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Engaging consumers in the digital era: An analysis of official tourism Facebook pages in India

Abstract

Digital Communication has provided an alternative and dynamic platform for interaction and socialization. Digital channels like social media and mobile phone are increasing their penetration into day to day life. According to a survey by (Digitalinsights, 2015), Indians are vigorously using different social networking sites and 88% of users share content on their social profiles. The interactive nature of social media has evolved the customer-approach of marketing from passive observers to active participants. Tourism Sector being an information intensive industry is significantly affected by social media, especially in destination promotion and marketing, providing information and generating awareness, influencing decision making and online purchase behavior. Thus, many researchers and marketers are concentrating on customer interaction and communication through social media and strategies to enhance customer engagement. This study aims to investigate which kind of content, media and posting day would engage consumers more on Facebook. Uses and gratification framework was used as the basis of the study. Official State Tourism Facebook pages were reviewed and a comparative analysis among the top three states on the basis of number of fans was done. The data was gathered manually from 15th Jan 2015-15th March 2015 and 15th Jan 2016-15th Mar 2016 and 430 posts in total were analyzed for this study. Consumer engagement was measured by the number of likes, comments and shares on the post. The results showed that large number of fans does not necessarily results into higher engagement index. The posts showing attractions have the highest engagement level. Also, it was established that single pictures have higher engagement index as compared to multiple pictures and videos. However, no relationship was found between the day of posting and engagement index.

Key words: consumer engagement; social media marketing; user generated content; India

Introduction

Internet has played an essential role in the marketing through digital communication and connectivity. Digital marketing channels like social media have revolutionized the traditional ways of interacting and engaging the target audiences (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Királová & Pavlíček, 2015; Straker & Wrigley, 2016). Social media empowers the consumers to interact and communicate spontaneously without the limitations of temporal or spatial boundaries (Brandt & Henning, 2002). The interactive nature of social media has evolved the customer-approach of marketing from passive observers to active participants. Social media provides platform for online sharing, consumption, production and have created a new

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way for decision making, interacting, purchasing and socializing (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate & Lebherz, 2014; Shao, 2009; Straker & Wrigley, 2016). It is often observed that referrals from family members and friends influence the travel decision behavior. Customers prefer to seek advices from the people who have already visited that particular destination than merely trusting the conventional advertisements from the suppliers. (Crompton, 1992; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012; Hyde & Laesser, 2009; Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). According to a survey Indians are vigorously using different social networking sites and 88% of users share content on their social profiles (Digitalinsights, 2015). Facebook is the market leader in social networking sites which surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently there are 1.59 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2016). Tourism Sector being an information intensive industry is significantly affected by social networking sites, especially in destination promotion and marketing, providing information and generating awareness, decision making and online purchase behavior. The State Government and Department of tourism have been attracted by the unlimited potential of social media, especially Facebook and they are inculcating this media in their marketing strategies for not only wider publicity of the tourist destinations but also to increase awareness about the tourist's destination. Due to vast popularity researchers and marketers are concentrating on customer interaction and communication through social media and strategies to enhance customer engagement (Burson-Marsteller, 2012; Parent, Plangger & Bal, 2011; Schultz & Peltier, 2013). In this context, the main Challenge faced by the researchers is to understand the needs of customers and how to engage their target audiences (Numes & Cespedes, 2003). Hence, understanding consumer's engagement on social media, what strategies should be created to increase engagement level, what motivates the consumers to participate in the social media are the areas of interest. Uses and gratification framework is used in this study to understand the motivation of consumers and how certain information is used to fulfill their needs. Thus, this paper aims to study the initiatives taken by the state government and tourism development corporations to promote tourism through Facebook and strategies applied to engage their customers on Facebook. It also proposes a framework for the process of customer engagement in tourism websites. Precisely, this exploratory study will analyze Facebook as communicating tool used by state government, kind of information disseminated and measures the consumer engagement index.

Literature review

Customer engagement: The concept of "engagement" have attracted the researchers from various fields like Education (Bryson, 2016), Management (Wirtz et al., 2013), Organizational Behavior (Chathoth et al., 2013), Psychology (Marbach & Lages, 2016) and Political Science (Firmstone and Coleman, 2014). "Engagement" has been extensively researched in marketing literature since 2005 (Brodie, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011). Based on the theoretical literature different researchers gave different definitions of Engagement. Engagement can be defined as "A psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative consumer experiences with a focal agent/object. It occurs under a specific set of context dependent conditions generating differing consumer engagement levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships" (Brodie et al., 2011). Engagement can also be defined as "the progression from interacting with the interface physically to becoming cognitively immersed in the content offered by it and then onto proactively spreading the outcomes of this involvement" (Oh, Bellur & Sundar, 2010). Mollen and Wilson (2010) describe consumers' engagement as "the cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value." Engagement as discussed in advertisement literature defines it as strength of customer-company relationship in terms of rational

and emotional bond (Bowden, 2009). Engagement through communication and interaction leads to the formation of long term relationship bond between company and customer (Brodie et al., 2011). Customer engagement is considered as better predictor of loyalty than customer satisfaction (Doorn van et al., 2010; Hollebeek, 2011; Mpinganjira, 2016). Therefore, understanding engagement in the form of suggestions, feedbacks leads to easy interpretation of customer's behavior and outcomes. To increase Engagement and loyalty among the customer's Social media must have these five characteristics: a) Participation b) Openness c) Conversation d) community and e) Connectedness (Mayfield, 2008). Customer engagement can be considered as value added services for travel and tourism industry which is highly price competitive in nature (Bowden, 2009; So, King & Sparks, 2012). Engagement through websites or on social media is often referred to as "online engagement" and it can be measured by monitoring various actions such as click through rates, page views, comments (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). According to Calder and colleagues (2009), consumers get engaged online due to eight factors: stimulation and inspiration (emotion), social facilitation (emotion), temporal reason (cognitive), self-esteem and civic mindedness (emotion), intrinsic enjoyment (emotion), utility (cognition), participation and socializing (behavioral), and community (emotion). Increased participation leads to increase in engagement level and creates a win-win situation for both customer and company (Verma, 2014). Koh and Kim (2004) gave four factors to measure the consumer's participation a) The effort to stimulate the community; b) The individual's motivation to interact c) Comments posted on websites; and d) The excitement with which an individual posts messages and responses in the community. Cognitive, emotional and behavioral are the major concepts used for understanding engagement (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). The present study will consider the most basic concept of engagement where customer's acquaintance with state website and their online behavior to these activities will be measured.

Facebook and customer engagement: Facebook is a social networking site that allows people to connect with each other and form a network of virtual community for social exchange (Aladwani, 2014). This research used Facebook as the underlying platform because of the fact that Facebook is the market leader in social networking sites which surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently sits at 1.59 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2016). State government consider Facebook as the most influential social media platform and around 68% of Indian states and Union Territories are present on Facebook and have their official brand page (Annex 1). Marketing through Facebook can be done through: Facebook ads, Facebook brand pages, Social plugins, Facebook applications and sponsored stories (Facebook, 2012). Interactivity and engagement are the most essential characteristic of Facebook. On an average, every user has 130 friends on the social networking sites, and it is also established that SNS like Facebook influences the consumer's buying behavior 15 percent more than any other means of marketing (comScore, 2011). It is also researched that around 50 percent of brand Facebook fans are customers of that brand (Hudson, Roth, Madden & Hudson, 2015). Customers on Facebook can voluntarily engage themselves through "likes", "shares", "comments" and marketers are also using Facebook for engaging customers through various activities (Kim & Drumwright, 2016). Greater the level of engagement faster will be the sharing and dissemination of information, knowledge and ideas (Casalo, Flavia'n & Guinali'u, 2007). For marketing and engagement purpose moderator should be careful about the followings: a) which type of content should be posted on the wall b) What kind of media should be used and c) when the content should be posted.

Theoretical framework

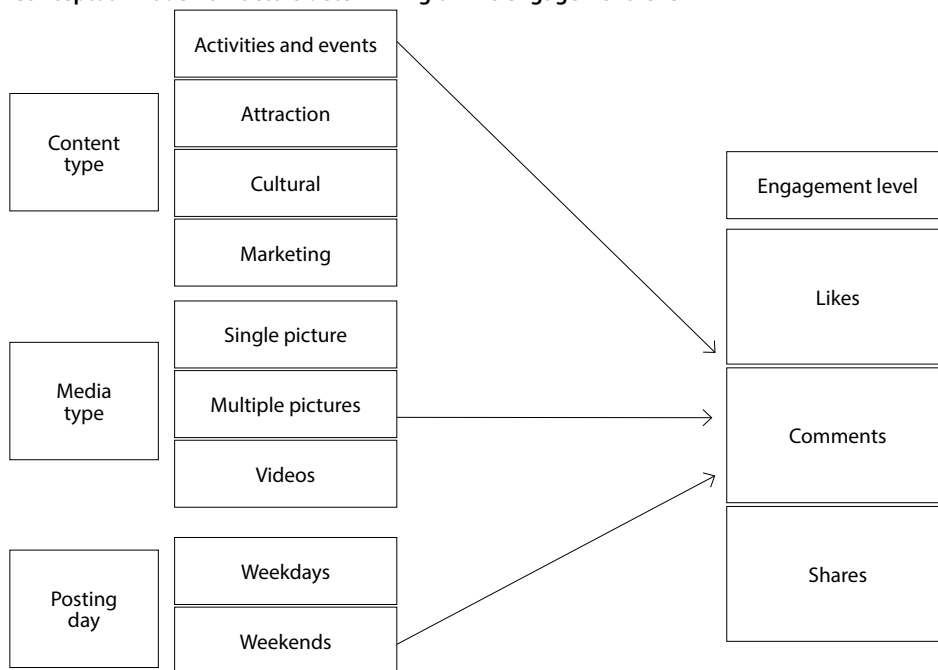
Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory postulated that people use media intentionally and selectively in order to satisfy their various needs. It is used by various researchers to understand the engagement

level of customers (Katz 1959; Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo, 2004; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke 2008; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011). U&G theory has evolved over the decades to illustrate the motivation of consumers to use media for consuming and sharing information. The terms Uses and Gratification was first coined by Kartz, Haas and Gurevitch in 1973 in order to overcome eliminate the insufficiencies of "Hypodermic needle" or "Magic bullet" theories of mass communication which states that customers can be easily influenced by the media messages without any cognitive interpretation. U&G theory in collaboration with Maslow need theory describes three basic needs of consumers that can be fulfilled by the media: Cognitive, Affective and Integrative needs. U&G theory identify why and how an individual explore a particular media to satisfy specific needs (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2015). It is the first approach that consider active role of consumer in searching information and employ appropriate media to fulfill the desired gratification need (Ku, Chu & Tseng, 2013). U&G is applied to various forms of media like television, radio, newspaper, and shows an active participation of consumers (Dimmick, Ramirez, Wang & Lin, 2007; Leung & Wei, 2000; Rubin, 1983; Ruggiero, 2000; Shao, 2009). Rapid growth of social media as communication channel have grabbed the attention of researchers towards the adoption of U&G theory for predicting the consumer behavior and motivation for using them (Chen, 2011; Muntinga et al., 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Smock, Ellison, Lampe & Wohn, 2011; Tonteri, Kosonen, Ellonen & Tarkiainen, 2011). Quan-Haase and Young (2010) define six gratifications from Facebook as Pastime, Affection, Fashion, Sociability, Sharing problems and social information. Sociability was found to be the highest gratification users obtained from interaction through social media. These findings emphasized on use of social media as a platform to engage consumers by forming a virtual community. Chen (2011) studied the competence of twitter to satisfy the need of human connection and interaction. The results showed that length of time is important determinant for the need of human connection. It also showed a positive correlation between active twitter usage and connectedness. Muntinga et al. (2011) classified consumer online brand related activities as a) consuming type in which involvement of individuals are minimum such as reading others posts b) contributing type in which moderate involvement is required such as commenting on others posts or liking the posts c) creating type where involvement level is highest such as writing blogs or uploading pictures related to brands. In most generic way content shared on Facebook can be categorized by the type of content and the media used to upload the content (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). To derive our hypotheses, we focus on previous findings and literature, and propose a conceptual model (Figure 1) to measure the engagement index.

- a) Content type: Generally, Consumers interacts and communicate through users-generated content. It is necessary for the tourism websites to build relationship with the customers to foster sense of belongingness (Enginkaya & Yilmaz; 2014). Previous researchers have found that entertainment and information are the stronger motivators for the engagement index (Muntinga et al., 2011; Park et al., 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). In this study Content type is further subcategorized as Activities and Events: posts communicating information and awareness related to local happenings, Goings-on, Actions and Festivals are included in this category ; Attraction: posts communicating information and awareness related to local places to visit, heritage sites and popular areas to visit are included in this category; Cultural: posts which communicates information and awareness related to the customs, social behavior, art and tradition are considered in this category and Marketing content: posts which communicate information and awareness related to promotion and selling of the products and services of the area are included in this category. Therefore, following hypotheses can be formulated:

- H1a: Posts with Activities and Events content are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
 - H1b: Posts with Attraction content are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
 - H1c: Posts with Cultural content are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
 - H1d: Posts with Marketing Content are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
- b) Media type: Actual sharing actions taken by the DMO's are classified under media type. One can share content on Facebook in the form of Status, Pictures, Videos and Links. Previous studies indicate that pictorial content influences the engagement level more than any other form of media type (Mariani, Di Felice & Mura, 2016). Engagement index of images are 22% higher from consumers than video posts and 54% higher than text (Brookes, 2010). Media type is further sub categorized as single picture: if content is posted through one picture is; Multiple Picture: if content is posted through more than one picture and video: if content is posted through video. Therefore, following hypotheses can be formulated:
- H2a: Posts with Single picture are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
 - H2b: Posts with Multiple pictures are the strongest motivator for engagement index.
 - H2c: Posts with Videos are the strongest motivator for engagement index.

Figure 1
Conceptual model for factors determining online engagement level



- c) Posting day: The concept of scheduling and timing is very well recognized by the Marketing and advertisement industry (Kumar, Novak & Tomkins, 2006). DMO's can post content either on weekdays (Monday to Friday) or on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) which is shown on the wall of fan pages. In case of Facebook the Content can appear again and again if it is liked shared or commented by the friends. Therefore, it is important to study the temporal element of the post so that important posts do not get lost in the pile of posts. Previous researches have showed that

most of the content are posted on weekdays (Golder, Wilkinson & Huberman, 2007). Therefore, we can formulate the following Hypotheses:

- H3a: Content posted on weekdays have highest engagement index.
- H3b: Content posted on weekends have highest engagement index.

Methodology

As the aim of the study is to investigate which kind of content, media and posting day would engage consumers more on Facebook, the information was gathered on the web by reviewing official tourism websites of State Government of India a complete list is provided in Annex 1. Among all the websites those having direct Facebook integration on their homepage were considered and accordingly states were ranked on the basis of number of fans on their official Facebook page. On this basis, top three states i.e. Kerala (1103862 and 1226707) fans in 2015 and 2016 respectively, West Bengal (210905 and 637617) fans in 2015 and 2016 respectively and Gujarat (864080 and 1158826) fans in 2015 and 2016 respectively were selected for further analyses. Facebook was considered to be most relevant for this study because, it is the world largest which surpass 1 billion registered accounts and currently there are 1.59 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2016). Data available on Facebook was easy to access. The data was gathered manually from 15th Jan 2015-15th March 2015 and 15th Jan 2016-15th Mar 2016. The captured data was processed manually by likes, comments and shares, date, content type, media type, day type. The posts obtained during this period were 430 posts in total. Highest number of posts were uploaded by Kerala (204) followed by West Bengal (138) and Gujarat (88). The post uploaded by the state government into the four content categories: Activities and events, attractions, cultural and marketing three media category type: Single picture, multiple pictures and video and two post day type: weekday and weekend the study used manual coding. In order to investigate the highest popularity of posts on the above-mentioned categories, the engagement index on Facebook page was addressed through: posting and updating content on the wall, commenting on the existing posts, liking the existing post and sharing the existing post on their profile. Popularity, Commitment and Virality were calculated using Number of likes, Comments and Shares. The calculation of the engagement index was performed using the following formulas:

Table 1
Facebook metrics for stakeholder engagement

Popularity	P1	Number of posts liked /total posts
	P2	Total likes / total number of posts
	P3	$(P2 / \text{number of fans}) \times 1000$
Commitment	C1	Number of posts commented / total posts
	C2	Total comments / total number of posts
	C3	$(C2 / \text{number of fans}) \times 1000$
Virality	V1	Number of posts shared / total posts
	V2	Total shares /total posts
	V3	$(V2 / \text{number of fans}) \times 1000$
Engagement	E	$P3+C3+v3$ Engagement index

Source: Bonsón & Ratkai (2013).

Analysis and results

To obtain the understanding of content type, media type and posting day type on engagement index above-mentioned formulas were applied. Table 2(i) shows the Content type posted by different states in 2015 and 2016 followed by their engagement index.

Table 2(i)
Engagement index based upon content type during the years 2015 and 2016

States	Content type	2015				2016			
		P3	C3	V3	E	P3	C3	V3	E
Kerala	Activities and events	0.18	0.002	0.02	0.19	0.85	0.07	0.10	0.96
	Attractions	1.06	0.01	0.19	1.26	2.34	0.02	0.23	2.59
	Cultural	0.49	0.01	0.11	0.61	1.83	0.02	0.13	1.98
	Marketing	0.86	0.01	0.09	0.95	3.90	0.05	0.65	4.60
West Bengal	Activities and events	0.79	0.01	0.06	0.82	0.34	0.003	0.02	0.36
	Attractions	2.69	0.03	0.27	2.99	1.69	0.02	0.15	1.86
	Cultural	1.36	0.01	0.19	1.55	0.59	0.01	0.07	0.69
	Marketing	1.37	0.02	0.13	1.52	0.38	0.003	0.04	0.41
Gujarat	Activities and events	36.10	0.18	1.25	37.55	1.87	0.01	0.12	2.00
	Attractions	37.90	0.21	1.35	39.49	6.82	0.05	0.44	7.31
	Cultural	-	-	-	-	1.81	0.02	0.18	2.01
	Marketing	9.27	0.13	2.79	12.18	1.31	0.01	0.05	1.38

On comparing the content posted by DMO's in the year 2015 and 2016, there is no difference in the type of content posted by West Bengal and Gujarat while Kerala uploaded different content. Kerala shared maximum posts containing Marketing content in both the years (42.9%) and (49.5%) respectively; West Bengal shared maximum posts showing Local Attractions (49.2%) and (52.2%) respectively; Gujarat also shared majority of the posts that shows attractions of the state (48.7%) and (56.5%) respectively.

Among all the three states in 2015 People are more involved in the posts that shows local attractions In 2016 similar trend was found among West Bengal and Gujarat whereas in Kerala Marketing posts have higher engagement index.

Table 2 (ii)
Engagement index based upon media type during the years 2015 and 2016

States	Media type	2015				2016			
		P3	C3	V3	E	P3	C3	V3	E
Kerala	Single picture	0.80	0.01	0.08	0.89	1.34	0.01	0.13	1.47
	Multiple pictures	0.89	0.01	0.08	0.98	6.23	0.07	0.85	7.14
	Videos	0.65	0.01	0.27	0.93	2.15	0.04	1.65	3.83
West Bengal	Single picture	1.89	0.02	0.17	2.07	1.06	0.01	0.09	1.16
	Multiple pictures	1.84	0.02	0.19	2.04	1.11	0.01	0.11	1.23
	Videos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gujarat	Single picture	37.95	0.20	1.31	39.46	4.26	0.03	0.27	4.56
	Multiple pictures	-	-	-	-	0.64	0.006	0.09	0.73
	Videos	8.67	0.11	2.48	11.25	5.61	0.03	0.28	5.92

Table 2(ii) shows the Media type used by different states in 2015 and 2016 for posting the content followed by their engagement index.

On comparing the media type used for uploading the post it was found that all the three states follow same trend. Kerala used single picture (50.5%) and (66.3%) in the year 2015 and 2016 Respectively; West Bengal in the year 2015 used multiple pictures (71.8%) while in 2016 it also used single picture (74.6%) and Gujarat upload the content maximum times using single picture (87.8%) and (95.6%) in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Popularity, commitment and virality of the posts are shown in the above table. Engagement index in 2015 is more of content posted by Single picture by Gujarat and West Bengal while in Kerala people are more engaged towards Multiple Pictures. In 2016 Kerala and West Bengal Multiple pictures posts have higher engagement index and In Gujarat People are more engaged towards videos that are uploaded by the DMO's.

Table 2 (iii)
Engagement index based upon posting day type during the years 2015 and 2016

States	Posting day type	2015				2016			
		P3	C3	V3	E	P3	C3	V3	E
Kerala	Weekend	0.85	0.01	0.11	0.97	2.94	0.03	0.36	3.37
	Weekend	1.42	0.02	0.29	1.71	2.51	0.03	0.42	2.29
West Bengal	Weekday	1.70	0.02	0.19	1.95	1.14	0.01	0.11	1.26
	Weekend	2.20	0.02	0.16	2.38	0.89	0.01	0.07	0.97
Gujarat	Weekday	37.68	0.20	1.45	37.33	3.74	0.03	0.25	4.02
	Weekend	29.74	0.18	1.46	31.39	5.29	0.03	0.29	5.61

While comparing the posting day it was found that all the three DMO' prefer Weekdays to post their content. Kerala uploaded (78%) and 73.3% posts on weekdays in 2015 and 2016 respectively; West Bengal uploaded (76%) and (73.1%) on weekdays in 2015 and 2016 respectively and Gujarat uploaded (78%) and (69.5%) on weekdays in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

In terms of Engagement Index People are more involved by the posts uploaded on weekends in 2015 by Kerala and West Bengal DMO's while In Gujarat weekdays posts have higher engagement index. In 2016 People are more involved by the posts uploaded on weekdays by Kerala and West Bengal DMO's while in Gujarat people are now more engaged with the posts uploaded on weekend.

Table 3
Summary of hypotheses (rejected or accepted)

Hypothesis	Kerala		West Bengal		Gujarat	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
H1a	No	No	No	No	No	No
H2b	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
H3c	No	No	No	No	No	No
H4d	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
H2a	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
H2b	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
H2c	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
H3a	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
H3b	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Discussion

Online communication is considered as an important aspect of Marketing and Promotion. Social media such as Facebook is not only gaining popularity for sharing travel experience but also used as a

marketing platform by the marketers. More likes, shares and comments on the page more will be the engagement level of the fans. Therefore, marketers always look for ways to enhance active likers and commentators on the page. This research shows that large number of fans does not necessarily results into higher engagement index. In this study, largest number of fans were found to be of Kerala However, Engagement index of Gujarat was highest among all the three states. Most popular way of communication was liking a post followed by sharing and the least was commenting on a post which was in consistent with the previous literature (Bonsón & Ratkai, 2013; Bonsón, Royo & Ratkai, 2015). Post uploaded on the website of Gujarat receives more likes, comments and are shared more in comparison to those uploaded by the Kerala and West Bengal DMO's. Content type is considered as an important contributor to engagement level hence, appropriate strategies should be adopted by the DMO's for content planning. Table 2(i) shows engagement level of three states based upon content type.

A common pattern was observed related to the content uploaded by the three states in two years. Kerala focus more on marketing content whereas West Bengal and Gujarat on content that shows attractions. The result shows that people interact more to the post that shows information related to the local attractions of the state, how to reach there, best time to visit and things to do in that place followed by the posts that upload marketing kind of content and shows least interaction with posts that contain cultural content. On these findings, we can accept our hypothesis H1b: Posts with Attraction content are the strongest motivator for engagement index.

Media type is another important factor which influences the engagement level. Similar pattern has been observed regarding the type of media used for uploading the content. Visual media was adopted by all the three state to upload the content. Single picture was preferred mostly for uploading the content. However, a mixed result was found in this context. Single picture led to more engagement level in the year 2015 for Gujarat and West Bengal whereas multiple pictures influenced engagement index more for Kerala in the same year. However, in 2016 Multiple pictures encouraged more interactivity for Kerala and West Bengal and while Videos were more popular for Gujarat. On the basis of these results, we can accept our hypothesis H2a: Posts with Single picture are the strongest motivator for engagement index for Kerala and H2b: Posts with Multiple pictures are the strongest motivator for engagement index for West Bengal and Gujarat.

The posting day of the week has no such influence on the engagement index. As in the case of Facebook the post that is once shared by the DMO's can be shown again on the page of fans if it is liked, commented or shared by friend or friends of friend. Due to this fact, we are not fully able to confirm our framed hypothesis.

Managerial implications and limitations

This investigation contributes meaningfully to the Government and state Government for designing their websites. This will not only help them to understand what kind of content increases interactivity and influences engagement index, but also what type of media should be preferred for uploading the desired content. Our results show that Marketing content was preferred more by Kerala Government but fans are more engaged towards the content related to local attractions. Single pictures were preferred mostly by the government but fans preferred both Single picture and multiple pictures to interact. State government can plan their strategy for advertisement and promotion as per the engagement level. Further, the present study also adds substantial implications for tourism practitioners and other stakeholders like travel agencies, tour operators, hoteliers and on-line accommodation providers who

also use social media platforms for marketing and promotion. Engaging tourists and potential customers through social media platforms requires strategic orientation and wherever possible professional expertise should be hired to design the communication through such mediums. Our study reveals that local attractions are more engaging than any other form of content, therefore it imperative for them to include such information on their pages. As indicated in our findings content type is a significant predictor of fan engagement, all tourism stakeholders should adopt strategic approach in content selection while deciding what information to post on their social media pages. Further our study also reveals that merely inviting fans to your page does not necessarily result in higher engagement levels. This suggests that tourism stakeholders should adopt the segmentation approach in inviting fans to their respective pages. The emphasis should be more on quality rather than quantity of fans on their pages. The study offers important implication for the policy makers as the information posted by them is often viewed as authentic and reliable. Facebook is most commonly used as promotional and marketing tool by travel and tourism industry and thus they must choose wisely the content, media type and day of posting.

The findings of the research are subject to limitations. Firstly, the study is limited to three states: Kerala, West Bengal and Gujarat. Data was collected for a limited period of time: Jan 15 2015-March 15 2015 and Jan 15 2016 - March 16 2016. As a concept of engagement, the investigation is limited to online engagement through Facebook fans. Future research could also consider additional factors like: time of the post, frequency of the post, length of the post and size of fan community. The study concentrated on the internal factors of Facebook to influence engagement future research can investigate the factors which influence the consumers to become fan of a brand page.

Annex 1

S.No.	States	Official website	Facebook link	Number of fans
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	http://andamans.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/andamanstourism/	Page not found
2	Andhra Pradesh	http://aptourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/andhrapradeshstourism	APTDC fb available 152,533
3	Arunachal Pradesh	http://arunachalpradesh.gov.in	Not found	
4	Assam	http://assamtourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/Assam-Tourism-216427845062911/timeline/	7,651
5	Bihar	http://bihartourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/www.bihartourism.gov.in	3,122
6	Chandigarh	http://chandigarhtourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/ChandigarhTourismWeek/?ref=hl	9,815
7	Chattisgarh	http://cgtourism.choice.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/GoChhattisgarh	111,445
8	Delhi	http://delhitourism.gov.in	https://www.facebook.com/delhitourism/?v=wall&ref=ts	9,748
9	Goa	http://goatourism.gov.in/	Not found	
10	Gujarat	http://gujarattourism.com/	https://www.facebook.com/guj-tourism	1,180,248
11	Haryana	http://haryanatourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/haryanatourismindia/	1,725

Annex 1 Continued

S.No.	States	Official website	Facebook link	Number of fans
12	Himachal Pradesh	http://himachaltourism.gov.in/	Not found	HPTDC not found
13	Jammu and Kashmir	http://jktourism.org/	https://www.facebook.com/kashmirtourism	21,392
14	Jharkhand	http://jharkhandtourism.in	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Jharkhand-Tourism/190981864304858	Page Not found
15	Karnataka	http://karnatakaturism.org/	https://www.facebook.com/Karnataka-Tourism-Fan-page-126437450701472/	167,469
16	Kerala	https://keralaturism.org/	https://www.facebook.com/keralaturismofficial	1,259,667
17	Lakshadweep	http://lakshadweeptourism.nic.in	Not found	
18	Madhya pradesh	http://mptourism.com/	https://www.facebook.com/MP-Tourism	362,331
19	Maharashtra	https://maharashtratourism.gov.in	https://www.facebook.com/MaharashtraTourismDevelopmentCorporationLtd/	103,105
20	Manipur	http://tourismmanipur.nic.in/	Not found	
21	Meghalaya	http://megtourism.gov.in/	Not found	
22	Mizoram	https://tourism.mizoram.gov.in	Not found	
23	Nagaland	http://tourismnagaland.com/		
24	Odisha	https://odishaturism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/OdishaTourismOfficial	51,251
25	Puducherry	http://tourism.pondicherry.gov.in	Not found	16,631
26	Punjab	https://punjabtourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/Punjab-Tourism-646273962132266/?ref=tsandfref=ts	108
27	Rajasthan	http://tourism.rajasthan.gov.in	https://www.facebook.com/rajasthan-tourism	107,814
28	Sikkim	https://sikkimtourism.gov.in/	Not Found	
29	Tamil Nadu	http://www.tamilnadutourism.org	https://www.facebook.com/tnttdc/?ref=sgm	5,143
30	Telangana	http://telanganaturism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/tourismtelanganastate	12,827
31	Tripura	http://tripuratourism.nic.in/	https://www.facebook.com/www.tripuratourism.gov.in	5,338
32	Uttar Pradesh	http://uptourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/Uttar-PradeshTourism	51,025
33	Uttarakhand	http://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in	https://www.facebook.com/UttarakhandTourismOfficialPage	5,731
34	West Bengal	http://wbtourism.gov.in/	https://www.facebook.com/tourismwb/	712,794

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Submitted: 16/11/2017

Accepted 05/03/2018