

Envisioning the Future: Post-Pandemic Content Strategy for Destination Marketing Organizations

Abstract

The highly contagious nature of the novel Coronavirus locks-unlocks and economic uncertainty around the world have changed the complete landscape of the tourism sector. To attract tourists, it is necessary to revise the content strategy of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in the post-Covid economy. This study explores how different characteristics of DMO's social media posts influence tourists' online engagement. We used 876 posts from July 2021 to June 2022 on the official Facebook handle of Incredible India, through which we assessed the tourists' 'engagement', using the number of likes, comments, and shares. Additionally, linguistic features-based categorization of posts was done using LIWC. The results demonstrate that message format, message appeal, motives, and time orientation of posts significantly influence the tourists' online engagement. These findings are relevant to information dissemination and provide valuable insights for DMOs. DMOs could use this study to design their future messages to gather maximum engagement through social media posts.

Keywords: tourism, DMO, Facebook, incredible India, Covid-19, social media marketing

1. Introduction

The exponential surge of social network sites (SNSs) drawing millions of users has effectively compelled organizations and brands to disseminate marketing messages to consumers through SNSs (Luarn et al., 2015). Social media usage has increased manifold both during and post-pandemic, facilitating users across geographies to stay connected for professional and social purposes (Wong et al., 2021). SNSs have been pivotal in helping to overcome geographical boundaries while creating, in the process, new possibilities across different economic sectors (Díaz et al., 2016; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008; Tavakoli & Mura, 2017; Tuten & Solomon, 2017) including tourism. SNSs are believed to act as a source of inspiration in influencing tourists' choices (Kazandzhieva & Santana, 2019; Liu et al., 2020).

Even in the context of tourism, social media serves as a tool of engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Choe et al., 2017; Isacsson & Gretzel, 2011; Leung et al., 2013) for tourists among themselves in terms of sharing their experiences through blogs, tweets, and posts, among others (Leung et al., 2013), as well as with the service providers (e.g. hotels, resorts etc.).

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are critical players in the tourism sector, besides the tourists and service providers (Kumar et al., 2022). Simply put, DMOs promote tourism anywhere (Kumar et al., 2022) and extensively use social media to promote their brands and services. However, they aren't the sole 'information providers'; tourists also seek advice/information from people who have already visited a destination rather than merely trusting the DMOs (Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012), again with the help of social media/SNS'. Through their study, Luarn et al. (2015) found that brand page information usually does receive the

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intended online engagement, indicating that viral marketing through SNSs has yet to reach the intended expectations of firms. However, the authors did express their concerns, proposing that the critical challenge here is attracting tourists/consumers to make them view the brand posts on social media (Luarn et al., 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic that wreaked havoc on the world economy brought about paradigm shifts to both life and living, owing to which the global transformation from pre to post-Covid eras seem almost centuries apart. In the context of academia, just like any other research topic, tourism research has undergone humungous changes that have significant ramifications and implications (Čorak et al., 2020). Crouch (2020), for example, opined that tourism research in the pre-Covid era would effectively lose relevance and utility to the extent of being obsolete in some cases. Sigala (2020) proposed that the priorities and themes in tourism-related research must be reconsidered. Given this backdrop, social media content creation requires a revamp; it must be reimagined and re-purposed to engage and attract tourists effectively.

No research aims to examine the campaign and its engagement through social media post-Covid. Although some studies have investigated the role of social media in the tourism sector (Gebreel & Shuayb, 2022), others have studied the changing role of social media communication in the sector post-Covid (Pachucki et al., 2022). Some scholars have studied social media usage among DMOs by analyzing Facebook and Twitter content (Hays et al., 2013). Results from previous research indicate that social media usage among DMOs is experimental and emphasizes the need for robust studies with larger samples (Uşaklı et al., 2017). Therefore, this study proposes to explore the following:

- Investigate and propose effective content strategies for DMOs to align with the expectations of future travelers.
- What DMOs should post on their Facebook/social media pages to leverage the same as an effective marketing tool!

This study examines the concepts of Message Appeal and Format (persuading consumers through the central route) and Linguistic Features, Motive, and Time Orientation (persuading consumers through the peripheral route) of DMO posts.

The following sections discuss extant literature used to develop the framework and data extraction methodology for investigating and understanding the impact on online engagement behavior. The penultimate section examines the results while testing our hypotheses. Finally, we conclude by providing theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Literature review and framework development

The pandemic has significantly impacted the global travel and tourism industry, compelling DMOs to adjust their strategies to the new realities. At the same time, social media platforms remain essential tools for DMOs to engage with prospective visitors, disseminate information, and maintain destination awareness, both during and post-pandemic (Abbasi et al., 2022; Tran & Rudolf, 2022). Specifically, social media platforms enable DMOs to foster engagement, establish trust, and generate favorable destination perceptions among prospective tourists (Kim & Kim, 2020; Munar & Jacobsen, 2023). Lund et al. (2018) have identified the need for DMOs to navigate the overwhelming volume of information, misinformation, and user-generated content on social media platforms. In fact, during the pandemic, some researchers even identified a few best practices for DMOs so that they could ‘fully’ leverage social media platforms (Mele et al., 2023; Tran & Rudolf, 2022). They proposed that to engage and inspire potential visitors, DMOs should prioritize user-generated content, leverage influencer partnerships, and employ storytelling techniques (Lund et al., 2018). Based on this discussion, it may be affirmed that social media has proved to be an indispensable resource for DMOs in adapting their marketing strategies to the challenges posed by COVID-19. Interestingly, however, what

has possibly been left missing are the social media content strategies that DMOs would need to adapt to in the post-pandemic world. Therefore, we attempt to address this gap.

2.1. Content characteristics and tourism engagement

In line with other brands, DMOs can create posts relevant to tourism, visual, non-visual, or a combination. For instance, followers of a DMO's page could respond to posts by liking, reacting, sharing, and commenting (Aranujo & Neijens, 2012; Lin & Lu, 2011; Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2014). Thus, to generate a 'content strategy' for greater tourist engagement on social media, this study refers to message appeal and format, linguistic features, motives, and time orientation as independent variables. Notably, these have been proposed based on some commonly used concepts for studying online response and relevance to tourism. We discuss these proposed 'strategies' individually, based upon which we formulate our hypotheses.

2.1.1. Message appeal

Message appeal may be understood as the persuasive approaches used in communication to capture the attention and curiosity of the target audience (O'Keefe, 2003; Walters & Mairs, 2014). It may broadly be classified into two categories: i.e. hedonic and informational (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; De Vries et al., 2012). Hedonic messages are those that relate to fantasies and feelings and are experiential. We classified posts as 'hedonic' if they attempted to attract post views through generic emotional content (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Informational messages, on the other hand, convey information rationally, which effectively refers to information items like an event, date, and place of a destination (Hays et al., 2013).

We considered any post that contained a specific informational aspect, for instance, details about a destination (e.g. history of a particular destination, geographic details, etc.) However, Swani et al. (2017) opines that viewers of the contents of social media in the B2C space try to express their feelings, emotions, and excitement by sharing emotionally appealing messages. Therefore, we suggest that the appeal of posts on Incredible India's Facebook page also affects tourist engagement.

H1: Hedonic (against informational) appeal of posts on social media positively influences tourist engagement

2.1.2. Linguistic features

Linguistic features refer to the language used to craft a post. Li and Xie (2020) proposed that 'text difficulty' effectively lowers brand engagement. It is essential to understand that linguistic features encompass one of the five overarching domains of fluency, where fluency refers to the ease of processing information (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009; Mcshane et al., 2019). The impact of post length on brand engagement is inconclusive in B2C literature. Sabate et al. (2014) and Antoniadis et al. (2019) found positive association.

In comparison, Lee et al. (2018) and Schultz (2017) found an adverse relation. While others say the effect is insignificant (De Vries et al., 2012). However, the underlying logic is that followers' engagement behaviors are influenced by longer posts as they will be more informative (McShane et al., 2019; Schultz, 2017). The inconclusive evidence in B2C literature and the lack of literature in the tourism sector motivate us to check the impact of post length on tourism engagement. Therefore, we proposed our second hypothesis.

H2: The length of social media posts has a significant impact on tourist engagement

2.1.3. Message format

Message format is the structure of a message or content shared on a social media platform (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Messages may be visual, non-visual, and/or in a combined form. The visual elements, for instance, cover photos, videos, and animations, which help capture and increase users'

attention and thereby aid in better comprehension for users (Niu, 2016). Extant literature has discussed several attributes of messages that include pictures, videos, maps, links, news or promotion of other social media or webpages (De Vries et al., 2012; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008; Noone et al., 2011). Notably, 'marketing effectiveness' dramatically varies depending on the message format (Leung et al., 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for DMOs that proper re-routing links for direct hotel booking, for example, are appropriately mentioned, as that would help DMOs promote other activities related to tourism through their own websites or social media pages (Noone et al., 2011; Tavakoli & Mura, 2018). Within the context of our study, given that the primary differentiating factor among posts we examined was video versus photo, we propose that the message format should be such that it has the maximum desired effect in terms of tourist engagement.

H3: Photo (against Video) messages posted on social media influence tourist engagement.

2.1.4. Motives

The theoretical model of uses and gratification posits that consumers are goal-driven; they use, take part in, and interact to meet their respective requirements (Katz, 1959). Interestingly, this model also briefly talks about the motivations of media usage. Different activities have differing motivations within the ambit of social media; for instance, while some people use social media for social engagements and developing a 'community,' others prefer using it to get information and be entertained. Some others look to create social media content to express themselves and for self-realization (Shao, 2009). Jung and Sundar (2016) study on motivations behind senior citizens' use of Facebook indicated that curiosity is positively associated with activities like commenting on others' status, updating their status, uploading new photos, etc. Earlier, Agarwal and Karahanna (2000) established that cognitive absorption, i.e. "a state of deep involvement with software", is exhibited through five dimensions, of which one is curiosity, tapping into the extant experience arouses an individual's sensory and cognitive curiosity (Malone, 1981). The key reason behind successful forward referencing headlines can be attributed to their ability to stimulate the curiosity of viewers (Potthast et al., 2016). Therefore, we suggest that posts that arouse curiosity on social media handles positively affect tourist engagement.

H4: Social media posts that arouse curiosity have a positive impact on tourist engagement

2.1.5. Time orientation

A study on the dimension of time was done by (Bergadaa, 1990) in consumer action. As per that study, multiple temporal orientations can induce various types of motivation. The study indicates that individuals can be classified as either present or future oriented. Further, it posits a general outlook toward different kinds of events, be they social or personal, that is believed to create either an appeal to or dread about the future. It results in present, past, or future orientation (Bergadaa, 1990). This temporal orientation is likely to be stable and would likely result in individuals making various types of plans; it may also lead to selecting a relationship with the environment. In line with this, we proposed our fifth hypothesis,

H5: Tourist engagement with social media posts depends on time orientation

3. Methodology

3.1. Data

We used Facebook as our chosen social media platform, as it allows monitoring interactions and posting content anonymously for research and application design (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2011; Goorha & Ungar, 2010; Lewis et al., 2008). India has a rich history, culture, cuisines, heritage, and geographical location to visit and experience with unmatched magnificence. Generally, Indian DMOs use various social media handles

to connect with tourists across the globe (Chandrasekaran et al., 2023; Chugh et al., 2019). We chose ‘Incredible India’s’ Facebook page as DMO; this is a campaign run by the Government of India’s Ministry of Tourism. This campaign aims to promote tourism in India, which has been maintained by India’s national tourism office since 2002. We extracted 876 posts from Incredible India’s official Facebook page from July 2021 to June 2022.

Each post consisted of the following: the post, media type, time and date of post creation, likes, shares and comments. We stored these details, fetched with the help of Facebook Graph API in Excel to help us investigate further. Then, we screened the posts to confirm that they were created solely by the page administrator; any other posts (e.g. from users) were not considered. To ensure that the data extracted is accurate and overcome the challenge of changes on the platform, we retrieved the online data within a narrow timeline (i.e. July 21st to June 22nd) (Krippendorff, 2013). Notably, we considered the one-year (i.e. July 21st to June 22nd) as our study period because, while July 21 marked the time when the Indian Government officially announced the nationwide stringent lockdown owing to the pandemic, Jun ’22 marked the completion of a year.

3.2. Data coding

To ensure the preciseness and reliability of the study, we coded the data independently. Discrepancies were reviewed and signed off after discussions with academia and industry experts. Systematic techniques are essential to ensure academic rigor, transparency, and repeatability while minimizing any pre-existing subjective bias. Therefore, we used content and linguistic analysis for data coding.

3.2.1. Content analysis

Content analysis can help to compare the content of a large sample systematically and objectively (Smith et al., 2012). Many researchers broadly used content analysis to investigate communication content. It is also used in various channels, like media stories, web pages and advertising (Roznowski, 2003; Yoon et al., 2008). Hence, content analysis was deemed suitable, as it would help examine the content of a large sample systematically and objectively. Table 1 shows the content analysis results, which facilitated categorizing social media posts as informational or functional, emotional, or hedonic, and message formats. This analysis shed light on brand perception, public opinion, and customer engagement, effectively empowering DMOs to understand the ‘sentiment’ surrounding their posts.

Table 1
Independent variables description

Message appeal type	Description
“Informational”	These kinds of messages rationally convey the information and can refer to information items like the event date or place of a destination (Hays et al., 2013) For this study, we have considered any post containing specific information about the post. For example, details about the destination (for example, the history of a particular destination, some geographic information about the specific destination, etc.)
“Hedonic”	Emotional messages are those that are related to “fantasy/feelings” and “experiential/Hedonic” aspects of a “product/experience” (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) For this study, we have classified generic posts and attempted to attract post views through emotional content
Message format type	
Photos	Does the post contain a photo?
Videos	Does the post contain a video?

3.2.2. Linguistic analysis

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a computer-based text analysis tool that helps researchers unlock people's psychological states based on words they use daily. LIWC-22 encompasses software and a 'dictionary' — a map that connects critical theories and psycho-social constructs with words, phrases, and other linguistic constructions (Boyd et al., 2022). This was deemed suitable for our study, as it helped mine the posts based on their language/word usage, enabling us to see their relationship with tourist engagement. Specifically, we used the following dimensions of LIWC to analyze the posts on Incredible India's Facebook page (Boyd et al., 2022). We ran the extracted 876 posts through the LIWC software and received the output, which was further used based on the above definitions to classify the posts. Table 2 shows the different LIWC dimensions used.

Table 2
Explanation of LIWC dimensions

LIWC dimension	Description/ Most frequently used exemplars
Summary variable	
Word count	Total word count
Motives	
Curiosity	scien*, look* for, research*, wonder
Allure	have, like, out, know
Time orientation	
Past focus	was, had, were, been
Present focus	is, are, I'm, can
Future focus	will, going to, have to, may

3.3. Variables operationalization

As part of DMO engagement, a message's appeal, format, and linguistic features are operationalized. Figure 1 details the proposed research model with the operationalized variable.

3.3.1. Operationalization of the independent variables

'Message appeal': herein, we coded the posts according to two types of messages (i.e. hedonic and informational). They correspond to other social media post content studies, particularly applicable to Facebook pages in the context of hospitality, among several brand categories (Cervellon & Galipienzo, 2015).

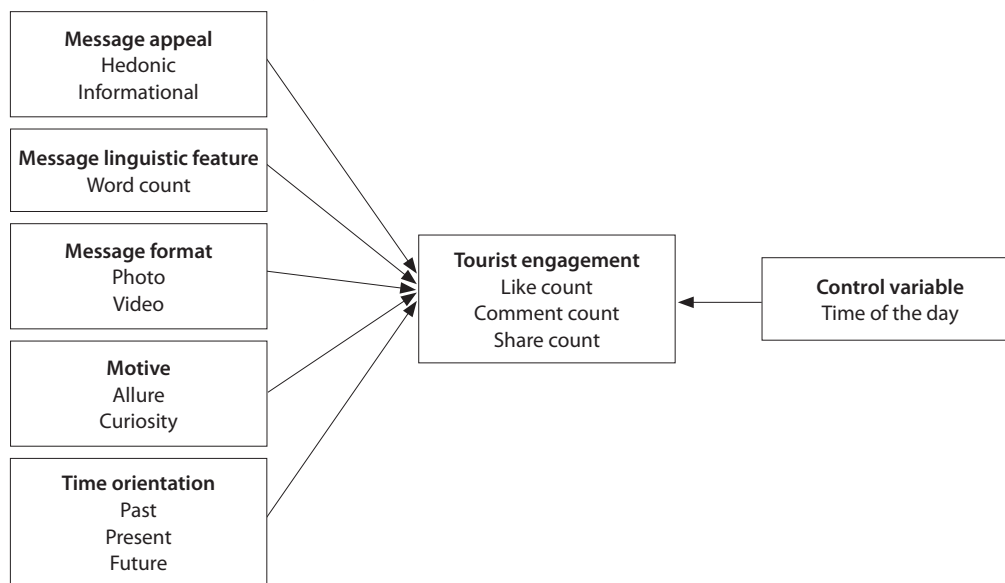
'Message format': herein, we coded the posts according to two types of message formats (i.e. photo and video). Notably, this approach was in line with extant literature, indicating different attributes of message formats, including videos, links, news, maps, photos, news, other social media promotions, and/or web pages (De Vries et al., 2012; Hays et al., 2013; Huertas et al., 2015; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008; Királová & Pavlíčka, 2015; Noone et al., 2011; Tavakoli & Mura, 2018; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Given that all the selected posts were visual and contained links to critical websites/contacts related to the destinations, we restricted the scope to photos and visuals only.

'Linguistic features': herein, we coded the posts based on their word count, again following literature, as it establishes that length of posts either has a positive effect, a negative effect, or no significant effect on brand engagement (Antoniadis et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Sabate et al., 2014; Schultz, 2017), and motive (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Malone, 1981; Potthast et al., 2016). We selected the LIWC output, which coded posts under two kinds of motives – allure and curiosity. Time Orientation: Following extant literature, we chose the LIWC output, which segregated posts by their time orientation as past, present and future (Bergadaa, 1990).

3.3.2. Operationalization of the dependent variables

Online engagement refers to a psychological state of users, characterized by interactive, co-creative experiences with a focal agent and object (Bonsón & Ratkai, 2013). To operationalize tourists' online engagement on Incredible India's Facebook page, we chose three dependent variables: 'likes, comments and shares' (Luarn et al., 2015). Literature posited that a post that receives many likes and shares might indicate that its content is interesting, increasing thereby its probability of being liked by others while leading to dissemination of the brand message to more potential tourists through the Facebook algorithm (Moore & McElroy, 2012; Ruiz-Mafe et al., 2014). Also, more comments on a post reflect the 'impact' of the post, as this is an indication that users/viewers spent time sharing their points of view (Sabate et al., 2014). Both these measures were broadly used to evaluate the publication impact (De Vries et al., 2012; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Sabate et al., 2014). Furthermore, since the posts we analyzed showed different levels of interaction, we propose the measures of 'likes, comments and shares' to measure their corresponding impacts.

Figure 1
Research model content strategy for destination marketing organizations



4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 3 displays the summary statistics of tourist engagement in these posts. As may be noted, emotional content was most frequently posted (88%), while there were fewer (12%) informational posts. As far as 'word count', the proportion of longer and shorter posts was similar, with 52% having higher and 48% having lower word count than the median word count of all posts taken together. Further, all posts were visual, having either a photo or a video. Additionally, it may be noted that almost all posts were tagged to relevant links. Photos were more frequently used – 57% of the posts analyzed had photos versus 43% with videos.

The findings reveal that almost an equal proportion of posts were classified as 'allure' and 'curiosity'. All the posts contained all three types of time orientation, i.e. past, present, and future. Notably, several overlaps indicated that the LIWC software identified posts with dual orientation. Furthermore, out of 766 posts placed to have some time orientation, 52% were determined to contain present-focused content, 34% contained

past-focused content, and 14% contained future-focused content. Table 4 summarizes different types of online engagement on Facebook, such as the number of likes, shares, and comments, vis a vis their replies to the post. It may also be noted that the measures of engagement variables were influenced to varying degrees by independent variables. In the next section, we report the results for each hypothesized association.

Table 3
Summary statistics of online engagement variable

	No. of posts	% of posts
Message appeal		
Hedonic	109	12
Information	766	88
Message linguistic features		
Post length		
Word count > Median	395	52
Word count < Median	364	48
Message format		
Photo	499	57
Video	374	43
Motive		
Allure > Median	396	49
Curiosity < Median	417	51
Time orientation		
Past focus	415	34
Present focus	646	52
Future focus	180	14

Table 4
Descriptive statistics of online engagement types

Part A: Summary statistics					
Variable	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
SHARES	873	65.59107	98.86293	1	1220
COMMENTS	875	16.29029	83.05223	0	1684
LIKES	875	791.9989	3615.603	11	84154
Part B: Correlation matrix between online engagement types					
	SHARES	COMMENTS	LIKES		
SHARES	1				
COMMENTS	0.4588***	1			
LIKES	0.4446***	0.8952***	1		

Note. N= number of posts; M= mean; SD= standard deviation.

*** Statistically significant at 99%.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

We used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses. According to H1, posts' message appeal (emotional or informational) influences tourist engagement. The results show a positive statistically significant impact for posts with message appeal (Likes, $F= 3.84$, $p= 0.001$) and (Comments, $F= 9.59$, $p= 0.002$). The number of shares for posts with message appeal was insignificant ($F= 0.01$, $p= 0.919$). Therefore, we partially accept our first hypothesis. In proceeding with our analysis, the results show that people are more likely to like, comment, and share posts with emotional message appeal (Likes, $M= 1698$, $SD= 8767$; Comments, $M= 39$, $SD= 167$; Shares; $M= 67$, $SD= 95$) than those with informational content (Likes, $M= 576$, $SD= 1574$; Comments, $M= 13$, $SD= 62$; Shares; $M= 65$, $SD= 100$) (refer Table 5). Based on the results, we conclude that DMOs could use more emotional message appeal while creating content for social media handles.

Table 5
Analysis of variance for the effect of message appeal

Dependent variable	Message appeal	N	M	SD	F	p
Likes	Hedonic	109	1698	8767	3.85	0.001***
	Informational	766	576	1574		
Comments	Hedonic	109	39	167	9.59	0.002**
	Informational	766	13	62		
Shares	Hedonic	107	67	95	0.01	0.919 ^{ns}
	Informational	766	65	100		

Note. N= number of posts; M= mean; SD= standard deviation; F= f value.

*** Statistically significant at 99%. ** Statistically significant at 95%.

^{ns} Not statistically significant.

Table 6
Analysis of variance for the effect of post length

Dependent variable	Word count	n	M	SD	F	p
Likes	High	395	423	465	7.83	0.005**
	Low	369	1164	5238		
Comments	High	395	10	9	7.29	0.007**
	Low	369	27	127		
Shares	High	394	60	68	10.97	0.001***
	Low	369	84	131		

Note. N= number of posts; M mean; SD= standard deviation; F= f value. Whereas High is greater than the Median WC, Low is less than the Median Word Count.

*** Statistically significant at 99%. ** Statistically significant at 95%.

H2 posited message linguistic features, such as post length that were set to influence tourist engagement. The results yielded that shorter posts (measured as word count) enable better engagement (Likes, $F= 7.83$, $p= 0.005$; Comments, $F= 7.29$, $p= 0.007$; Shares, $F= 10.97$, $p= 0.001$). Further, as hypothesized, posts with a low word count help to successfully engage more people on social media. The results for posts with low word count yielded the following: (Likes, $M= 1164$, $SD= 5238$; Comments, $M= 27$, $SD= 127$; Shares; $M= 84$, $SD= 131$); whereas posts with higher word count had these results (Likes, $M= 423$, $SD= 465$; Comments, $M= 10$, $SD= 9$; Shares; $M= 60$, $SD= 68$), which reflect that there are less likely to create tourist engagement.

Table 7
Analysis of variance for the effect of message format

Dependent variable	Message appeal	N	M	SD	F	p
Likes	Photo	500	992	4516	7.53	0.006**
	Video	374	349	369		
Comments	Photo	500	19	109	0.89	0.345 ^{ns}
	Video	374	13	15		
Shares	Photo	499	59	99	4.54	0.033**
	Video	374	74	98		

Note. N= number of posts; M= mean; SD= standard deviation; F= f value.

** Statistically significant at 95%.

^{ns} Not statistically significant.

Table 8
Analysis of variance for the effect of motive

Dependent variable	Motive	n	M	SD	F	p
Likes	Allure	397	690	4148	1.62	0.203ns
	Curiosity	417	1097	4926		
Comments	Allure	397	15	67	2.52	0.113 ^{ns}
	Curiosity	417	26	119		

Table 8 (continued)

Shares	Allure	396	63	84	10.30	0.001***
	Curiosity	417	87	123		

Note. N= number of posts; M= mean; SD= standard deviation; F= f value.

*** Statistically significant at 99%.

^{ns} Not statistically significant.

The ANOVA analysis reveals that while mean likes are significantly higher ($M= 992, SD= 4516, F= 7.53, p=0.006$) for posts with one or more pictures, low data requirements, easy to understand, and less time taking in buffering are the possible reasons behind the same (refer Table 7). In comparison, posts with video clips have higher mean engagement regarding shares ($M= 74, SD= 98, F= 4.54, p=0.033$). However, the results on engagement with message format in terms of comments are inconclusive. Therefore, we partially accept our third hypothesis.

Table 9
Analysis of variance for the effect of time orientation

Dependent variable	Time orientation	n	M	SD	F	p
Likes	Past	415	620	1921	0.45	0.640 ^{ns}
	Present	646	761	3706		
	Future	180	924	6131		
Comments	Past	415	15	83	0.15	0.864 ^{ns}
	Present	646	18	90		
	Future	180	18	98		
Shares	Past	414	68	106	1.15	0.316 ^{ns}
	Present	645	72	106		
	Future	179	59	76		

Note. N= number of posts; M= mean; SD= standard deviation; F= f value.

^{ns} Not statistically significant.

Further, posts that arouse curiosity have a positive influence on tourist engagement. Table 8 shows several shares are significantly higher ($M= 87, SD= 123, F= 10.30, p=0.001$) for curiosity-generating posts than alluring posts (refer to Table 8). As hypothesized, consumer engagement may depend on the time orientation of a post per se (past, present, future). Our analysis shows no significant relation between tourist engagement and the time orientation of the post (Likes, $p= 0.640$; Comments, $p=0.864$, Shares $p=0.316$), thus supporting the null hypothesis and refuting the alternate hypothesis (refer to Table 9).

5. Discussion

This study examined the influence of Message Appeal, Message Format, Linguistic Features, Motive and Time Orientation of social media posts on user/tourist engagement. The effects of potential variables on tourist engagement differ, and the results indicate the same, partially supporting the first hypothesis. Our findings support that likes and comments are significantly higher for emotional content, while that is not the case in cases of post shares, concurring in the process with findings from literature (Coursaris et al., 2016; Swani et al., 2017; Wu & Wang, 2011). This suggests that both kinds of messages have different levels of marketing effectiveness. Second, consistent with previous studies, we observed that shorter posts are more engaging than longer ones, supporting our second hypothesis. Notably, this too concurs with extant literature, as authors in the past have established that long sentences or words in posts decrease the ease of processing, as individuals need more working memory load to process longer posts (Deng et al., 2021; Khawaja et al., 2014; Mikk, 2008).

The third hypothesis is partially supported; while photo posts garner more likes, video posts garner more shares. More likes of photo posts could probably be because, unlike photos, videos take longer to view (De Vries et al., 2012; Luarn et al., 2015), which might discourage viewers from watching video posts till the end. The fourth hypothesis is also partially supported. Our analysis shows that shares are significantly higher

($p=0.001$) for curiosity-generating posts than alluring posts. Again, this aligns with recent studies that have begun to consider curiosity a moderator in the e-WOM adoption process (Fang, 2014). Notably, while Likes and Comments are also higher for curiosity-generating posts, they are not statistically significant (Likes, $p=0.203$; Comments, $p=0.113$). Our fifth hypothesis may be rejected, unlike previous studies, whereby it was believed that future orientation has a positive effect on the users' intentions to actively generate content and passively monitor SNS (Makri & Schlegelmilch, 2017). A probable reason for this is that destination-related posts are not time-bound.

As mentioned earlier, the Incredible India page primarily promotes tourism destinations and details about them – one can visit these destinations at their own will, and there is no temporal dimension to it (except for events or special occasions).

6. Conclusion

SNSs allow users to interact and share their opinions and views with others. Hence, they are considered more than an additional channel for disseminating information (Nair, 2011). The Ministry of Tourism (GoI) linked Incredible India to Facebook in 2012, but to date, we note only about 2 million likes for the page; this is significantly lower than the engagement of some specific states that drive tourism aggressively in India and even private players. Besides, this also indicates the need for Incredible India administrators to create strategies to craft sharper posts for more robust dissemination among tourists in the online space. Given that we have primarily considered posts from the Incredible India page in-depth, our findings could encourage Incredible India and other DMO campaigns in India to further sharpen their posts for optimum engagement through Facebook.

6.1. Implications

This study examined the influence of dependent variables on tourist engagement, covering both central and peripheral routes to persuasion. The results would presumably help Indian DMOs revise their strategies while adapting to changing consumer behaviour. Besides, the study also proposes that DMOs could and need to adjust their content strategies to the shifting requirements, expectations, and motivations of travellers in the new travel landscape post-Covid. Using metrics, analytics and a data-driven approach, our findings could guide administrators in terms of which content characteristics to include in Facebook posts. For example, to attain high engagement, administrators could consider crafting shorter posts in the future. Second, our findings indicate that different characteristics of content influence online engagement, based on which types of 'engagement' administrators would like to enhance can be decided. For example, posts containing photos could improve the 'likes', while those having videos could enhance shares. Finally, Incredible India and other DMOs using Facebook as a platform for disseminating information could post inspiration from our findings regarding their future social media post development strategies.

6.2. Limitations and future scope of study

Although our results may be deemed 'satisfactory', the study has limitations. First, the data was only collected for one year, during and immediately after the pandemic. More similar studies may be needed, especially within other demographics, to establish our findings for all DMO Facebook pages. Future research could also check the temporal improvement in results with the relaxation in covid-19 lockdown. Second, this study did not address influences from social circles. In other words, we didn't explore whether people like/comment/share a post because the post is genuinely engaging or because of the influence of peers/family and other Facebook friends. Future studies thereby could look to address this gap. Third, our study has been limited to Incredible India's Facebook page; more profound and significant themes may emerge if one studies the official government's social media pages of other tourism campaigns.

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