

INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION TRAVEL SHOWS ON VIEWER'S PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Travelling is considered to be an activity of rejuvenation for families and individuals. There is an extensive thought process and planning done by consumers, especially for the long vacations. How would a person decide on a particular destination? Can media content be considered a strong external influence for travel. The purpose of this paper is to assess the possible influences of travel-based Television shows on the viewers' awareness of a destination. The travel-based purchase decisions may also be related to the type of lodging chosen and the eateries and restaurant visited. According to the data results, travel-related awareness of consumers increased after watching the shows, the results revealed some differences with respect to the demographic traits. The Travel shows on television provide a visual appeal to the destinations featured and thus can be considered an appropriate marketing tool for Tourism and hospitality related Brands.

Keywords: Mass Communication, Television, Travel Series, Viewers, Destination Image, Consumer Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, travelling is a necessary break from the hectic routines of city life. Tourists are exploring different ways of holidaying: adventure camps, farmhouses, rural vacations, backpacking and homestays guesthouses. They are also more keen to explore the history and cultural aspects of the travelled destination. The important components of travel are transport journey taken; visit to the landscape and indulgence in the natural or historic beauty of the region visited. The individual may document the travel through photography or he may just enjoy the scenic view of that place. The traveler may also experience the cultural aspects and social relations with the inhabitants of the region. It may be part of dance performances, cuisine, conversations about history and geography of the place (Dilek & Kulakoğlu, 2018).

The complexity of travel and tourism makes it necessary to understand the decision-making process of the tourists. It's a high involvement process with a need of information to travel and to know about the attractions of the place. People choose a destination which has a combination of familiarity about the place and a strangeness in terms of novelty of that travel experience (Yiannakis & Gibson, 2004). The travel genre in media act as a means to glorify a specific holiday destination through beautiful imagery, music and narration (Dunn, 2005a). It is considered to be a hybrid of journalistic documentary on lifestyle series and advertising (Waade, 2009). Travel is in fact a sub set of the lifestyle genre as there is a consumption of travel experience, travelling modes, cultural rituals and food as commodities. The series combines the value of an educational documentary and entertainment formats. The genre is evolved as there are established companies like Discovery Channel, BBC Lifestyle etc. who are making the shows more engaging and sophisticated.

These shows act like a ‘window’ to the world’s natural beauty, because the viewer can enjoy travel experience even while sitting at home and burdened by the mundane daily routines (Waade, 2009). The romantic representation of the location through the impressive narration of the Anchor, scenic picturisation and an engaging music is often referred to as “*tourist gaze*” Urry (2002) in travel literature.

Influence on Viewers

The theory of Uses and Gratification Katz et al. (1973) proposed four types of gratification needs of the audience: Information, Personal Growth, Social Learning and Entertainment. The audience needs to be an active participant to engage in the content and to learn few things of life. Media has the capability to educate and inform apart from the entertaining. With respect to travel, a viewer can be either motivated to travel or he would be just interested to watch travel content on television. As discussed earlier, it may also be a way to escape the daily stress without incurring the travel expense. The travel shows are primarily an entertainment genre; but can provide the right information about the destination portrayed. The mention of destination and the presentation can be referred to as the ‘*Product Placement*’ of travel destination. The presentation can take the three modes as explained (Russell, 1998):

1. Visual mode: the consumer/viewer can assess the scenic beauty and cultural aspects on the basis of visuals shown
2. Audio mode: The narration can provide name, and added information about the destination.
3. Combined mode: Here the visual appeal is accentuated with the audio message about the destination

When a consumer needs to buy a high involvement product or service, he would gather more information and compare many alternatives before finalizing one (Solomon, 2002). Travelling is considered a high involvement purchase as it includes cost of travel, lodging, food and also engagement of one’s time (which is also a constraint and a cost in modern times). Travel needs prior research and information gathering.

A research Mege (2015) aimed at assessing the impact of exposure to destination through television shows suggested that the familiarity with the destination and intent to travel was also seen. The results showed that the exposure to the place influenced both the cognitive and affective attitude of the viewers towards the destination Image. These terms need to be understood before we go further:

1. **Destination Image:** Media is classified as an agent of destination image (Gartner, 1993). The autonomous agent is one which is considered an information source which may not be a part of marketing communication. Destination image is described to have two components: cognitive and affective (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Cognitive destination image may relate to the evaluation of destination by the viewers in terms of existing knowledge and experience (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Affective destination image may relate to the feeling evoked or memory etched about the destination presented in the shows (Pike & Ryan, 2004).
2. **Familiarity:** It can be considered as the acceptance of a destination as a good travel option on the basis of knowledge gained about it. Familiarity with the place is an important factor in deciding which destination to visit (Chen & Lin, 2011). Travel series programs increase familiarity towards a place by presenting it in an attractive and informative manner (Kim & Richardson, 2003). There is a positive association between places showcased in media and viewers’ grown familiarity with the same place (Rudowsky, 2013).
3. **Travel Intention:** Intention is defined as a tendency to act or to do something that will result in actual behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). If we measure intention, one can predict the actual behavior that will be taken by individuals in the future (Quintal & Phau, 2015). With respect to travel purchase, researchers

have proved that if the tourists have positive intention to visit a place, purchase may happen eventually (Kim & Jun, 2016). It was proved by a research in Japan, that a movie with violence and crime may create a negative intention about the place, and thereby decreased the travel visits of the viewers (Yang, 2011). The media exposure, involvement of the viewers and on-site screen-tourism experiences affects the intention. The role of demographic traits like gender differences have also been discussed in recent researches (Liu & Lu, 2013). The intention may also vary with the price sensitivity of that individual (Zeithaml et al. 1996).

Tourism and Destination Image

A person may form a perception about a destination based on promotional information seen in movies, television and magazines. The perception may or may not change after visiting the same place (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). The idea of media induced tourism is not new and is mentioned frequently in tourism related journals. In his research, “*Understanding the Film-Induced Tourist*”, (Macionis, 2004). Macionis revisited the “*push and pull*” theory Dann (1977) (which examined the sociological perception of a tourist) and media induced tourism. According to him, there are ‘*Pull factors*’ which can attract a tourist to a given destination. It can be the presentation of scenic beauty or culture of that place. Similarly, ‘*Push factors*’ are the preconceived notions of the tourist about the place. It could be related to feelings attached to that place which can be nostalgia, fantasy, romance, or even self-actualization. The 3 P's concept with relation to Movies is discussed vividly by (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2012).

1. **Place:** it relates to the shoot location where a particular scene of a movie or television is presented. With Travel shows, the genre itself promotes scenic beauty and locations. The viewer may wish to visit that destination after watching it that way. Croy & Wheeler (2007). reiterated the idea with ‘*familiarization*’ of various locations through media and thereby generating awareness and interest among tourists.
2. **Performance:** It relates to the multiple ways a location's beauty and attraction can be accentuated through use of cinematography, script, music and the Anchor's narration. With fictional content, the individual may relate to a character and work upon fantasy to visit the same place. However, with travel-based content, the person's awareness about the location can be enriched through showcasing the culture, food, history of that place.
3. **Personality:** In a fictional format, the need could be to visit a place where a famous actor would have shot a particular scene. In travel shows, it would relate to Famous Anchors who have also acquired a celebrity status in the modern world. A celebrity (actors/characters/anchors) has the capacity to attract an audience and thereby constitute the “*pull*” attribute (Kim et al., 2006). The communicative intentionality of the travel series is to entertain the television audience with factual information, tempting travel scenes and an anchor who inspires confidence and includes people, and who guides the viewer safely from place to place. The anchor plays an important role in the travel series and he/she binds the different features together, creates identification for the viewer as well as ensuring a good atmosphere and contact between the participants in the program and contact with the viewers.

Movies Vs. Television Shows

Film and television promoting tourism is referred to as “*screen tourism*” and is quite often acknowledged and discussed since 1990s, but there are very few in depth analysis of this phenomenon especially with relation to small screen influence on tourist purchase decisions. Screen tourism presents the landscape beauty and attractions of a place and makes it popular and appealing. There are instances where a tourist place authorities have asked movie producers to shoot in a specific location and offered them incentives like tax benefits, free accommodations etc. However, with respect to television production, there is less trust. It is usually assumed that a movie with larger budget have greater cinematic impact and thus greater attention (Beeton,

2005). The television viewing is unique and the associated experience is different with that of a movie. Also, the reach of television is greater especially in Asian countries. Movies in theatre are watched once in a while, but television shows are broadcasted more frequently in a week or sometimes daily. With the continuity feature, television provides a better opportunity to create relationships or affinity with its viewers through its characters or Anchors (Russell et al., 2004).

Tourism as a Product

Tourism is considered to be a product or service to be '*consumed*' by the tourists. It consists of multiple attributes to attract a '*prospect*' tourist. The travel-based literature enlists following elements related to travel and tourism Lew (1987):

1. The normal base from where the tourist starts his travel
2. Locations which take the status of tourist destination
3. The travel route
4. Activities, experiences and facilities in that travel destination
5. The social relationships which they form during the stay and travel

Thus, a destination is not only physically attractive but also be related to some memorabilia related to things famous in that area. Every tourist (consumer) has expectations and motivations when he travels to any destinations and the expectations usually related to above mentioned factors. A destination may comprise of geographical location, hotels and resorts, famous sites to visit, some architectural facade, transport facilities, food etc. It includes people, social life and their cultural practices (Zemla, 2016). All these traits are showcased through visual storytelling in a travel series and the rhetoric of the anchor.

Viewership Behaviour in India

The entertainment industry is evolving (Barat, 2017). Indian television industry is catering to a variety of audiences for sports, adventure, fiction, history, news, music, religion, fashion, cookery etc. The concept of "*social television*" is evolving where people are watching programs on multiple devices, across computers, mobile-phones, and tablets (Harboe, 2009). It has been observed that many viewers watch programs while multitasking. When they watch it through mobile phones, they may also be logged into social media. This gives an opportunity for engagement and reviews for the content.

The Travelling genre on television is gradually picking up viewership in India but there is limited research on the theme. The objective of the present research is to examine the influence of travel series on Indian television on the viewers' awareness and intention related to travel planning. The researcher aims to study multiple disciplines like media communications, consumer behaviour, marketing and advertising and probe into the relationship of media with the audience.

A Travel series showcased in India reflect some local and international lifestyle identity in relation to touristic consumer cultures. Many times, the viewer would get to know more about the global tourism through television. Like other lifestyle series dealing with consumption products and lifestyle markers encompassing fashion, food, garden, design and interior that balance somewhere between journalism and advertising, travel series typically deal with destinations, travel modes, cultural experiences and food as commodities (Waade, 2009). This is expressed in the choice of destination and means of travelling, attractive pictures and music,

positive experiences, concrete consumer advice and tourist information. The viewer is placed in the role of customer and tourist in the series. He may get lured to a local place or an international location. The glimpse of various international cuisines, dining practices, travel features and fashion aspects is quite enriching for any audience.

METHODOLOGY

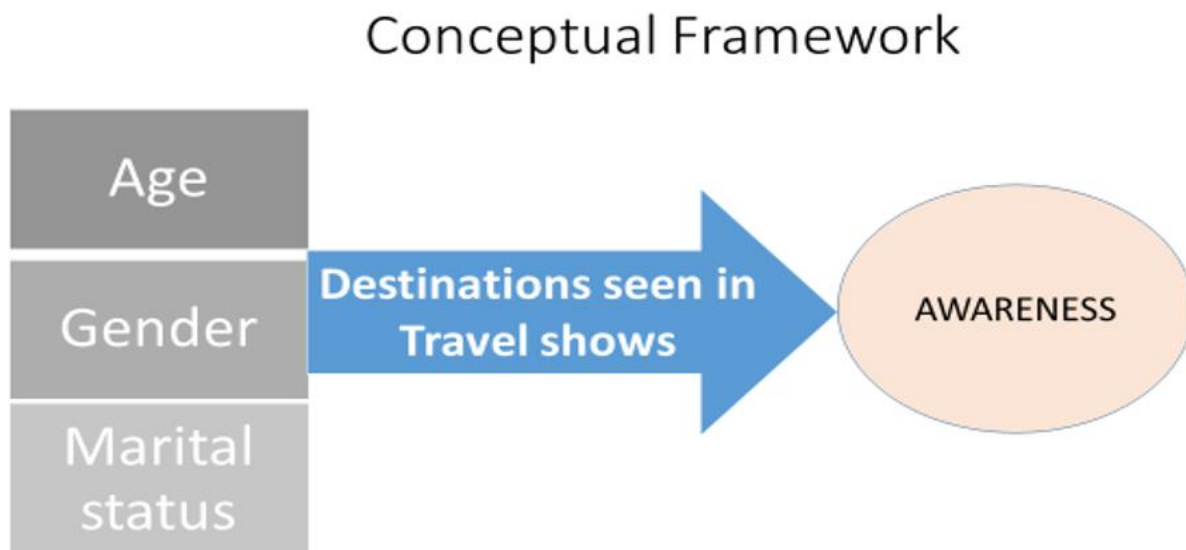
Several research studies have portrayed the influence of media on viewers. These studies identified positive as well negative consequences on the society. However, there is limited studies which focused on the small screen with travel genre and India's perspective is not even mentioned. The author has attempted to study and understand the concepts of lifestyle media, travel genre and consumer culture. The major source of secondary data in the review of literature was research papers published in National and International Journals. Basis on the review of literature, the relationship between television viewing, social learning and awareness is being delved upon. The research questions formed on the basis of literature gap were Figure 1:

RQ1: Can the "Place" of Travel Shows on Indian Television could induce travel Awareness in the viewers?

RQ2: How the differences of demographic traits of Indian viewers can influence the travel awareness of viewers?

Statement of problem formed on the basis of questions:

"There is a rise of lifestyle programming with specific theme of travel on Indian television, these shows present many picturesque locations; there are celebrity Anchors with travel advise. Given that these formats promote tourism; it would be valuable to understand the influence on their specific viewers in terms of awareness of travel destination."



**FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Thus, the hypotheses are aimed to assess the relationships between the demographic variables and the viewers' awareness about destinations presented in various Travel series on Television.

H1: There is no significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.

H2: There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness local about travel destinations.

H3: There is no significant influence of marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.

H4: There is no significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

H5: There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

H6: There is no significant influence of marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

The statistical data presented in this analysis part of the initial phase of a broader investigation collected for the doctoral thesis project on “*Influence of Food & Travel Shows on Indian Consumers*”. The study was conceptualized in 2019 and the data collection was done during June to August 2019. The sampling type for the customer survey was Non-Probability Sampling method. Within Non-Probability sampling method, judgmental sampling method was used. Primary Data was gathered using survey as a mode of data collection. The methods used for Primary Data Collection were personal interviews and electronic mailing questionnaires. The respondents were asked to give their opinion on their viewership of Travel shows watched on Indian Television. The sampling frame comprise of individual male and female in the age group of 18-60 years. The researcher has used structured questionnaire with Likert scale questions and respondents profile. After developing questionnaire and before starting the survey, a pilot test was conducted to find out whether respondents are comfortable to answer the questions. It was also tested to see if they understand the questions in terms of language and technicalities. The questionnaire was also tested for typographical and grammatical errors. The pilot testing was done with 50 respondents whose profile matches with the profile of the respondents who are in the sampling frame of the research study. On the basis of problems found out while filling the questionnaire, changes were made and a final questionnaire was prepared for the consumer survey.

A total of 1086 responses were collected from customers in from Tier 1 & Tier 2 cities of India. Before performing the analysis of data, the data collected was processed comprising data editing, data coding and data entry. This was followed by data analysis using frequency table and cross tabulations between awareness variables and age and gender of the respondents using SPSS 18.0 Version.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The viewers' perceptions were studied to determine influence of different elements of demographical segmentation on awareness about travel shows. The analysis of the opinions of viewers of different demography are presented in Table 1 to Table 15.

The results are presented in three forms:

1. Respondents profile
2. Cross Tabulation
3. Chi square test

34.3% of the respondents were found to be in the age bracket of 26-35 years closely followed by age group of 18-25 years (31.5%). 19.9% of the respondents in the survey were in the age bracket of 36-45 years. The senior respondents in the age bracket of 46-60 were 14.4%. The frequency table for age wise breakup of respondents is below:

Age (Years)	Percent
46-60	14.4
36-45	19.9
26-35	34.3
18-25	31.5
Total	100.0

In the survey, of the total respondents, 53.7 % were male while women respondents were 46.3%.

Gender	Percent
female	46.3
Male	53.7
Total	100.0

With regards to marital status, more than half of the participating respondents were Single (51.7%). A significant proportion of married people were also part of the survey. The following table below presents a picture of breakup of respondents in this category:

Marital Status	Percent
single/bachelor	51.7
Married	48.3
Total	100.0

My awareness about local travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Age				Total
	46-60	36-45	26-35	18-25	

	to a small extent	53	72	136	133	394
	to some extent	4	13	15	21	53
	To moderate extent	57	58	71	55	241
	to a large extent	42	73	150	133	398
Total		156	216	372	342	1086

As can be seen from the above table that viewers in the age group of 26-35 years of age were found to be getting aware to a large extent (40%) about local travel destinations after watching travel shows closely followed by 18-25 years. Only 27% of viewers in the age of 46-60 years were found to be getting aware to a large extent about local travel destinations after watching travel shows.

Table 5			
CHI-SQUARE TESTS			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.641 ^a	9	0.000

The first hypothesis was:

H1: There is no significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.

Since the p value is less than 0.05 hence there is a significant positive association between age and viewers' awareness about local travel destinations after watching travel shows. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis (H1) and accept the alternate hypothesis i.e. There is significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.

TABLE 6				
GENDER WISE PERCEPTION OF VIEWERS ON AWARENESS ABOUT LOCAL TRAVEL DESTINATIONS AFTER WATCHING TRAVEL SHOWS				
My awareness about local travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Gender		Total	
	Female	Male		
to a small extent	162	232	394	
to some extent	31	22	53	
to moderate extent	107	134	241	
to a large extent	203	195	398	
Total	503	583	1086	

As far as gender is concerned 40% of female were found to be getting aware to a large extent about local travel destinations after watching travel shows compare to male which is 33%.

Table 7			
CHI-SQUARE TESTS			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.319 ^a	3	0.010

The second hypothesis is:

H2: There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness local about travel destinations.

Since the p value is less than 0.05 hence there is a significant positive association between gender and viewers' awareness about local travel destinations after watching travel shows. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis (H2) and accept the alternate hypothesis i.e. There is significant influence of different gender of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.

My awareness about local travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Marital Status		Total
	single/ bachelor	Married	
to a small extent	195	199	394
to some extent	26	27	53
to moderate extent	142	99	241
to a large extent	198	200	398
Total	561	525	1086

In the table above regarding marital status, the marital status does not have any significant role in creating awareness to a large extent.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.556 ^a	3	0.087

The third hypothesis was

There is no significant influence of marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations Since the p value is more than 0.05 hence there is no significant association between Marital status and viewers' awareness about local travel destinations after watching travel shows. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis (H3).

My awareness about international travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Age				Total
	46-60	36-45	26-35	18-25	
not at all	25	69	114	82	290
to a small extent	32	40	87	70	229
to some extent	4	18	27	18	67
to moderate extent	56	39	54	77	226
to a large extent	39	50	90	95	274
Total	156	216	372	342	1086

In the table above age variation was not found to have any impact on viewers getting aware to a large extent about international travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows.

Table 11			
CHI-SQUARE TESTS			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.352 ^a	4	0.174

The fourth hypothesis was:

H4: There is no significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

Since the p value is more than 0.05 hence there is no significant association between Age and viewers' awareness about international travel destinations after watching travel shows. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis (H4).

Table 12				
GENDER WISE PERCEPTION OF VIEWERS ON AWARENESS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DESTINATIONS AFTER WATCHING TRAVEL SHOWS				
My awareness about international travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Gender		Total	
	Female	male		
not at all	152	138	290	
to a small extent	105	124	229	
to some extent	29	38	67	
to moderate extent	97	129	226	
to a large extent	120	154	274	
Total	503	583	1086	

24% of female were found to be getting aware to a large extent about International travel destinations after watching travel shows which is lesser as compared to male which is 26%.

Table 13			
CHI-SQUARE TESTS			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.352 ^a	4	0.174

The fifth hypothesis was:

H5: There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

Since the p value is more than 0.05 hence there is no significant association between Gender and viewers' awareness about international travel destinations after watching travel shows. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis (H5). There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

Table 14				
MARITAL STATUS WISE PERCEPTION OF VIEWERS ON AWARENESS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DESTINATIONS AFTER WATCHING TRAVEL SHOWS				
My awareness about international travel destinations has increased after watching travel shows	Marital Status		Total	
	single/bachelor	Married		
not at all	150	140	290	

	to a small extent	116	113	229
	to some extent	20	47	67
	to moderate extent	138	88	226
	to a large extent	137	137	274
Total		561	525	1086

In the table above regarding marital status, the marital status does not have any significant role in creating awareness to a large extent.

Table 15			
CHI-SQUARE TESTS			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.157 ^a	4	0.000

The sixth hypothesis was:

H6: There is no significant influence of Marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

Since the p value is less than 0.05 hence there is a significant positive association between Marital Status and viewers' awareness about international travel destinations after watching travel shows. Hence, we accept the null hypothesis (H6) and accept i.e. There is no significant influence of Marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations. Thus, it can be seen from above analysis and interpretation that:

1. There is significant influence of different age of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.
2. There is significant influence of different gender of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.
3. There is no significant influence of marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about local travel destinations.
4. There is no significant association between Age and viewers' awareness about international travel destinations after watching travel shows.
5. There is no significant influence of gender difference of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.
6. There is no significant influence of Marital status of participating respondents of Travel shows on their awareness about international travel destinations.

CONCLUSION

In this era of entertainment, customer influences and interactions with media has grown tremendously. The content and genre in every media platform have a faithful audience and followings. The liking and information for a travel series may further be promoted through their social media accounts. The role of travel series can be crucial in area of tourism marketing especially in the Asian markets like India. As we can interpret from the results that local travel awareness is influenced by differences in age and gender. The younger generation is keener to travel across India and know about it. Senior citizens show less reception because of constraints to take journey and therefore is not engaged actively with the travel content. Also, females are more actively engaged in local travel content than males. Interestingly, the international travel awareness shows no impact of age difference, genders and marital status. It may be attributed to the reason that international travel is expensive and not affordable to all viewers. The price sensitivity of various income groups may show a greater impact than other factors.

Even though the research results cannot be fully generalized, they provide useful insights for marketers in taking the right steps toward effective marketing strategies to be used in travel Series watched in India. Furthermore, the research findings have created a foundation that can inspire future research in the creation of more accountable frameworks in Indian television, which can help marketers in taking more solid investment decisions in the future. The tourism partners and hospitality brands need to leverage the media content on travel on television and social media and also understand the dynamics of demographic traits to communicate better. India is a country of young consumers, with rising disposable income, the brands need to seize this opportunity by crafting content and promotion together in a travel show.

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