way Anova of Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.980	3	.327	.823	.482
Within Groups	146.797	370	.397		
Total	147.777	373			

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social media tourism promotion (SMPT)	1.00	5.00	1.8187	.49207
Travel motivation (TM)	1.00	5.00	1.8013	.53662
Behavioral intention of tourist (BIT)	1.00	5.00	1.9209	.58142
Actual behavior of tourist (ABT)	1.00	5.00	2.0036	.62953

Table 4 displays the Mean, Standard deviation, Minimums, and Maximum values of study variables (such as social media tourism promotion (SMPT), travel motivation (TM), the behavioral intention of tourist (BIT) and the actual behavior of tourism (ABT)). Additionally, Table 2 shows that social media tourism promotion (SMPT) contains a mean value = 1.8187 and a standard deviation = .49207. Similarly, the mean value of travel motivation (TM) = 1.8013, and the standard deviation is .53662. The behavioral intention of tourists (BIT) contains a mean value = 1.9209 and a standard deviation = .58142 and Actual behavior of tourists (ABT) has a mean value = 2.0036 and a standard deviation = .62953. All variables in this investigation consist of a minimum value (1) and a maximum value (5).

Table 5
Reliability Analysis

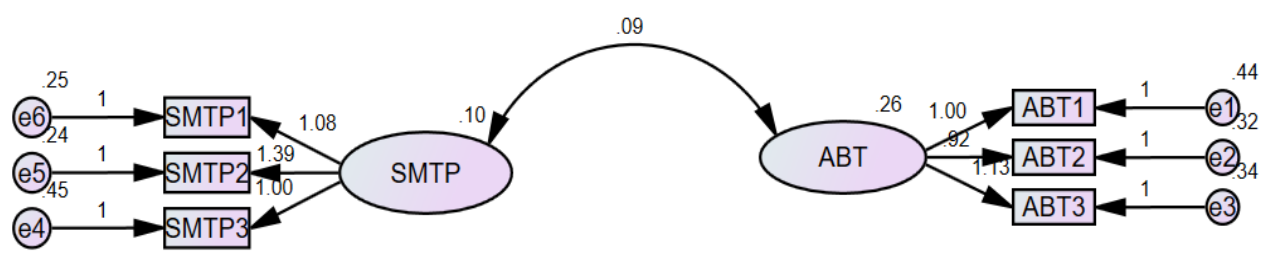
Variables	No of items	Cronbach Alpha
Social media tourism promotion (SMTP)	3	.700
Travel motivation (TM)	4	.642
Behavioral intention of tourist (BIT)	3	.646
Actual behavior of tourism (ABT)	3	.700

Table 5 demonstrates the analysis of reliability for 13 statements. Cronbach's alpha is widely utilized to analyze reliability and internal constancy when individuals use diverse Likert Scales. One can only proceed with the investigation if the constructs or variables are reliable. This is why it is essential to confirm that the reliability of all the constructs must be at least 0.6 (Ursachi et al., 2015). According to Table 5, it has been scrutinized that social media tourism promotion (SMPT) is assessed by using three items in this study. The Cronbach alpha value of these three items is 0.700. Additionally, the measurement of travel motivation (TM) contains four survey items with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.642, The behavioral intention of tourists (BIT) and Actual behavior of tourism (ABT) comprise three survey items with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.646 and .700, which signifies good reliability; so it is concluded that all constructs/variables in this investigation are reliable because reliability values are in the range of 0.7 to .09 (Ursachi et al., 2015).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To ensure the validity of the construct the researcher employed CFA because it is employed to evaluate if a researcher's comprehension of a construct aligns with its measured parameters (Marsh et al., 2020). Similarly, for obtaining most useful and accurate results paired analysis was consider effective and authentic technique (Marsh et al., 2009).

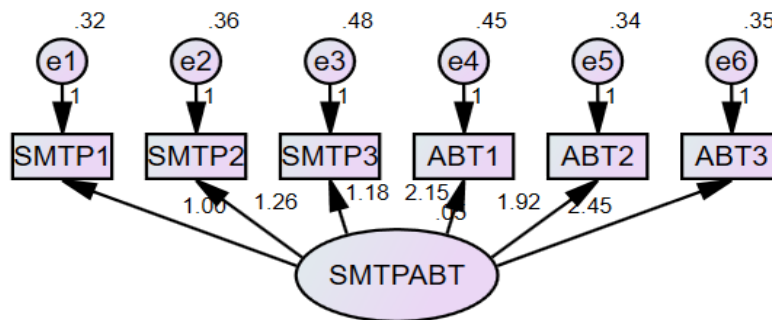
Figure 1
Two Factor Analysis (SMTP-ABT)



The two-factor analysis of model for instance, Social media tourism promotion (SMTP) and Actual behavior of tourist (ABT) displayed that the value of $\chi^2 = 14000$, $df = 8$, $CFI = .982$, $GFI = .988$, $NFI = .960$, $RMSEA = .045$ exhibits that this model is a good fit (Figure 1).

Figure 2

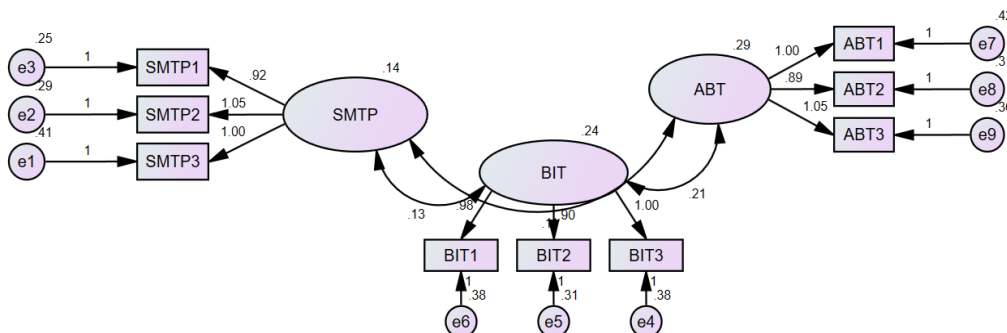
One Factor Analysis (SMTP-ABT)



The consequence of the examination of one factor is $\chi^2 = 62.236$, $df = 9$, $CFI = .843$, $GFI = .944$, $NFI = .824$, $RMSEA = .126$; it reveals that the outcome of two factors is more better than the analysis of one factor (Figure 2). Examination of the three-factor analysis, such as Social media tourism promotion (SMTP), Behavioral intention of tourist (BIT), and Actual behavior of tourist (ABT), revealed that the value of $\chi^2 = 41.332$, $df = 24$, $CFI = .974$, $GFI = .975$, $NFI = .940$, and $RMSEA = .044$, exhibits that this model is a good fit (Figure 3).

Figure 3

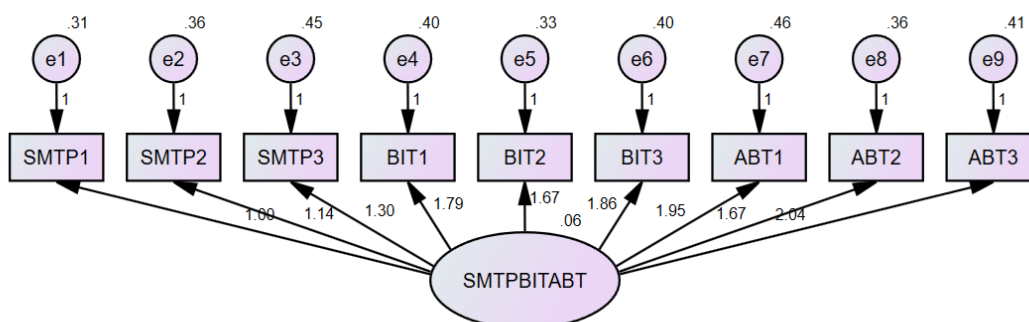
Three Factor Analysis (SMTP-BIT-ABT)



The effect of one factor analysis is $\chi^2 = 94.687$, $df = 27$, $CFI = .897$, $GFI = .943$, $NFI = .863$, $RMSEA = .082$; it exhibits that the consequence of two factors is more useful than one factor (Figure 4).

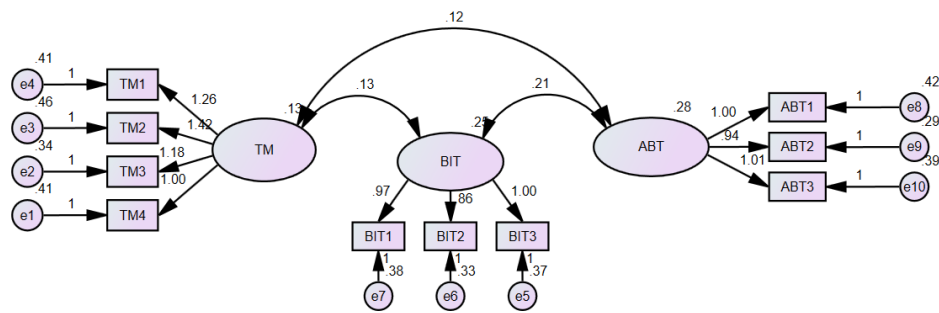
Figure 4

One Factor Analysis (SMTP-BIT-ABT)



Three factor analysis for example, Travel motivation (TM), Behavioral intention of tourist (BIT) and Actual behavior of tourist (ABT) exhibited that the value of $\chi^2 = 51.505$, $df = 34$, $CFI = .971$, $GFI = .929$, $NFI = .971$, $RMSEA = .060$ reveals that this model is good fit (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Three Factor Analysis (TM-BIT-ABT)



Analysis of one factor reveals that the value of $\chi^2 = 136.311$, $df = 35$, $CFI = .872$, $GFI = .927$, $NFI = .873$, $RMSEA = .088$; it exhibits that the findings of two factors is finer than one factor (Figure 6).

Figure 6
One Factor Analysis (TM-BIT-ABT)

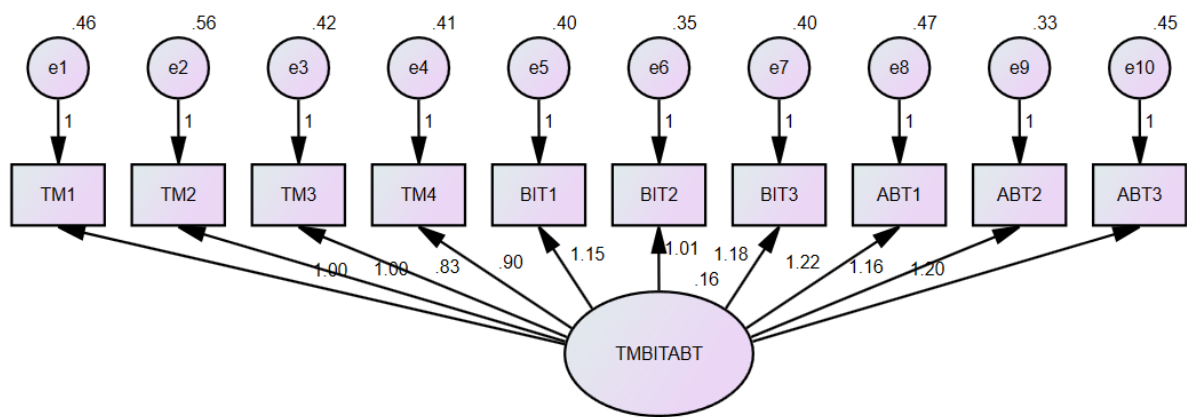


Table 6
Correlation Analysis

	SMTPM	TM	BITM	ABTM
SMTPM	1			
TM	.363**	1		
BIT	.461**	.541**	1	
ABT	.358**	.440**	.541**	1

Correlation analysis shows the link or correlation between diverse variables (Živković et al., 2014). In this study, the association among study constructs, for instance, social media tourism promotion (SMPT), Travel motivation (TM), the actual behavior of tourism (ABT) and the behavioral intention of tourist (BIT) has been analyzed. Table 6 shows a positive and significant link between Social media for tourism promotion (SMPT) and the actual behavior of tourists (ABT) with $r = .358^{**}$. There is a positive and significant link between travel motivation (TM) and the actual behavior of tourists (ABT) with $r = .440^{**}$. There is a positive and significant link between the Behavioral intentions of tourists (BIT) and the actual behavior of tourists (ABT), with $r = .541^{**}$ at a level of 0.01.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the study confirm that social media tourism promotion (SMTP) has a positive and significant impact on the actual behavior of tourists (ABT) ($\beta = .1769$, $t = 2.8435$, $p = .0047$). Additionally, behavioral intentions of tourists (BIT) partially mediate the relationship between SMTP and ABT. Therefore hypotheses H1 has been verified. These findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of social media as a tool for influencing tourist behavior. Social media platforms serve as

effective channels for promoting destinations, which can subsequently lead to increased tourist visits and engagement (Fotis et al., 2012; Leung et al., 2013). The study also confirms and proves H2 that travel motivation (TM) positively impacts the actual behavior of tourists (ABT) ($\beta = .2513$, $t = 4.3791$, $p = .000$). Behavioral intentions of tourists (BIT) partially mediate this relationship (effect = .2518, 95% CI [.1699, .3382]). Recent studies provide supports to the notion that travel motivation is important to predict the tourists' behavior. For example, Pereira, Gupta, and Hussain (2019) state that the travel motivation acts as a larger determinant on the attitude of tourists and this in turn determines the behavior. Destination image is also revealed as an intervening variable between travel motivation and tourist behavior in this study, thus supporting motivational factors in tourism as identified in other studies (Pereira et al., 2019). Likewise, Bayih and Singh (2020) examined the relationship between travel motivation and behavioral intention of domestic tourist and established that push and pull motivation factors were significant determinates of overall satisfaction which affected actual behavior of domestic tourist. This supports the argument that travel motivation is a direct antecedent of tourists' behaviors especially when accompanied by positive travel experiences (Bayih & Singh, 2020).

As H3 hypothesized, the study finds that behavioral intentions of tourists (BIT) significantly impact the actual behavior of tourists (ABT) ($\beta = .541$, $p < .01$) have been confirmed. This result is consistent with the theory of planned behavior, which posits that intentions are the most immediate determinants of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Previous studies have also shown that in the context of tourism, tourists' intentions to visit a destination strongly predict their actual travel behavior (Lam & Hsu, 2004; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010). Though these contributions are validated, this study has some limitations. Since it examines only tourists interacting with the Facebook pages of selected tour operators, such magnitude of findings might not be generalized to other social media or other populations. The study's reliance on quantitative data and a descriptive research design, while providing a structured and statistically rigorous approach, also limits the depth of understanding regarding the underlying reasons behind tourists' behaviors and motivations. Quantitative data alone cannot capture the nuanced, complex factors that may influence tourists' decisions and actions. Tourism behaviors are often influenced by a variety of contextual factors, including the availability and use of social media platforms, cultural attitudes towards travel, and the level of technological penetration, all of which can vary significantly across different regions. Therefore, the extent to which these findings can be applied to other contexts remains uncertain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics between social media, travel motivation and tourist behavior within the context of Pakistan's tourism sector. The findings reinforce the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), particularly in illustrating how behavioral intentions mediate the relationship between social media tourism promotion (SMTP), travel motivation (TM) and the actual behavior of tourists (AB). This highlights the significant role of social media in influencing tourist behavior, not just as a promotional tool but as a critical platform where behavioral intentions are formed and reinforced. The research also underscores the importance of understanding and targeting travel motivations, which are shown to directly influence tourist behavior. From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that tourism operators and marketers should strategically leverage social media, tailor their messaging to align with tourists' motivations. By focusing on these elements, tourism businesses can better influence behavioral intentions and ultimately drive actual tourist behavior, leading to increased engagement and success in the competitive tourism market.

Recommendations

The current research was limited to domestic tourism; thus, there exists significant potential for further investigation from an international standpoint, particularly in examining the influence of social media on the promotion of international tourism in Pakistan. Moreover, longitudinal studies would be necessary to track changes in tourist behavior over time and to confirm whether changes in the independent variables indeed lead to changes in the dependent variables, particularly in the context of actual behavior.

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