

Social Media as an Emerging Tool for Destination Weddings in India

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Abstract

A destination wedding is the latest trend that has grabbed the attention of Indians. The role of social media marketing in destination weddings is very crucial and different from other types of marketing mainly because the product is usually a service. Social media is a phenomenon that has become the most important part of the marketing mix. Underpinned by technological improvements, the impact of social media, evolving consumption, and marketing paradigm, this paper is an attempt to explore the impact of such change in relation to the current state of destination weddings. Traditional Indian wedding celebrations include couples and their families and friends preparing and running the entire show. However, in the last few decades, the industry has witnessed a major drift over relation to emerging trends in recruiting wedding planners selecting various wedding destinations, using technology and social media. A destination wedding is the latest trend in the Indian wedding industry. No matter in which manner we may present this phenomenon but we cannot ignore this recent trend in the tourism industry. Globalisation is one of the major factors that have been a driving force in the increase in destination weddings across the globe. It appears that there is a great potential for increasing further its economic importance through social media marketing. This paper attempts to examine the emerging position of social media as an effective tool in promoting India as a wedding destination. The study comprised the use secondary data for the collection of facts and figures.

Keywords

Social media, Social media marketing, Destination wedding, Wedding tourism, Indian wedding destinations, and Indian wedding.

1. Introduction

The advancement of information and communication technology, particularly the internet, has had a significant impact on the evolution of marketing tools. The internet's existence and credibility have

profoundly altered how customers obtain information, how they plan and execute their activities, and how they share their experiences with others. A huge increase in the prominence of social media platforms that allow internet users to interact, connect, and produce creative content has marked a major step forward in the evolution of the internet (Popesku, 2014).

In today's technology-driven world, social networking sites have become a way for businesses to reach a wider audience with their marketing initiatives. A connection between brands and consumers, delivering a personal channel and currency for user-centered networking and social engagement is basically what constitutes social media marketing. With the advent of social media, the tools and tactics for connecting with customers have changed dramatically, and as a result, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is compatible with their business strategy. This is especially true for a business looking for a competitive advantage (Paquette, 2013).

The world has changed as a result of social media, and as result, the world has also changed what it expected from social media platforms. Businesses of all kinds and sorts are frantically trying to figure out how to take advantage of this new and constantly expanding technology. It is critical to figure out the best ways to incorporate social media into the planning process. Businesses that wish to succeed cannot afford to ignore the digital and social media revolution (Martin, 2019).

The internet has become the backbone of our civilization today. We refer to the current version, which allows users to interact with senders, like Web 2.0. We have progressed from a very simple one-way communication device (Web 1.0) to an interactive social system that is open to all of us 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Consumers in practically any region of the world may create and share content because of the widespread access to technologies such as personal computers, digital video, and audio recorders, webcams, smartphones, and wearables such as smartwatches (Tuten & Solomon, 2016).

The progressive advent of print, film, televised and computer-generated media has greatly expanded the ability to structure, create and recreate the meaning of weddings as well as the manner in which these weddings take place. This basically suggests that the media has impacted the way in which people plan their weddings and, to some extent, the meaning of weddings.

In relation to computer-generated media, in 2015 it was reported that almost half of the world's population had access to the internet compared to 2000 when only 6.8 percent of the population had access. This demonstrates how fast technology is expanding (Aakansha, 2018). According to a study by (Craddock, 2018), two in five people show suppliers features they want at their destination wedding from posts they have seen on Pinterest. In another of Smith's reports, she discovered that more than half of brides are sharing progress updates throughout their wedding day, while also sharing registery information and pictures of the planning process in the lead-up to the big day. This leads to a report by (Zolfagharifard, 2015) which revealed that more than 75 percent of people admitted to making their lives seem more exciting through social media.

It is becoming more of a trend to make the public aware of people's personal events online through social media platforms. A study by (Donnellan, 2016) identifies that this is becoming more evident in modern-day weddings including destination weddings. They suggest that people have become reliant on sharing something as intimate as someone's wedding day, over numerous accounts on social media.

Social media has made it easier for people to do this which can be seen in the current social media trends. These include; Setting up a hashtag for a wedding to make it easier for people to find information and photos from the day. Creating a bespoke geofilter that only appears on a phone if guests are in the wedding location, which can then be shared on picture-based social media sites such as Snapchat and Instagram. People also live to stream their wedding online through social platforms such as Facebook for all their online friends to watch whilst the ceremony takes place.

2. Review of the Literature

A wedding is seen as a concrete indicator of a family's social position in India. As a result, families spend a small fortune on their weddings, and parents begin arranging their child's wedding years in advance. The wedding market in India is booming, with an estimated 10 million weddings taking place each year (Aegon Life, 2018).

Weddings in India differ according to geography, religion, culture, and the bride and groom's personal tastes. Weddings are a joyful celebration in India, and are usually marked by elaborate decorations, colour, music, dancing, costumes, and customs that vary according to the bride and groom's community, area, and religion. Every year, around 10 million marriages are held in India, with Hindu weddings accounting for about 80 percent of the total (Yee, 2008).

According to a report by KPMG, the large Indian wedding market, which is typically considered recession-proof, is worth roughly \$40-50 billion. It continues to expand at a high rate of 25-30 percent per year. The annual cost of a luxury wedding is estimated to be between \$20-250 million. The luxury wedding market is largely served by a slew of high-profile planners who come up with concepts and then hire or subcontract the various operations, from flower arrangements to entertainment, from food to photography. The way the unorganized market works is that there are planners strewn about large cities which employ contractors and service providers like photographers and caterers (Nandwani, 2018).

When weddings are considered, social media has aided wedding planners in promoting their businesses via social media reviews, tagging, and comments. Wedding planners who tag there are clients on social media posts are more likely to be seen and promoted through digital word of mouth. Rather than spending money in professional services, many couples, particularly those who are on a tight budget are increasingly turning to internet services, websites, social media, and mobile applications to find solutions to their wedding needs and budget (Edwards, 2020).

With the new power of social media, weddings are becoming shaped by Facebook statuses, Instagram snaps and Twitter updates right from the proposal to the wedding day. A study recognises that more and more people are taking advantage of social media websites to help them with virtually every aspect of their wedding from choosing the destinations to the caterers, decorators, photographers, and so on (Desai, 2020).

Consumer vacation travel habits are largely influenced by social media, but destination weddings may be the most affected. The reach and effect of sumptuous visual imagery are leading more couples to seek out increasingly unique experiences that will make their destination wedding extraordinary. Couples want to brag to their friends and family about their unique wedding destination. “Very unusual places” are what social-media-savvy wedding clients seek. The traditional beach areas are well-known to most people. The couples are looking for nature preserves and parks, as well as tropical gardens and other venues that will add to the uniqueness of a wedding (D'Ambrosio, 2018).

Social media has a far-reaching consequences. People vacationing habits have shifted as a result. It has changed the way we search for new jobs. In recent years, it has become evident that wedding planning has evolved as well. The ideal wedding of today differs significantly from the ideal wedding of the pre-social media era. Wedding costs have also been affected, as one might assume. Over the last five years, the average wedding expenses has risen steadily. And it is easy to understand how social media has played a part in this (Arnold, 2018).

Social media, especially for destination weddings, is a terrific way for attendees to get to know one another before the wedding day. People start by introducing folks who plan to come on Facebook or Twitter so that there is more camaraderie during the real party. On the route to the wedding, people share milestones on social media. Pictures of the dress fitting, the location, and other details add to the thrill of the occasion (Destify, 2017).

People are married to digital when it comes to wedding planning. Wedding planning is now done in 83 percent of cases. 62 percent of couples design their own wedding website. A wedding planning app is used by 52 percent of people. A wedding hashtag is used by 54 percent of people. According to a research, newly engaged couples are increasingly using social media to help prepare their special day each year. Wedding Instagram influencers will continue to have a significant presence in the industry hotbed as long as brides and grooms continue to plan weddings (Saraidari, 2019).

People are now organizing destination weddings for their once-in-a-lifetime vacation, and posting content that shines a spotlight on destinations. Social media influencers have played a key role in supporting destination weddings online (Pooley, 2022)

3. Objectives of the Study

This research paper is infact an outcome of a broader study conducted by the researcher. The objectives of the present research paper are the following:

- 3.1. To analyze the use of social media as a marketing tool for the promotion of India as a wedding destination.
- 3.2. To investigate the influence of social media on the decision-making process of the consumers while selecting the wedding destinations and accommodations.

4. Research Methodology

The research method adopted in the present research is the descriptive literature review method. The study comprises the use of secondary data for the collection of facts and figures. The researcher has reviewed and analyzed the available literature in the related articles, research papers, conference proceedings, books, reports, blogs, and other online sources for the conduct and analysis of the research purpose.

5. Social Media

The phrase “social media” has become quite popular over the last few years. It can be defined as the collective online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing, and collaboration. Internet-based websites and mobile-based applications are used to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Websites and programmes dedicated to forums, micro-blogging, social-networking, social bookmarking, and wikis are among numerous sorts of social media (Roy, 2017).

In simple terms, social media refers to any website that allows users to share their material, thoughts, and viewpoints while also encouraging contacts. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Digg, MySpace, Reddit, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+, Stumble Upon, Delicious, Scribd, Instagram, Whatsapp, Flickr, Tumblr, and others are some of the major social media platforms. Social media facilitates meeting new people and forming relationships. It operates on advanced internet-based platforms. It aids in the formation and dissemination of knowledge or any piece of

information to a large audience. Low-cost tools that mix technology and social contact with the use of language are referred to as social media. People use social media to communicate and interact online. While social media has been there since the beginning of the internet, there has been a surge in the quantity and popularity of social media sites in the previous ten years. It is termed as social media because users interact with and around it in a social setting, which might include chats, commentary, annotations, and engagement exchanges created by the users. Over the last few years, creating material has grown exponentially easier, result in in a surge in social media usage. Non-technical web users can now create content on an ever-increasing number of platforms (Singh, 2019).

Social media are the online means of communication, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities and organizations, facilitated by technology and mobility. Like traditional media, social media includes several channels, each of which has specific vehicles. Social media's main channels include social communities, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce, and an e-channel in business networking for communication and sharing among linked people (Tuten & Solomon, 2016).

To sum up, social media refers to a group of new types of internet media that have the following features:

- 5.1. Participation** – Everyone who is interested is encouraged to participate and give feedback via social media. The distinction between media and audience is obfuscated.
- 5.2. Openness** – The majority of social media platforms want input and involvement. They encourage voting, comments, and information, and exchange. There are almost never any obstacles to accessing and using content.

- 5.3. Conversation** – Traditional media, for the most part, is about broadcasting (which involves the transmission or distribution of content to the audience), social media is viewed as two-way communication.
- 5.4. Community** – Social media enables communities to form fast and efficiently communicate. Communities share common interests such as photography, political news, a favourite reality show, a favourite TV show, and so on.
- 5.5. Connectedness** – The majority of the social media networks survive on their interconnectedness, utilizing ties to other networks and individuals as well.

Even for individuals who are not actively involved in social media, the social media revolution is visible all across the world. Initially, social media was mostly utilized by individuals for peer-to-peer contact, but, as time passed, professionals began to use social media for business communications.

6. Destination Weddings

When it comes to wedding planning, the venue is crucial. If a couple wants to tie the knot somewhere special, they might want to consider a destination wedding. Weddings held distant from the couple's hometown are known as destination weddings, and they frequently necessitate travel for the wedding party and guests (Lake, 2022).

A destination wedding is a wedding that takes place outside of the couples' hometown. The couple along with their families travel to the location and get married. The destination weddings are becoming popular and the couples are getting more involved in the planning process and choosing the special locations as per their dreams and aspirations (Nichols, 2017)

With the introduction of destination weddings, weddings are no longer the same. This type of wedding takes place in the middle of nowhere, which is neither the bride's nor the groom's home. The couple and their guests go to a specific place for the wedding ceremony in a destination wedding. The setting is one of the most important parts of any destination wedding. This is why resorts surrounded by soul-pleasing natural displays and the scent of calm are often the most popular choices for this type of weddings. A destination wedding combines a theme wedding with panoramic views from all sides (Country Roads, 2018).

A destination wedding in India would be a fantastic experience that combines culture, customs, and liveliness, with gorgeous sites and stunning architectural marvels to pick from. It would undoubtedly make each of the weddings functions a one-of-a-kind experience that the couple, their families, and their guests would remember for the rest of their lives. The deserts, beaches, mountains, and palaces that formerly housed royalty are ideal locations for a wedding in India. In reality, golf courses, resorts, and gardens are equally places to hold the destination wedding in India (Das, 2022).

7. Social Media as a Tool of Marketing Wedding Destinations

When it comes to attracting destination weddings, social media marketing is crucial. Aspiring couples want to learn everything there is to know about a location before deciding on it as their wedding destination. They also want a personal connection with the location, which is particularly important for millennials. This generation is looking for authentic experiences that it wants to learn more about and share with the rest of the world via the internet. Businesses that want to engage in to this market should build a strong online presence through their websites, social media channels, blogs, mobile applications, electronic marketing, and partnerships with wedding portals and related businesses (Mobar & Thadani, 2018).

Marketers can use social media to rethink their marketing messages traditional one-way communication flow and how it can help them add a new interactive communication flow into their plan. For businesses, the emergence and extension of social media, as well as its function in marketing, has been extremely beneficial. Communities, social networks, blog marketing, and other methods are used by a corporation. It is the most recent “buzz” and is currently fashionable. A large number of businesses have a presence on the social media marketing platform, which they use with unique ideas to effectively maximize and globalize their campaigns.

Until recently, organizing a destination wedding required an additional trip or a lot of phone time. In either instance, it was difficult to predict whether everything would go according to the plan. But with the advent of the internet and social media, engaged couples may now communicate in person with anyone involved in the planning process. Virtual tours of the select places are also available. Social media helps in being a planning tool thereby making planning easier, bringing people together, and generating great ideas (Arnold, 2018).

(Preston, 2014) identifies that social media can be beneficial as a destination wedding marketing tool. She lists three ways that social media can prove itself to be useful;

7.1. Vendor Search – Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow people to search for potential destination vendor companies. These platforms act as a virtual portfolio for companies to show off what they can do.

7.2. Group Chats – This is a feature available on most social media platforms. They are a convenient form of communication between people, such as a bride and her bridesmaids. Group chats can help to speed up the planning process as it helps questions to be answered quicker.

7.3. Group Pin Boards – These are boards created on Pinterest that people can share with their friends and where friends can add ideas too.

The use of social media by destination marketing organizations has grown to the point where it has become more than just a marketing tool. Businesses have devised new strategies for utilizing social media to their benefit. Travel companies use social media to deliver customer support to their customers. Hotels, on the other hand, are embracing Whatsapp and other chat systems to provide concierge services. So that is the evolution of social media, and we will almost certainly see further changes in the years to come (Bechte, 2020).

8. Conclusion

According to the findings, technology advancements and social media have revolutionized the way consumers connect with products and services, as well as businesses. Customers today are more powerful than

ever before, requiring marketers to create a plan that incorporates a diverse mix of online, mobile, and social media marketing to encourage consumer involvement, brand dialogue, and advocacy. The shift may be seen in connection to destination weddings in India, and the study's focus was on the adoption and rate at which social media has, is, or will influence the whole destination wedding sector. The findings of the study provided sufficient data to explain and support the study's major topic. These data support the notion that social media can be an effective tool for the promotion of destination weddings in India. Sharing experiences with others on social media plays an essential role in influencing people who live in other regions or notions to choose a specific wedding destination. Though the role of social media as a marketing tool has surged over the last few years, still there is a long way to go for most of the businesses to effectively use social media as a marketing tool for the promotion and development of destination weddings in India.

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