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## THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL BLOGS AND VLOGS ON TRAVEL DECISION MAKING AMONG YOUNG TRAVELLERS, EVIDENCE FROM 20-35 YEARS AGE GROUP

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### ABSTRACT

In today's context, young travellers segment can be identified as a new trend in travel and tourism industry. Due to the development of technology, information regarding travel and tourism are easily accessible. The young generation has more influence in using technology, their travel decision making can be altered by online websites and applications. The purpose of the study is to investigate whether there is an impact on travel decisions making among young travellers, due to the behaviour of vlogs and blogs. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire sent to a sample of 200 travel blog and vlog followers between 20 and 35 years. The questionnaire was spread through eWOM. It reveals that the researcher was used trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise as independent variables. Travel decision making was the dependent variable of this study. The data were analyzed by statistical tools such as descriptive and inferential statistics. According to the survey, all independent and dependent variables are reliable hence the Cronbach's Alpha value is higher than 0.7. Most of the young travellers follow travel blogs and vlogs through YouTube. The survey concludes that all three independent variables were significant and showed a positive relationship with the dependent variable. Attractiveness acts as the highest influencing factor in the travel decision-making process. The findings of this study could help travel industry companies to effectively track and implement online promotions. The study concludes a positive impact of travel blogs and vlogs on travel decision making among young travellers.

**Keywords:** *eWOM, travel blog, travel decision, travel vlog, young travellers*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1. Background of the Study***

Nowadays, almost everyone's life has become more complicated with their busy schedules. Hence people are trying new ways to relax physically and mentally. Fern (2015) state that travelling has been identified as a means of mental relaxation that promotes physical and mental health.

People tend to travel as a hobby and it has become a life style for many. The increase of social networks and new technologies introduce new capabilities and challenges to the tourism industry. According to Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou (2013), the young travelers' segment has been identified as a new trend in the Travel and Tourism industry and is highly influenced by the media. Thus, they can be easily manipulated by false information.

Travel vlogs and blogs play a crucial role on the internet among young travelers. Travelers tend to follow travel vlogs and blogs before planning their vacation to gather information about the five A's (Attraction, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, and Activities).

Myers (2010) states that the word 'blog' is derived from the word 'weblog'. If an individual or an organization uses a website to keep logs about their own travel experiences, it is a travel blog. Blogs are journal based web sites that typically allows the authors to post content on the websites (Gordon, 2006). For better understanding and convenience, some of them use videos to keep their logs. The word 'vlog' originates from the word 'video blog'. Although the posts may also include text, providing context for the video, the focus of each post is a video.

### ***1.2. Research Problem***

Today, social media and YouTube have become the prominent Internet platforms used by the younger generation. Hence the younger generation has a tendency to follow the trends created by internet platforms. When it comes to travel, there are plenty of travel vlogs and blogs on the Internet. However, there are doubts about the reliability of the information. Certain travelers get less satisfaction than expected after the travel experience.

Some travel vlogs and blogs have different purposes such as commercial and personal desires. For example, promoting their own business, promoting sponsors, and so on. Before pursuing it, you need to identify a quality travel vlog or blog. The necessity of this study was to investigate whether there is an impact on the traveler's decision making by following travel vlogs and blogs.

Therefore, in this study, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise are investigated to find out the influence on the travel decision making by following travel vlogs and blogs. The Problem statement addressed in the present study is;

“To what extent do Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise of a travel vlog or blog affect a traveler’s travel decision making process? “

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of the travel vlogs and blogs to travel decision making.

- To identify the relationship between independent variables (Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and expertise)
- To identify how to use travel vlogs and blogs to decide travel destinations
- To identify professional travel vlogs and blogs

### **1.4. Significance**

Travel decision is the outcome of the young travelers after following the travel vlog and a blog. Therefore, it is more significant to know accurate information to get a better travel decision. Though the young generation has more enthusiastic about traveling, only less number of researches can be found on the impact of travel vlog/blog on travel decision making of young travelers.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Travel Decision Making**

Travelers need to make various decisions before they actually travel. For instance, they need to decide what kind of accommodation, the food they want to experience, most preferred activities need to take part in, the sightseeing they want to visit or the most suitable place for their stay. Therefore the travel decision making has become a complex process (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016). Particularly, it is an activity decided by the traveler himself (McCabe, 2009). Therefore, it can be stated that the travel decision making is based on the traveler’s behavior. The studies states that the sciences related to the traveler’s behavior are sociology, anthropology, psychology, and Economics (Suryani, 2008).

### **2.2. Travel Vlogs & Blogs**

Blogs and Vlogs are web sites that contain the writer’s or group of writers’ own experiences, observations, opinions, etc. The word ‘blog’ originates from the shortened word, ‘web log’ and the word ‘vlog’ derived from the word ‘video blog’. Travelers today use blogs and vlogs to share their experiences with others across the world. (Chow, 2005).

Users who write blogs do it for two major reasons; self-expression and social interaction (Papacharissi, 2002). Travel Vlogs are the Most Popular Type of Travel Videos Watched on YouTube. 64% of people who are thinking about taking a trip watch travel-related videos. 60% of travelers who view social video

use it to narrow down their activity, brand or destination choices. 45% of Travelers Booked Immediately After Watching a Travel Activity Video (Henderson, 2018).

### **2.3. Trustworthiness**

Online trust usually develops during the reviewing process. It can be expressed by the slow trust. Thus, after a few return visits to the site, the person slowly builds confidence in the source of the information. When a person trusts the information provided on a specific website and it becomes credible, he or she will inevitably return to that site in search of other information. This is because the website meets the user's expectations and trusts all the information posted on it (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996).

### **2.4. Attractiveness**

Attractiveness can be mentioned with dependent variables as similarity, familiarity, likeability. Original attraction has the role of amplification message sent by features such as beauty, elegance and style. Corresponding source attraction the variables are equality-similarity between the origin of the message and the recipient, familiarity- approximation recipient and origin and compassion- impact on the recipient. (Corina , 2010)

### **2.5. Expertise**

Expertise means those who are qualified, skilled and professional in origin. The proficiency factor of the model is closely related to a concept like normal - trust in certain individuals and groups of people. The same is true in the Internet world - information published by people who are definitely experts on a specific issue will be more reliable. When it comes to searching for information on the Internet, people tend to first look at websites that gather people who know what they are writing about. (Davydova, 2012)

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

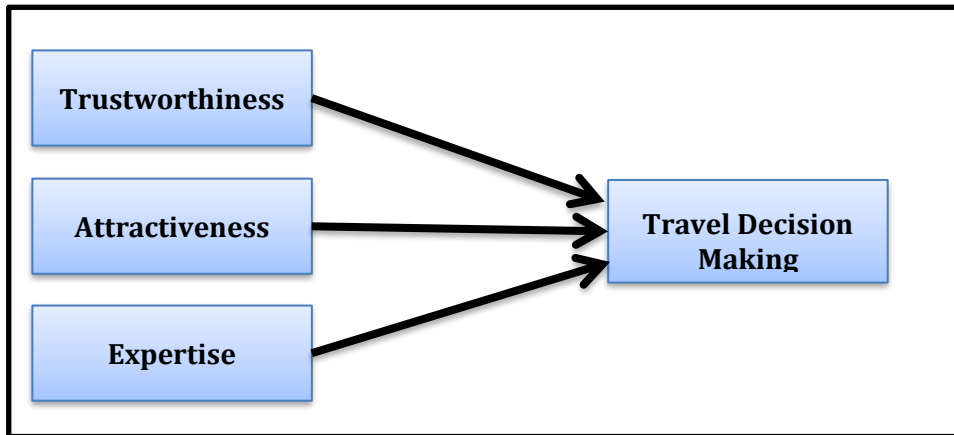
### **3.1. Research Approach**

The approach in the research is definitely a quantitative approach. The phenomenon of the impact of travel vlogs and blogs on travel decision making is decided to be the focus of the research. Moreover, this phenomenon is integrated with the relevant theories of travelers' behavior and new trends in travel blogs and vlogs. Primary data for the research comes from an online survey of travel blog followers between the ages of 20 and 35.

### **3.2. Research Context**

The researcher himself developed a conceptual framework for the purpose of this study. Comments were generated after reviewing the relevant literature. Travel decision making is the dependent variable of this study. Several key variables that influence travel decision-making has been identified based on the

literature and included in the model as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, and have been identified as independent variables. (Canning & West, 2006).



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

### ***3.2 Population & Sample Selection***

In this study, the target population comprised of young travel vlogs and blog users between the ages of 20 and 35 in Sri Lanka. The sample was selected through a non-probability sampling method (Snowball Sampling Method). The sample size was 200.

### ***3.3. Data Collection Methods & Analysis***

This study was mainly based on primarily collected data from the selected sample. Therefore, an online survey was distributed through the internet. Questions were measured through the five-point Likert scale which varies from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The least agreement to the statement was marked by one since the highest agreement was marked by five. Data were collected within four weeks. The response rate was 212, and 200 were selected for the data analysis. The data was then analyzed using statistical software SPSS.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS**

### ***4.1. Demographic Analysis***

#### ***4.1.1. Gender Representation of the sample***

As shown by the following table, most respondents of the research are males.

**Table 3: Gender**

Gender	Percentage	Frequency
Male	58%	116
Female	42%	84

*4.1.2. Age Representation of the sample*

*The table shows age group 26 – 30 years is the most contributed age group.*

**Table 4: Age**

Age Group	Percentage	Frequency
21-25	26.5%	53
26-30	63.5%	127
31-35	10%	20

*4.1.3. Most preferred platform*

The table below proves that the Youtube is the most following platform of the participants.

**Table 5: Most preferred platform**

Platform	Percentage	Frequency
YouTube	49.5%	99
Facebook	32.5%	65
Instagram	14.5%	29
Travel vlogs/blogs	3.5%	7

*4.1.4. Reason to Watch/Read Travel Vlogs and Blogs*

*As per the collected data, mostly the young generation use travel blogs/vlogs to get an idea about destinations that they might want to visit in the future*

**Table 6: Reasons to watch/read travel vlogs and blogs**

Reason	Percentage	Frequency
To get ideas about destinations that you might want to visit in the future	38%	76
To get information about destinations that you are already planning to go to	37.5%	75
To read about destinations where you have already been	9%	18
To spend time reading interesting stories about different places	15.5%	31

## 4.2. Reliability Test

**Table 5: Reliability test**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Travel Decision Making	0.745
Trustworthiness	0.797
Attractiveness	0.823
Expertise	0.869

According to the Cronbach's Alpha Value, all the values of variables are higher than 0.7 and are reliable.

## 4.3. Pearson Correlation Coefficient

### 4.3.1. The relationship between Trustworthiness on Travel decision making

**Table 6: Correlation analysis**

Correlations		Travel Decision Making	Trustworthiness
Travel Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	1	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	199	199
Trustworthiness	Pearson Correlation	.687**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	199	199

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 4.3.2. The relationship between Attractiveness on Travel decision making

**Table 7: Correlation analysis**

Correlations		Travel Decision Making	Attractiveness
Travel Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	1	.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	199	199
Attractiveness	Pearson Correlation	.605**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	199	199

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 4.3.3. The relationship between Expertise on Travel decision making

**Table 8: Correlation analysis**

Correlations		Travel Decision Making	Expertise
Travel Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	1	.668**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	199	199
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.668**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	199	199

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the above tables, the relationships between Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise with Travel Decision Making are positive. Because the correlation values are respectively, 0.687, 0.605 and 0.668. The significant values are, 0.000 for all the variables. The p values are less than 0.01. Therefore, null hypothesis (There is no relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (There is a relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable) is acceptable.

## 4.4. Regression Analysis

### 4.4.1. Multiple Regression

**Table 9: Model summary**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.738 <sup>a</sup>	.545	.538	.29684

a. Predictors: (Constant), Expertise, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness

According to the information represented in Table 9, R square value of the model is 0.545. That indicates, total changes of Travel Decision Making represented from 54.5% of Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Expertise.



**Table 10: ANOVA table**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.542	3	6.847	77.712	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	17.182	195	.088		
	Total	37.724	198			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision Making

b. Predictors: (Constant), Expertise, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness

According to the ANOVA table, it can be identified whether the regression model significantly predicted the dependent variable. Based on the above table, the significant value of model was represented in the above table, it is 0.000. That means the variances among the variables are significant.

Based on the results of the below table, Trustworthiness's, Attractiveness' and Expertise's  $\beta$  values are respectively 0.359, 0.183 and 0.280. All 3 variables are significant to predict dependent variable (Travel Decision Making) because of the p values are (0.000, 0.008 and 0.000) lower than alpha value (0.05).

**Table 11: Coefficient table**

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.907	.204		4.455	.000
	Trustworthiness	.334	.071	.359	4.715	.000
	Attractiveness	.193	.072	.183	2.673	.008
	Expertise	.241	.066	.280	3.638	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Travel Decision Making

## 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The main objective of this study is to find the impact of Travel Vlogs and Blogs on the travel decision making of young travelers. Therefore, for this study, three independent variables have been selected to measure the impact of travel vlogs and blogs. Considering the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, all three independent variables are significant and have higher values. Consequently, the

study proves that independent variables (trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise) are strongly affected to travel decision-making (dependent variable).

As mentioned earlier, researches on the selected field of study are limited, where variables are used only as indicators of the reliability of information sources. Here, those are used as factors influencing travel vlogs / blogs in making travel decisions. Considering those factors, travelers will be able to identify professional travel vlogs and blogs without hesitation.

## **6. CONCLUSION & CONTRIBUTIONS**

The study reveals that there is a powerful influence on young travelers' decisions after following travel vlogs and blogs. There is a tendency of changing minds regarding travel decisions among young travelers after they consider a few factors in a travel vlog or blog. They appraise trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise as indicators to make the decision although travelers use those indicators to measure the quality of a travel vlog or blog.

### **6.1. Contribution to the Existing Knowledge**

By focusing on this research, travel vloggers and bloggers can promote their vlogs or blogs if they consider the trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise of their marketing strategies. It will attract the attention of young visitors to the travel vlog / blog site. Furthermore, the customer behavior can be monitored using these three factors.

From the point of view of the young traveler, they can have a good understanding of travel vlogs and blogs which will help them make a good travel decision through travel blogs and vlogs.

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