



E-ISSN: 2706-9591
P-ISSN: 2706-9583
www.tourismjournal.net
IJTHM 2024; 6(1): 194-199
Received: 06-01-2024
Accepted: 13-02-2024

Prachi Pandey
Research Scholar, Department
of Commerce, Shyama Prasad
Mukherjee Government Degree
College, University of
Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar
Pradesh, India

Dr. Sarvesh Singh
Assistant Professor,
Department of Commerce,
Shyama Prasad Mukherjee
Government Degree College,
University of Allahabad,
Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Corresponding Author:
Prachi Pandey
Research Scholar, Department
of Commerce, Shyama Prasad
Mukherjee Government Degree
College, University of
Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar
Pradesh, India

Impact of online content on youths towards travel and tourism industry in India

Prachi Pandey and Dr. Sarvesh Singh

Abstract

The rise of the digital age has dramatically transformed how people plan and experience travel, especially among the youth in India. With the increasing prevalence of social media, blogs, vlogs, and travel websites, the travel preferences of Indian youth are heavily influenced by online content. This research paper explores the impact of online content on youths' travel behaviour, using secondary data from authentic sources. It highlights the evolving dynamics of the travel and tourism industry in India, with a particular focus on the growing influence of digital platforms, influencer marketing, and user-generated content (UGC). These elements are increasingly shaping how travellers discover, choose, and engage with destinations. The paper also provides visual charts, graphs, and statistical data to support the analysis.

Keywords: Online content, youth, travel, tourism industry, social media, influencer marketing, India

Introduction

India's travel and tourism sector has experienced rapid expansion in recent years, largely due to the increasing influence of digital platforms. The country's youth population, comprising individuals aged 18-35, are increasingly relying on social media, travel blogs, and online reviews to make informed travel decisions. Digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have become crucial for promoting destinations, hotels, and experiences.

Online content has significantly shaped the attitudes and behaviours of young people in India regarding travel and tourism, influencing them in various ways. The widespread use of social media and digital content has drastically transformed how young people engage with travel information. Digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and numerous travel blogs significantly impact the travel decisions and habits of Indian youth, who are increasingly attracted to the curated experiences and destinations featured online.

Social media platforms have evolved into influential tools that shape perceptions and boost engagement among young people. Rather than being passive consumers, they actively create and share content themselves. Studies have shown that the visually driven nature of platforms like Instagram and TikTok significantly affects young people's travel decisions, often encouraging them to explore offbeat destinations and experiences that they might not have considered otherwise. This shift reflects a broader global trend where digital content has a marked influence on travel motivations and decisions, making the role of the industry more critical than ever.

Online content, particularly user-generated content (UGC), allows youth travellers to explore new places through the lens of others. Influencers and travel bloggers play a significant role in shaping travel preferences by showcasing unexplored destinations, reviewing accommodations, and providing firsthand experiences.

The main objective of this research is to explore how online content impacts the travel and tourism behaviours of Indian youth.

Literature review

Inversini, A., & Cantoni, L. (2011) ^[6] conducted a study was conducted to examine how the tourism content of Ravenna, Italy, is represented by search engines like Google and Yahoo!. The results indicate that destinations should actively manage their online presence. This can be done by keeping an eye on what people are saying online and using content created by users as part of their marketing and reputation management strategies.

Munar, A. M., & Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2013) ^[10].

Focused on understanding how Scandinavian tourists perceive Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 information sources, specifically looking at how social media influences how they share information about their holidays. This research was based on a survey conducted during the summer season in Mallorca, Spain. The findings revealed tourists' opinions on the reliability of social media and other online sources. The study also looked into how tourists participate in creating and sharing content online. Additionally, it discussed the detailed aspects of tourist information, such as enjoyment (hedonic aspects), practical usefulness (utilitarian values), and the intensity of information available, especially concerning social media interactions, making holiday decisions, and booking trips online.

Khan, M. J., Chelliah, S., & Ahmed, S. (2019) ^[8] conducted a quantitative study involving 316 university students in Malaysia. The results indicated that travel motivation positively influenced their intention to visit destinations. However, the findings also pointed out that, in some instances, the effect size (f^2) of this statistically significant relationship was relatively low. The study outcomes offered valuable insights to destination managers for incorporating influential factors into promotional strategies aimed at generating interest in visiting India among potential market segments.

Arora, N., & Lata, S. (2020) ^[3] conducted an empirical study with 486 respondents from Delhi who watched YouTube channels before visiting a destination. The goal was to understand how travellers use information from YouTube and how it affects their intention to visit those places. The study used structural equation modelling with partial least squares to test the hypotheses. The results revealed that tourists carefully analyze and critically evaluate YouTube content before making their final travel decisions.

Singh, A., & Munjal, S. (2021) ^[11] highlighted the growing importance of digital technologies in engaging customers and promoting hospitality and tourism products. It emphasized finding the right balance between digital tools and the human touch, along with traditional marketing methods. The study also explored how influencers and online reviews shape purchasing decisions in the travel and tourism sector. The findings shed light on current digital trends within India's hospitality and tourism industry, offering insights into how these trends influence strategic decisions. The authors provided valuable contributions to understanding how best to blend digital and traditional marketing approaches in this context.

Agrawal, G., Dumka, A., Singh, M., & Bijalwan, A. (2022) ^[2] examined the usability and accessibility of the official state tourism websites in India. Usability was assessed using automated tools that evaluated various web quality parameters, while accessibility was evaluated with the automated tool TAW to check compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.0. The websites were also manually reviewed to identify accessibility features and language options. The findings showed that the usability and accessibility of Indian state tourism websites are generally low, highlighting a need for significant improvement.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how online content influences the travel decisions of Indian youth.
2. To understand how social media platforms and user-generated content (UGC) influence the travel choices of Indian youth.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and qualitative. The data is collected from secondary sources such as books, and research articles published in journals, newspapers, and various websites.

Data Analysis and Findings

This research relies on secondary data gathered from credible sources, including reports from the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), Google Travel Insights, and industry data from Phocuswright. The analysis focuses on identifying trends in how Indian youth consume online content and the extent to which this content influences their travel decisions.

Influence of Online Content on Travel Decisions of Indian Youth: Statistical Data

Overview of the Impact: Online content, particularly through social media, significantly impacts the travel decisions of Indian youth. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are key sources of travel inspiration, with many young travellers seeking visually appealing destinations that they have seen online. This trend isn't limited to casual vacationers; it also includes luxury travellers, who frequently turn to social media to enrich their trips and discover new destinations.

Key Statistics

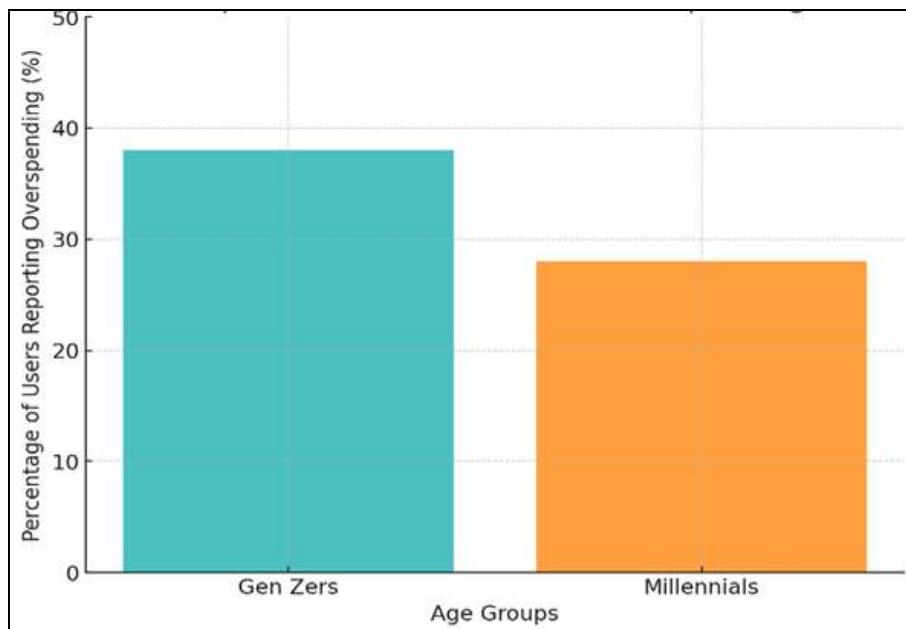
- **Social Media as a Main Source of Inspiration:** Globally, 35% of consumers turn to social media for travel inspiration, with the number rising to 53% among Gen Zers. In comparison, traditional sources like travel agents (29%) and TV shows or movies (25%) have a lesser influence on travel decisions (Passport and Visa photos online)
- **Platform Preferences:** Instagram is the most popular platform among youth for travel-related content, used by 37% of travellers. It is followed by YouTube (26%) and Facebook (23%). This shows the dominance of visually driven platforms that emphasize photo and video sharing, aligning with the preferences of young travellers seeking vibrant and picturesque locations (Passport and Visa photos online).
- **Influence of Travel Influencers:** Approximately 78% of social media users, particularly those in younger age groups, report being influenced by travel influencers to explore new destinations, restaurants, or attractions. This highlights the substantial role of influencers in shaping travel trends among Indian youth (Passport and Visa photos online).
- **Overspending Due to Social Media:** Social media exposure has led to financial implications, with 38% of Gen Zers and 28% of Millennials reporting that they have overspent on travel after being influenced by the vacations of others they follow online. This statistic underscores the aspirational effect of online content on travel behaviours (Passport and Visa photos online)
- **Vacation Behaviour:** A significant majority (89%) of travellers engage with social media while on vacation, often dedicating 1–2 hours daily to browsing. This constant connection can impact the overall travel experience, with 58% of travellers feeling that excessive social media usage detracted from their last vacation (Passport and Visa photos online).

Impact of social media on travel spending

The influence of online content on travel decisions among

Indian youth is profound, driven largely by visually rich social media platforms and influencer recommendations. This has reshaped the tourism landscape, prompting young

travellers to seek out destinations that offer not only experiences but also social media-worthy moments.



Source: (Passport and Visa photos online)

Fig 1: Impact of social media on travel spending

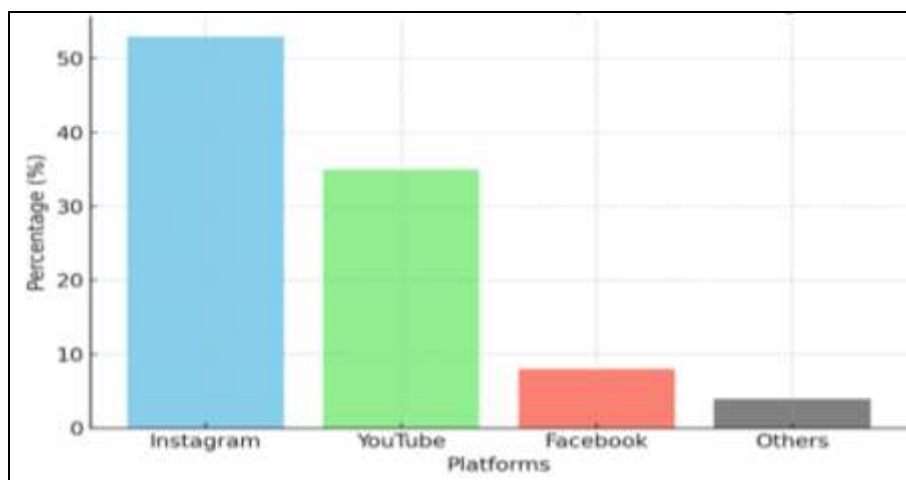
Explanation

This graph illustrates that a significant portion of both Gen Zers (38%) and Millennials (28%) have been influenced by social media to spend more on travel than they initially planned. The higher percentage among Gen Zers suggests that they are particularly susceptible to the aspirational content found on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This behaviour can be attributed to the desire to replicate the experiences seen in influencer posts or other user-generated content, leading to higher spending on travel, accommodations, and activities.

Social Media Platforms and User-Generated Content (UGC)

Preferred Platforms for Travel Inspiration

According to a report by Google India, 90% of Indian travellers begin their travel research online. Among youth, Instagram (53%) and YouTube (35%) emerged as the most popular platforms for travel inspiration, followed by Facebook (8%). Youths engage heavily with travel influencers and bloggers on these platforms to discover new destinations and experiences.



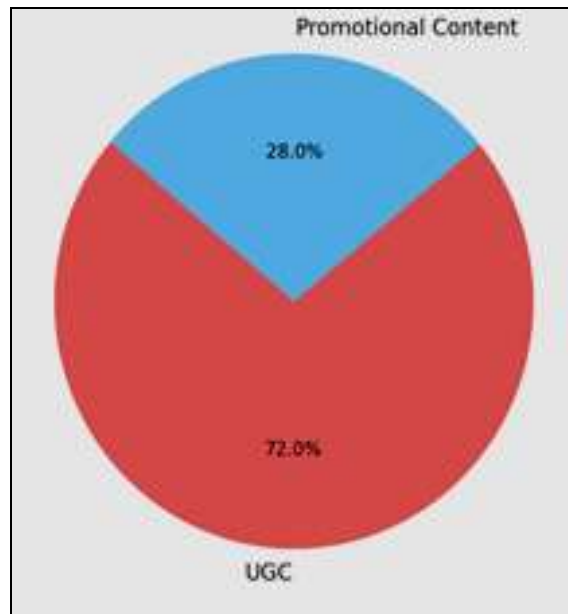
Source: Google India Travel Insights, 2021

Fig 1: Preferred platforms for travel inspiration among youths

Impact of User-Created Content (UGC)

User-generated content (UGC), including reviews, photos, and videos shared by other travellers, plays a pivotal role in shaping youth travel decisions. Phocuswright (2021) reports that 72% of Indian youths trust UGC over promotional

content from travel agencies. This trust in authentic experiences is driving a shift toward more unique, offbeat destinations that are not heavily marketed through traditional media.



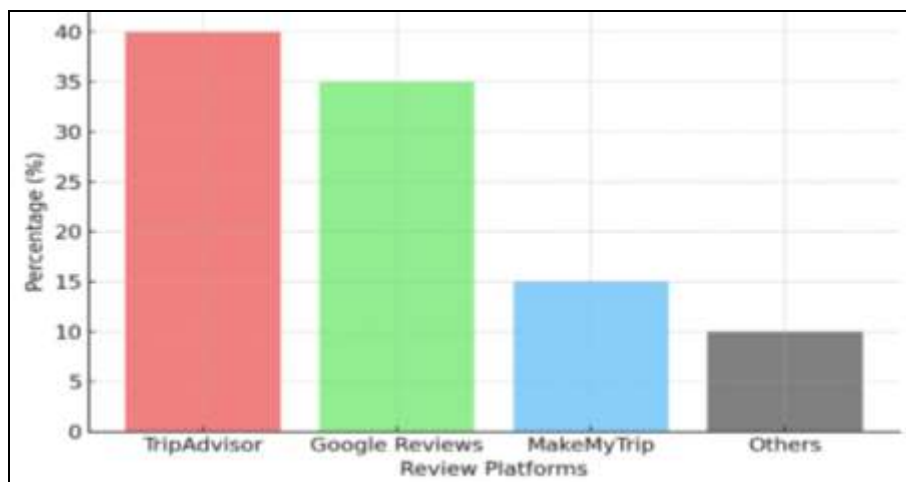
Source: Phocuswright, 2021

Fig 2: Trust in UGC vs. Promotional content

2.3. Online Reviews and Booking Decisions

Online reviews from platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and MakeMyTrip significantly influence youth travel bookings. According to IAMAI (2022), 61% of

Indian youths consult online reviews before making a hotel or travel booking, and positive reviews are a crucial element in their decision-making.



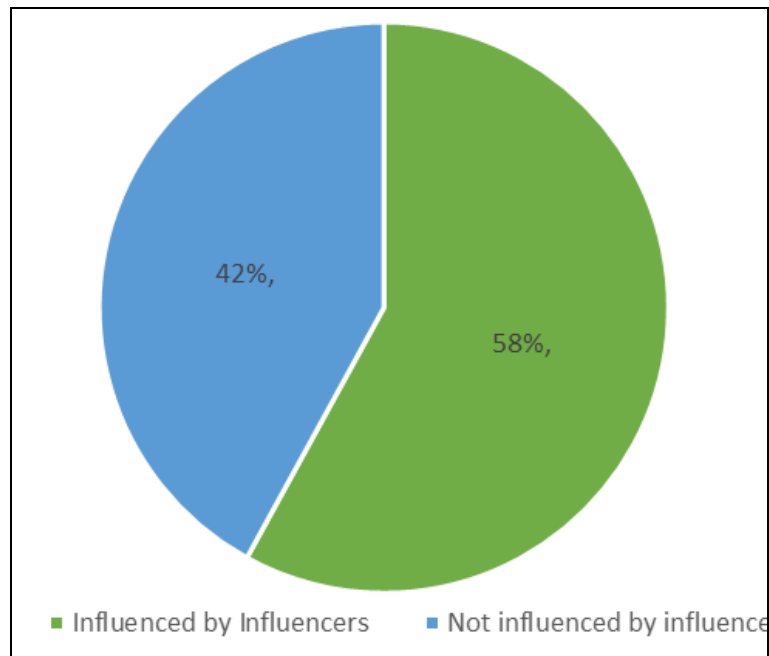
Source: (IAMAI, 2022) Platforms used for travel reviews

Fig 3: Platforms used for travel reviews

Role of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has become an essential tool for the travel industry. A study by Phocuswright found that 58% of Indian youths have booked a destination or travel service

after seeing it promoted by a social media influencer. Influencers who share personalized travel stories and experiences are seen as trustworthy and relatable, making their recommendations highly impactful.



Source: Phocuswright, 2021

Fig 4: Percentage of youths influenced by travel influencers

The data analysis reveals significant trends in how Indian youth engage with digital content when planning their travel experiences. A combination of social media platforms, user-generated content (UGC), and influencer marketing has profoundly shaped their travel decisions. Below is a detailed analysis supported by statistical data?

- **Social Media as a Key Source of Travel Inspiration:** According to Phocuswright's 2021 report, over 53% of Indian youth use Instagram as their primary platform for travel inspiration, followed by 35% who turn to YouTube for video-based travel content. These platforms offer visually compelling, bite-sized content that appeals to younger audiences. This trend is further confirmed by Hootsuite, which reports that Instagram posts with travel-related hashtags have a 70% higher engagement rate than other content.
- **User-Generated Content (UGC) vs. Promotional Content:** UGC has become a trusted source of travel information for Indian youth. 72% of them trust UGC more than promotional content from brands, according to a study by eMarketer. Reviews, photos, and travel stories shared by peers create a sense of authenticity that traditional advertisements often lack. Platforms like TripAdvisor and Google Reviews are widely used for this purpose, with 40% of Indian travellers relying on TripAdvisor and 35% on Google Reviews for travel planning.
- **Influencer marketing's growing impact:** Influencer marketing has become a significant driver of youth travel decisions. 58% of Indian youths report being influenced by travel bloggers and social media influencers, according to Phocuswright. Influencers not only provide aspirational content but also offer practical advice, which resonates well with the younger demographic. As per Forbes, influencers help create a personalized connection with their audience, which leads to stronger engagement and conversion.
- **Rise of Online Travel Platforms:** Digital platforms such as MakeMyTrip, Airbnb, and Booking.com are

popular among Indian youth. According to Statista, 75% of Indian travellers under 35 prefer booking their trips online, leveraging travel apps for hotel bookings, flight reservations, and holiday planning. This shift is driven by convenience, easy access to reviews, and personalized suggestions offered by these platforms.

- **Impact of Visual and Video Content:** Video-based platforms like YouTube are highly influential in travel planning. A report from Google India found that 80% of Indian travellers watch travel-related videos before booking a trip. Video content offers a more immersive experience, allowing viewers to get a closer look at potential destinations and activities, making them more likely to convert their inspiration into real bookings.

Research Outcomes and Suggestions

The study reveals that online content, particularly on social media platforms, plays a pivotal role in shaping the travel preferences of Indian youth. Influencers, user-generated content (UGC), and travel reviews are significant drivers behind their travel decisions. Youths increasingly rely on digital platforms for travel inspiration and planning, urging the tourism industry to adapt to these changing dynamics.

- **Shift toward Offbeat Destinations:** Youths are increasingly choosing offbeat and unexplored destinations, inspired by social media content and UGC. Unlike traditional tourists, they seek authentic, local experiences that are often discovered through travel blogs and influencer posts.
- **Importance of Visual Content:** Visual content, particularly photos and videos, plays a significant role in attracting youth travellers. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube are highly effective for travel brands looking to engage with younger demographics.
- **Increased Trust in Peer Reviews:** Online reviews and user-generated content are highly trusted by youths, who prioritize real-life experiences shared by other travellers over marketing content from hotels or travel agencies.

Suggestions for the Indian Travel and Tourism Industry

- **Collaborate with Influencers:** Travel agencies and tourism boards should partner with influencers who appeal to young travellers. Influencers with authentic travel experiences and personal storytelling can drive engagement and bookings.
- **Encourage UGC:** The travel industry should actively encourage customers to share their experiences online through photos, reviews, and videos. User-generated content (UGC) is a strong marketing tool that boosts brand credibility and appeals to young travellers, making it a successful strategy to attract this audience.
- **Optimize for Mobile and Social Media:** As the majority of youths use their smartphones for travel research and bookings, travel companies should ensure their platforms are mobile-friendly and optimized for social media engagement.
- **Promote Offbeat and Local Experiences:** The growing interest in offbeat and local travel experiences offers a huge opportunity for tourism boards to promote lesser-known destinations through digital content and social media campaigns.

Conclusion

The study underscores the significant influence of online content on the travel preferences of Indian youth. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TripAdvisor have become vital tools for young travellers seeking inspiration and planning their trips. User-generated content (UGC), online reviews, and influencer recommendations significantly influence their choices, underscoring the importance for businesses in the tourism industry to prioritize and refine their digital strategies.

In summary, the digital revolution in the travel and tourism sector is more than just a passing trend; it represents a lasting change. Businesses that successfully harness the power of digital content and adapt to changing consumer behaviours will be able to stay competitive in this fast-evolving market. Additionally, understanding the preferences and online behaviours of the youth demographic is key to driving engagement and increasing customer loyalty. The continued integration of social media, UGC, and influencer marketing will be essential in shaping the future of travel in India, particularly for the youth segment.

References

1. Admin. The role of social media in shaping the travel experience. Avlon Shiksha Niketan. 2023, July 20. Available from: <https://rb.gy/ilck6o>
2. Agrawal G, Dumka A, Singh M, Bijalwan A. Assessing usability and accessibility of Indian tourism websites for visually impaired. *Journal of Sensors*; c2022.
3. Arora N, Lata S. YouTube channels influence on destination visit intentions: An empirical analysis on the base of information adoption model. *Journal of Indian Business Research*. 2020;12(1):23-42.
4. Hinton T, Richter F. Infographic: Social media has the greatest influence on travel destination choices. *Statista Daily Data*. 2023, June 6. Available from: <https://rb.gy/51gi7t>
5. How we make travel and tourism inclusive and sustainable. *World Economic Forum*. (n.d.). Available from: <https://rb.gy/myh1uz>
6. Inversini A, Cantoni L. Towards online content classification in understanding tourism destinations' information competition and reputation. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*. 2011;6(3):282-299.
7. Kaushik Dasgupta K. Attracting Indian travellers: 5 major shifts travel brands need to make. Google. 2019, August. Available from: <https://rb.gy/vjrmfs>
8. Khan MJ, Chelliah S, Ahmed S. Intention to visit India among potential travellers: Role of travel motivation, perceived travel risks, and travel constraints. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 2019;19(3):351-367.
9. Woolf M. 18+ statistics on how social media affects travel. *PhotoAiD*. (n.d.). Available from: <https://shorturl.at/8fUQI>
10. Munar AM, Jacobsen JKS. Trust and involvement in tourism social media and web-based travel information sources. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*. 2013;13(1):1-19.
11. Singh A, Munjal S. How is the hospitality and tourism industry in India responding to the dynamic digital era?. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*. 2021;13(2):163-167.
12. The Impact of Digital Media on Travel Decisions in India. *IAMAI*. (n.d.). Available from: <https://rb.gy/h1n8b7>
13. The power of reviews. (n.d.-a). Available from: <https://shorturl.at/5xhnK>
14. ETTravelWorld.com. Social media influencers changing the way people travel. *ETTravelWorld.com*. 2023, March 28. Available from: <https://shorturl.at/47g2r>