



Scrolling for Opportunities: An Investigation of the Role of Social Media Advertising in Shaping Tourists' Decision-Making

*Exploring the impact of Social Media Platforms Perception and Travel Choice:
A case study in Dublin*

National College of Ireland

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Abstract

Social media has changed the way travellers find, evaluate, and interact with destinations, making an enormous difference in tourism (Lama, 2024). This thesis examines the various content types, including influencer marketing, user generated content, and target advertising, that most significantly influence decision-making. Considering Dublin's rich cultural heritage and its increasing attractiveness to tourists it is essential to analyse the effects of social media

ads on views of local experiences. While the use of targeted social media advertisements is increasing, it is still understudied in the context of Dublin, Ireland's most visited city, known for its robust tourism and rich culture. This paper used data from individuals in the 18 to 35 and 55+ age groups. The most recent data from Fáilte Ireland's Summer 2024 Consumer Update were used to create these segments, which account for 60% of the tourist population to Ireland. Also, most of the interviewers are Brazilians, consequently to the high number of Brazilians who visit and reside in Dublin. The most recent evidence from CSO (2023) showed that 17% of the individuals living in Dublin are not Irish, and the largest group of non-Irish inhabitants are Brazilians, numbering 11,188. This study also examined how social media advertising influences visitors' perceptions and choices about local experiences in Dublin, guided by destination Image Theory (Chon, 1990) and Media Dependency Theory (BallRokeach and DeFleur, 1976; Wangqu *et al.*, 2024). This paper analysed the impact of influencer advertising, user-generated content, and targeted advertisements on tourists' perceptions of Dublin, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups as methodologies. This qualitative study also aimed to address this gap by providing data, investigations, and platform perspectives on the directions in which visitors interact with social media content and how these elements influence tourists' decisions. It demonstrated the impact of social media marketing on opinions in advertising of destinations, providing tourism marketers with valuable insights to encourage authentic local experiences. This thesis provides Dublin tourism organisations with valuable information that will assist them in the development of more authentic and engaging social media advertising.

Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Tourist Decision-Making, Online Content, Opportunities, Destination Choice, Tourism in Dublin.

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QuillBot	This tool was used solely for language refinement, grammar and improving clarity because English is not the first language of the researcher.	https://quillbot.com/

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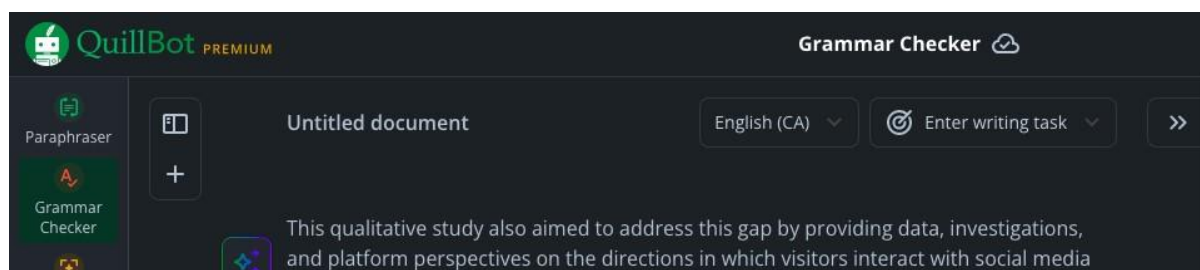
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Please could you translate the following interviews from Portuguese to English, always keeping the tone and meaning accurate.	For example: Participant 2 replied in Portuguese "Eu acredito que seja por causa da natureza e da qualidade de vida". Translation from Portuguese to English: "I believe it's because of nature and quality of life".
Microsoft Teams	
Transcriptions in Microsoft Teams was used to automatically transcribe some interview recordings.	
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QuillBot	
QuillBot was used to refine language, rephrase sentence, help with grammar and improve clarity in certain situations of the dissertation. This tool was helpful because English is not the first language of the researcher. It was used for improvements, not to generate original content.	
Write the sentence and use the tools to clarify or paraphrase to be better understood.	For example: "This dissertation seeks-aimssearches.. to examine the influence of social media on how tourists make their travel decisions...".

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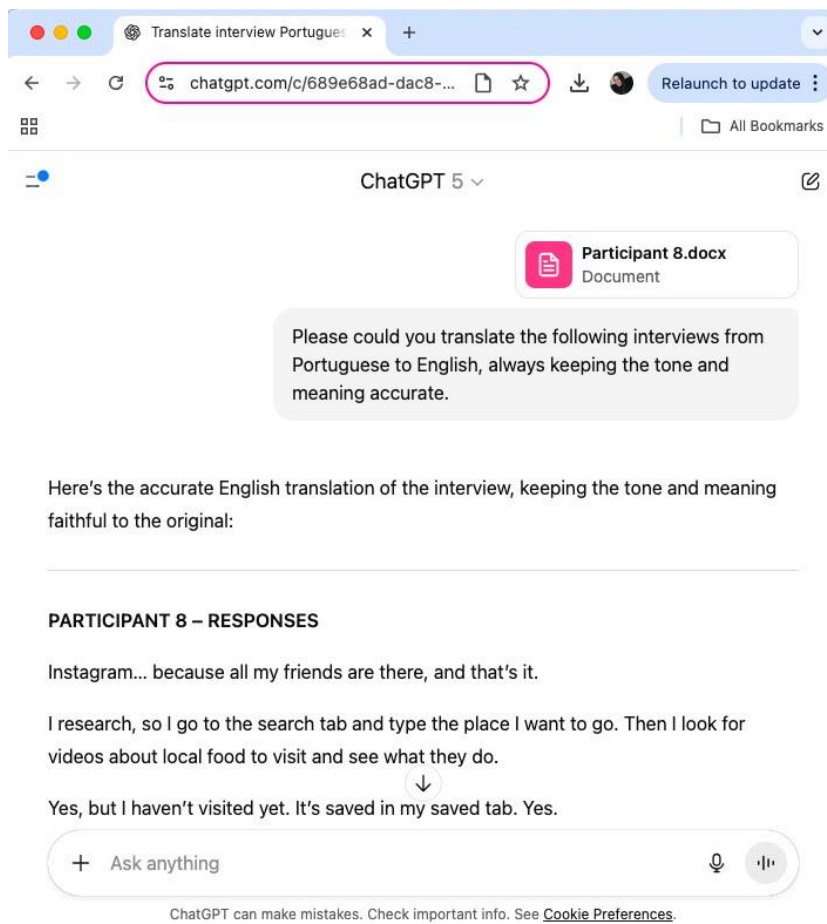
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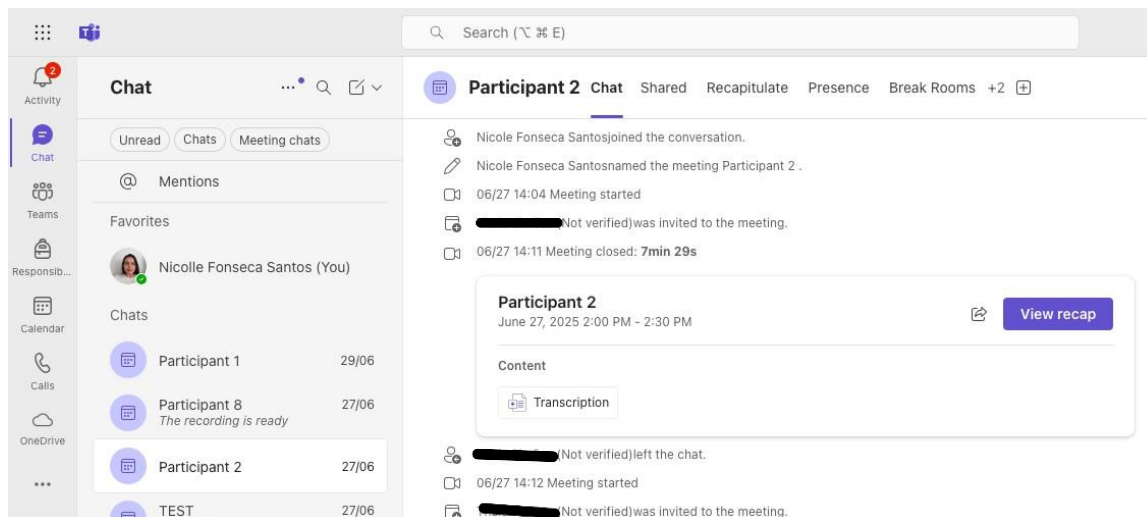


Additional Evidence: ChatGPT

Sample prompt: "Please could you translate the following interviews from Portuguese to English, always keeping the tone and meaning accurate".



Additional Evidence: Microsoft Teams



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Chapter 1 - Introduction	

1.1 Background

Social media platforms offer numerous advantages, making them indispensable instruments for companies overseeing their marketing communications (Abdeladhim, 2025). Evidence from Zhou and Xue (2021) suggests that social media locations help build community, trust, and enjoyment, which have a huge impact on where people choose to travel. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of Sujatha (2023) ideas. According to the author, social media transformed the planning of trips, allowing individuals to interact more easily, and has made people more active. The behavior-related impacts indicate how essential it is to conduct research as early as possible (Zazai and Hamidi, 2025).

The travel and tourism sector has intertwined social media into the core of the industry, used as the primary resource, allowing companies to connect with customers while formulating sophisticated marketing plans. It is an essential function in the contemporary visitor industry, as evidenced by its capacity to engage with a global audience and disseminate information about the location (Chu *et al.*, 2020). The author's findings showed that social media has

changed tourism. However, it can be unfair to smaller destinations, and that is why understanding the effectiveness of social media in promoting a place is so important for this industry. It is important to emphasise that both big and small locations must adjust to make use of social media's growing power to remain competitive in a world that is becoming more digital.

The rise of social media has profoundly altered the marketing of places, even in situations previously deemed implausible (Zahay, 2021). The roles of marketer have evolved from a stricter framework to a distinct position centered on UGC and eWOM, significantly influencing a traveler's views and choices (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media has been a significant marketing tool, exemplified by Tourism New Zealand's If You Seek campaign, which not only rejuvenated the 100% Pure New Zealand brand but also encouraged off-peak tourism and highlighted authentic New Zealanders #IfYouSeekNZ posts (New Zealand Tourism, 2023).

It has now become common for destinations to incorporate social media into their marketing plans. It is, however, important to consider the impact of social media on the perception and behaviour of tourists. Dublin, which has a vibrant tourism industry, a rich cultural legacy, and a Brazilian population of more than 58,000 citizens, is a great place to study how content works and how digital stories shape visitors' expectations. A multitude of individuals have integrated into professional roles and forged strong ties to the nation. A recent survey indicates a long-term presence in the city, with 40% of Brazilians in Ireland saying they had no plans to return to Brazil. More than 78% of Brazilians came after 2016, and many of them came to work in higher-skilled occupations after learning English (Malone, 2024). This population growth creates a new or enhanced social media advertising opportunity, especially concerning tourism, by using Dublin's deepening ethnic variety.

Ireland attracts Brazilians because it provides competitive salaries, flexible visa policies, and the option to work while learning English. This makes them more employable and gives them access to global markets. Given the global status of English, Ireland serves not merely as a tourist destination but as a place to begin for more professional growth. It is relatively open immigration regulations and a great quality of living make it even more attractive to Brazilians who want to improve their education, career possibilities and a better life. These factors are causing more Brazilians to move to Dublin, which is affecting tourism advertising. Social media becomes essential for companies aiming to reach varied and aspirational audiences, especially those that serve younger, globally minded audiences. The increasing Brazilian

presence in Dublin is noteworthy, given that most of the interviews for this study were carried out with Brazilian nationals. It is crucial to comprehend the factors that attract Brazilians to Ireland, as their perspective and experiences can offer valuable insights for tourism marketing initiatives.

Exploring Topics (2025) argues that Facebook is still the world's most popular social media platform, with more than 3.07 billion monthly active users. While WhatsApp reports 3.07 billion users, followed by YouTube with 2.7 billion, Instagram with 2 billion, and TikTok with 1.84 billion.

Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have become powerful marketing platforms that impact buying decisions with target ads, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content. Social media affects tourist behaviour worldwide (Acharjee and Ahmed, 2023), however its effects in Dublin are scarce.

This research investigates Dublin's social media marketing campaigns and their influence on the perceptions and the decision-making processes of prospective tourists, employing a qualitative approach of content analysis, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. This study contributes to marketing literature by looking at the ways passive digital content is used to engage and influence decision-making to enhance social media advertising and boost interaction, awareness, and overall visitor satisfaction. This is especially important for creating efficient digital marketing frameworks since it studies the effects of different consumer audience engagement and content types on consumer behaviour, enabling tourism and destination marketing companies to design sharper and more result-oriented campaigns. Let it be noted that this study is intended to provide social media marketing strategies that would promote Dublin more as a travel destination while enhancing the overall visit experience for prospective tourists.

1.2 Justification for Research and Objectives

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly changed the perception and marketing of tourist destinations, with platforms having power through user-generated content, endorsements from influencers, and targeted ads. However, there is still not enough research on how this affects travellers in cities like Dublin. Dublin is a fascinating destination for this study due to it has an abundance of cultural history and is becoming popular with tourists from

other countries. However, not much research has been done on how social media and other tailored platforms shape narrative digital stories and how much such stories shape tourists' expectations and decisions about genuine local experiences.

This research is centred on social media marketing, looking into buying behaviour, user preferences, the level of employment of the platforms, interactivity, and user engagement. Marketers can determine various perceptions and trust by content strategies through engagement analysing content and emotional, or factual influencer or corporate messages.

The objectives of this thesis are to accomplish four main goals:

Objective 1: The study's primary goal is to explore how social media advertising content affects travellers' opinions about how authentic a place is (e.g., videos, photos, reviews).

Objective 2: To investigate which information formats and social media sites have the biggest impact on peoples travel choices. This aim was adressed using a content analysis of important social media platforms, supported by semi-structured interviews with active users, to establish which content categories and platforms has the most effect on travel decisions.

Objective 3: To assess how travellers engage with social media advertising at three distinct stages of the travel experience. Pre-travel (planning), during travel (engagement), and posttravel (reflection and sharing). Interviews and content analysis were used to accomplish this goal, allowing for a study of how social media advertising affects visitor engagement at each of these phases.

Objective 4: This study aims to offer practical, evidence-based recommendations to Dublin's tourism operators and destination marketing groups, with the objective of improving the efficacy of their digital advertising strategies in attracting and engaging potential visitors.

These objectives align the research topics defined in Chapter 3. Their concerns are examined through a qualitative methodology employing semi-structured interviews with individuals from various age demographics (refer to Chapter 4). The interview instrument was meticulously designed and pilot-tested to correspond with these objectives (Appendices 1-4)

This means that the main objective of the current study is to make a big difference in the academic conversation about digital marketing and tourism, and to give useful advice to destination marketing professionals who desire to enhance their marketing strategies in a travel market that is becoming more competitive and digital. This study was motivated by the

This thesis synthesises ideas from both contemporary and classic studies to show how theoretical and practical views in digital tourist advertising have changed over time, or perhaps not changed. It allows the reader to immerse themselves in current trends and consumer behaviours within the broader trajectory of established knowledge, which makes the research more in-depth and relevant to the situation.

The literature review conducted in this investigation reveals that, despite the extensive research conducted on the influence of social media on travel decisions, the dynamics of these impacts in urban environments such as Dublin have received less attention. This gap inspired this study's sub-questions to investigate these areas and reveal tourism marketing methods. This research gap highlights the need to learn more about how social media information affects travellers' perceptions of authenticity and how they make decisions during their trip.

How can these aspects and information shared through platforms be an opportunity for marketing strategies? What type of advertising content is more effective in shaping travel choices?

1. Which social media platform has the greatest influence on tourist decision-making regarding Dublin as a destination?
2. Which content is more effective in building tourists' decision-making?
3. How can companies in Dublin utilize these results to improve their marketing strategies in a tourist area and help travel and tourism?

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The goal of his study is to learn more about how social media ads affect visitors views of a destination authenticity and how they make decisions. The results are meant to show that different social media sites and types of content can affect travel decisions and find the most effective methods to improve digital marketing before, during, and after a trip.

One of the expectations that guided the planning of this research endeavour was to contribute to the body of knowledge on digital advertising and tourism by investigating the effects of different social media platforms and content types on urban tourism. This study extends relevant theories and offers insights into generational differences in platform use and trust, giving DMOs and the tourist sector in Dublin useful advice on how to create connections, set expectations, and make visitors happier.

The paper aims to offer Dublin travel agencies and destinations marketing organisations useful advice that will help them better connect with both local and international travellers and make their advertising efforts more effective. This work also wants to add to the academic literature by filling in the gap in research on how social media affects city tourism marketing, especially in light of Dublin changing tourism scene.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This study is divided into the following chapters to navigate the reader through the argument and offer a clear framework for comprehending the study process and findings.

The first section of this paper establishes the context by elucidating the impetus for the study and describing the research question, background topic, and discussing the rationale for the research, with the gap in the literature that it aims to fill. The topics discussed in the chapters that follow are derived from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, which summarises relevant research and theories. In the next section, Chapter 3, the reader will find the methodology used for this study. Describing the methods used in the study, qualitative methods including focus groups, content analysis, and semi-structured interviews are listed. The section also covers the data collection process, the rationale behind the chosen methodologies, and how these methodologies will help answer the research question. This outlines the proposed

research approach and technique, including the methods for gathering and analysing data. It explains the merits and challenges of the selected strategy while also addressing how it will meet the objectives of the study. In Chapter 4, the discussion presents the data analysis's findings, which are organised into distinct themes that answer the corresponding research questions. Chapter 5 provides a detailed explanation of the findings, highlighting their wider implications and their connection to the theoretical framework. However, this study also argues about the limitations of the thesis, because in research it is crucial to analyse what went wrong and what works positively. This paper shows that one of the most enjoyable components of the discovery process is the ability to learn from both errors and triumphs, as they give essential insights that help with personal and academic improvement.

This study is carefully planned such that each chapter builds on the last one and the entire thesis flows smoothly. It is possible for an argument to make sense from the introduction to the conclusion and suggestion.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter offers a critical analysis of the body of research on how social media advertising influences travellers' opinions and choices. It synthesises several viewpoints on user engagement tactics, platform-specific dynamics, content efficacy, and the evolving nature of advertising in the digital era. Both theoretical and empirical findings are emphasised, especially as they relate to Dublin tourists. It is important to mention that key inadequacies are identified, and the necessity of the current research is justified in the chapter's conclusion.

2.1 Social Media's Impact on consumer engagement and tourism advertising

Nandi and Subrahmanyam (2024) show a framework that understands the effects of digital marketing across platforms. However, a more detailed examination of the effects of the kinds of content types and platforms would enhance the research. Ulukok and Saygili (2024) ignore platform factors that affect the applicability of their findings, such as different customer conduct on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Mature consumers lean towards educational material on Facebook, whereas younger users favour visual posts on Instagram and TikTok, where short, captivating videos can sometimes lead to instant travel choices. Instagram and Facebook still provide long text posts and guides, which enable users to tell stories in an immersive manner, and they provide community building features. Still, as noted by Ulukok and Saygili (2024), older users tend to use Facebook as a repository for long and in-depth text, while younger users gravitate toward Instagram and TikTok. This underscores why adaptive and age-specific strategies are so important. Perhaps future studies will look into the connection between algorithms and targeted marketing, as well as the engagement trends influenced by demographics that shape the content's impact.

The development of social media has changed how firms sell to tourists by letting them quickly reach a substantial increase in the number of individuals, receive more exposure, and appear in new ways to advertise tourism destinations (Ulukok and Saygili, 2024). According to Hussain et al. (2024), social media content is essential for marketing travel destinations and drawing tourists. The results emphasise how it facilitates communication, creativity, and successful tourism marketing, and examining these patterns aids in foreseeing future developments. However, these improvements, although making more individuals aware of and interested in

digital tourism, could additionally render things unfair by favouring places with more resources.

This shows that we need to create more equitable digital tourist policies.

According to Stephens and McLaughlin (2020), a lack of understanding about how to use new technologies, like social media, for marketing could weaken a small business's competitive edge. It indicates that the rapid advancement of digital platforms has fundamentally altered how businesses interact with their customers. The author shows efforts, making them more efficient and cost-effective. However, Ahnfeld *et al.*, (2023) emphasizes the importance of integrating digital empathy with user experience (UX) studies to enhance user engagement and deliver contextually relevant content. Evaluations driven by AI are becoming more essential for enhancing marketing strategies. Stephens and McLaughlin (2020) examine how these techniques might be applied in social media marketing.

Nonetheless, they must also consider the practical and ethical concerns. These research efforts offer insight into the impact of social media marketing on tourist engagement and choices, underscoring the importance of ethical, equitable, and tailored strategies.

The following section examines social media usage among different age demographics, highlighting the growth in users over 50 and the necessity for tourism marketers to adjust campaigns to attract a broader audience. This section examines recent trends and real-world instances of older adults' engagement with platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, and the implications for creating more inclusive and effective tourism promotion, particularly in cities like Dublin.

2.2 Demographic Considerations in Social Media Advertising for Tourism

The idea that social media platforms are predominantly utilised by younger demographics, such as adolescents, university students, and young adults, had been progressively contested by recent empirical evidence. Younger users remain a substantial segment of social media audiences, although older age groups are swiftly adopting and engaging with these platforms, thus increasing the demographic scope of digital communication (Zahay *et al.*, 2021). The

authors also argued that in 2019, around 81% of mobile phones were smartphones, markedly improving internet availability and enabling social media usage throughout all age groups. The percentage of people aged 65 and older owning a smartphone rose from 13% to 53% between 2014 and 2019; additionally, social media use has increased significantly among users aged 50 to 64 years. Around 68% of this demographic uses Facebook, 70% uses YouTube, and over 80% own a smartphone and use social media.

Siguencia (2025) as cited in Tuazon (2023) portrayed in his recent work that older adults are not just passive consumers of social media content, but are proactively using it for selfimprovement and lifelong learning. The DigIN project aimed at fostering the use of technology among 55 years and older adults found that 42% of the users of YouTube were aged 55 to 64, demonstrating a considerable use of videos that were aimed at providing them with relevant information. These two points indicate that elderly people are not just passively consuming— reading and watching content. They actively engage with tailored content. This contradicts the outdated notion that social media serves the sole purpose of enabling conversations with younger people.

Neglecting older consumers may overlook a burgeoning group of tech-savvy travellers, highlighting the necessity for including strategies that acknowledge age as an influencing factor in determining platform usage and interaction on channels like YouTube and Facebook. This demographic shift is especially important for the tourism and hospitality industries, as digital platforms greatly impact travellers decisions when they travel.

Older travellers, once overlooked in social media campaigns, now form an engaged, accessible niche, actively using platforms often linked to younger audiences like Facebook and YouTube. YouTube highlights the necessity of implementing inclusive marketing tactics that adapt to diverse interests, behaviours, and decision-making processes. Recognising this expanding demographic presence facilitates the creation of more focused and effective destination marketing strategies. Campaigns tailored for Facebook or YouTube can now engage not only digital-native millennials and Gen Z travellers but also older tourists who may prioritise diverse types of information, narrative, or visual aesthetics. This corresponds with the transition from generic advertising to more sophisticated, audience-targeted engagement essential in shaping travel choices among various demographic groups. Consequently, social media advertising for tourism has to overcome youth-centric stereotypes and acknowledge the significance of demographics.

Cities often include festivals and events in their urban policies to draw tourists and investors, extend the tourism season, and boost economic growth in today's globalised and competitive environment. Quinn *et al.*, (2022) suggest that Dublin's event tourism policies prioritise economic competitiveness over sociocultural goals, adopting an urban entrepreneurial perspective. Based on their ideas, festivals enhance pride, inclusion, and a feeling of community. This indicates that visitors seek more than merely business. However, it fails to include the impact of social media promotion on tourists' views of authenticity. As a result, bridging the gap between macro-level consumer insights. This dissertation examines how wellchosen social media advertising of Dublin influences visitors' expectations, choices, and interactions with local culture.

The next section will examine the distinctions between social media and conventional advertising, which was essential in this research as it can highlight its significance.

2.4 Social Media Advertising X Traditional advertising

Ertemel and Ammoura (2016) identify distinctions between traditional advertising and social media advertising, highlighting social media's cost-effectiveness and its potential to foster strong relationships with audiences. A recent study by Acharjee and Ahmed (2023) indicates that companies can enhance their relationships with clients and ultimately fulfill their needs through the implementation of interactive and personalized marketing strategies.

Businesses utilize social media platforms for advertising and promotion to reach potential customers (Acharjee and Ahmed, 2023). A recent study by Suprpto et al. (2020) indicates that during the Industrial Revolution, numerous businesses utilized social media, especially Instagram, as a promotional tool. Advertising strategies, including influencer collaborations and location narratives, effectively inspire travellers. Travel influencers cultivate audience trust and establish emotional connections through the sharing of personal travel narratives, which encourages consideration of the destinations they promote. Emotional connections to videos that narrate historical and cultural stories further enhance engagement.

2.5 Tourist Decision-Making

This chapter discusses two studies, however dated, that impact the current research by highlighting the significance of social media growth in influencing visitors' decisions. According to Panwar et al. (2019), consumer behaviour is characterised by the acts consumers undertake to seek, utilise, evaluate, and dispose of products and services that they perceive will satisfy their preferences. For the last 60 to 70 years, extensive marketing research has focused on the question, How do consumers determine their purchasing decisions? (Richarme, 2005). The author's question matches, as old as it is and very important for recent studies, with the idea of how tourists decide where to go and spend their time and money and, as a result, collect experiences. The author focuses on the core concepts and frameworks related to the models of consumer decision making. In a more recent study, Sujatha (2023) suggests that social media is now an integral part of the journey of the modern tourist industry.

A classic study from Bettman *et al.*, (1998) shared some intriguing ideas on how people make choices. Consumer behaviour study shows that how information is framed and how easy it is to get to may affect how people make decisions. In the travel industry, social media evidence functions as both an information source and a contextual framework. Suggestions from peers, particularly for low-involvement consumers who are not engaging in deliberate, logical comparisons, emotionally charged narratives, and imagery, are significant in shaping their perceptions and decision-making.

Agarwal and Mitra (2025) argued that impulsive purchasing is stimulated by practical and emotive ad elements, as well as empathetic user interaction. However, privacy concerns may impede this process, emphasising the necessity of trust-building in social media marketing. Even though the author's findings have geographical limitations, they can give more thorough and internationally relevant knowledge of SMA effectiveness, consider platform-specific dynamics, include a wider range of variables, and investigate the moderating effects of doubt.

2.6 Social Media Advertising

Data collected from Statista in 2025 (Dixon, 2025), it was predicted that Ireland's social media user base would grow steadily by 0.6 million between 2024 and 2019. It indicates a consistent rise in online interaction. According to O'Connor *et al.*, (2016), Social media platforms like Facebook have refined their analytical capabilities to identify user demographics, enabling businesses to reach their target market more efficiently with social media advertisements. The author has noted monitoring trends and how they may impact marketing initiatives. There is a lack of information regarding how tourists use social media, specifically about visiting Dublin.

Focusing research specifically on the use of social media in tourism would enhance the understanding of its impact on travel choices; however, existing evidence highlights the necessity to explore how this marketing affects tourists' selection of Dublin.

According to Abdeladhim (2025), social media enhances a company's ability to improve brand recognition, trust, and loyalty, offering a clear advantage through social media marketing. Even without comments or shares, a customer's perception and buying decision hinges on a brand's promotional efforts and information packaging, particularly advertising.

Trust is built by the source effect, which states customers tend to trust social media peers and other users rather than marketers. This shows why commendable client evaluations are indispensable for trust. Furthermore, social media marketing allows users and businesses to communicate, solve problems, and refine their relationships. Users may regard advertising as crucial, but to promote brand loyalty, businesses must counterbalance the messages with authentic engagements. All in all, social media enables marketers to engage customers and gather their opinions with minimal effort.

Reshma and Selvam (2024) contend that individuals are more likely to engage with social media when they actively share experiences and trust the brand community. This emphasises how social media advertisements impact the choices people make regarding travelling. The targeted study of tourism, along with consumer behaviour in Dublin fills in the gaps and improves the use of digital marketing to encourage real travel and greater involvement with the location.

However, the literature review reveals gaps and contradictions that need to be discussed. Social media platforms offer a wide reach, but their effectiveness varies with culture, demographics, and internet access. These existing gaps in the literature demonstrate the necessity for this study. Although Acharjee and Ahmed (2023) and Suprpto et al. (2020) argue the importance of tailored content and advertising through influencers, they overlook the comparative analysis of the effectiveness of these strategies through different industries and demographic groups.

2.7 Influence of Social Media in Shaping Destination Image and Dependency

The importance of eWOM in destination selection is further supported by recent studies. Consistent with the core findings of Ismail *et al.* (2023), Ayeh *et al.* (2013) provided that

electronic word-of-mouth has an enormous effect on where people choose to go, and this effect is mediated by how they see the personality of the destination and how satisfied they are overall. Similarly, Aboalganam *et al.* (2025) demonstrate how user-generated content improves destination imagery, which in turn impacts intentions to visit. This idea builds on Ayeh *et al.* (2013) by discussing how eWOM affects people's minds while they travel in the digital domain.

According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's (1976) Media Dependency Theory, the influence of media grows as individuals rely on it to meet cognitive, emotional, and social needs, particularly in uncertain situations. Wangqu (2024) improves this idea, arguing that illustrating reliance as a dynamic, focused on objective interaction. This is evident in tourism, where people of all ages use social media for information, reassurance, inspiration, and cultural guidance.

Lan *et al.*, (2025) made an unexpected addition to the field by offering a method with two computational frameworks that use GPT-4 to extract destination expectations from user-generated content (UGC). The authors' studies suggested that the reasons which motivate tourists and travellers to visit a certain place are changing with the dominance of the digital world, which is relaxed and social, rather than natural or emotional, a shift which is now more commonplace. This logic idea is crucial for this research on Irish travellers influenced by Instagram and TikTok. This dissertations focus on how comments, reviews, and videos affect travel decisions in line with Lan *et al.*, (2025) quantification of emotions in social media texts, which links sentiment to intention. Their focus on digital expectations transfer reverts to Ayeh *et al.*, (2013) psychological mediation theory, but which offers a real-time, global alternative by the use of LLMS (large language models).

In conclusion, research presented in this Literature Review confirms the importance of social media in influencing travellers' opinions and choices. Inconsistent results across platforms, low regional relevance, and poor frameworks for measuring visitor trust show that more focused research is needed. By investigating how social media material affects travellers' decisions in Dublin, this study fills these gaps and advances both academic and practical discussions in digital tourism advertising.

Chapter 3 – Research Questions

3.1

Introduction

The foundation of any research question study is its research questions, which help the researcher identify a specific research problem or topic and define the direction and scope of the investigation. A strong research question not only points out a gap in knowledge, but it also shows that the person asking it has a good grasp of the subject and is based on previous academic literature (Barroga and Matanguihan, 2022). The growing impact of social media is reshaping the entire tourism industry, particularly with regard to the marketing of destinations. While social media is increasingly impacting travel decisions, there is a considerable information gap in regard to different types of content (reviews, influencers, posts, photos, and videos) and platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) as it concerns Dublin. This gap will be addressed by this project, which aims at customising social media marketing for more impactful vision engagement that would alter perceptions of Dublin as a travel destination.

This section delineates the principal research question, three sub-questions, and their alignment with the literature review and study objectives. The data was gathered using semi-structured interviews (illustrated in Appendix 4 for the interview instructions), supplemented with a well-designed recruitment methodology (Appendices 1-3). These instruments immediately engage the inquiries presented and guarantee coherence across aims, queries, and data gathering methodologies.

3.2 Aim of the Research

The aim of this thesis, within the context of Dublin, the overarching purpose of this research is to analyse the ways in which advertising on social media platforms impacts the decisions that tourists make, along with the ways in which tourism business may use these insights to improve their advertising efforts.

3.3 Research Questions

The main question of this study is:

How can these aspects and information shared through platforms be an opportunity for marketing strategies?_What type of advertising content is more effective in shaping travel choices?

The primary question will assist in determining the type of content, such as reviews, that affects travellers choices. It has a significant impact on tourists decisions and is in line with how they engage with social media content. While some visitors might be swayed by stunning images, others might be inspired by open comments or videos that show real-life experiences.

Travel destinations can concentrate their marketing efforts on the things that most inspire their audience by asking questions to gain a better understanding of how the various tastes and behaviours of tourists relate to different types of content.

The study will follow these sub-questions:

1. Which social media platform has the greatest influence on tourist decision-making regarding Dublin as a destination?

This question pertains to the matter of platform usage trends among different age demographics that were covered in the literature review (Ulukok and Saygili, 2024). For example, resourcebased attention to TikTok is predominant among Genz Users; in contrast, Facebook is enjoyed by elderly consumers.

2. Which content is more effective in building tourists' decision-making?

This question is relevant to the argument concerning the literature review about the content type, credibility, and authenticity (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Hussain *et al.*, 2024).

3. How can these results help companies in Dublin improve their marketing strategies in a tourism destination and foster the tourism industry?

This sub question supports the objectives of this study, offering suggestions derived upon data gathered from participants, and consistent with the practical consequences addressed in Chapter 6.

The study aims to explore the effectiveness of social media advertising in shaping tourists' decision-making, focusing on Dublin as the study context. Dublin was chosen because, combined with its historical and cultural appeal, it provides a unique context to study the impacts of social media advertising. Improving tourism marketing techniques requires an understanding of which elements of social media content impact travellers choices to visit a

city with such a wide range of attractions. However, it is also essential to mention that less is known about how people conclude to come to Ireland, what content is more efficient and how it can help companies foster tourism in this area.

To illustrate these gaps, the subsequent research objectives were formulated in:

1. Examines at how different kinds of social media affect how tourists see Dublin.
2. Investigate generational gaps in platform utilization and content credibility;
3. Determine the most effective content methods for captivating tourists through digital platforms.
4. Provide practical advice for tourism marketers in Dublin

These aims are attained by qualitative data gathered from twelve semi-structured interviews, analysed thematically (refer to Chapter 4). The instrument used (Appendix 4) was meticulously crafted based on deficiencies discovered in the literature reseach and completed pilot testing for clatity.

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

This chapter explores the investigation of the research topic and discusses the rationale behind the selection of certain approaches and procedures. This study applies qualitative research methodology and is guided by acknowledged research techniques literature (Sauders *et al.*, 2019; Creswell and Creswell, 2017) and was consistent with the study's objectives. The methods used assist in this paper's investigation and exploration of how social media advertising influences travelers' opinions and choices. It allows the exploration of conduct, attitudes, and motivations, connecting tourists' interactions with content and decisions they make about their next trip.

4.1 Research Design

According to Brunner (2010), in her Handbook of Tourism Behavior she argues for the use of qualitative, interpretive approaches in tourism consumer research to identify the underlying why or reasons that influence visitor conduct. The chapter critiques the common practice of implementing quantitative, destination-focused research methods, which serve the purpose of generating normative statistics, but fails to capture the deeper emotional and psychological factors influencing the traveler's decision.

The chapter's critique of popular approaches, which supports Amis' (2011) interpretative paradigm to emphasise the importance of qualitative research, is one of its main contributions. The authors showcase how travellers may choose familiar activities over a sense of liberty during their travels, disproving that novelty is the primary motivator for visiting a place.

Building on these arguments, recent research indicates that mobile connectivity is redefining the boundaries of home and away for travelers. Continuous digital contact as a relational system (Conti and Farsaris, 2022) suggests that nature-based visitors from Sweden retain relationships even when physically distant. As demonstrated by Cai and McKenna (2021) with a critique of Foucault, tourists constantly negotiate and reevaluate the psychological boundary between immersion in a place and digital presence and as power disengagement while navigating smartphone use during digital-free tourism. Taken together, these studies illustrate the power of a qualitative approach to reveal subtle behaviors of visitors that conventional quantitative approaches overlook, such as the simultaneous sensations of connection and escape.

In health research, the most well-known methods of collecting qualitative data include focus groups, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations (Busetto *et al.*, 2020). As part of the primary research, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 participants. Depending on the participants' choices and availability, interviews were conducted either in person or virtually through video and conversations. Participants, both local and foreign, were recruited via social media groups.

This section aims to investigate how visitors interact with social media advertising and how those interactions affect their decision-making while planning a trip across generations. The reason for these age group divisions can be found in research studies which have constantly pointed out the differences in digital engagement, choice of platforms, and levels of digital literacy across the age spectrum (Ulukok and Saygili, 2024; Ahnfeld *et al.*, 2023).

Younger age groups have greater exposure and easier access to visually appealing and fastpaced platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Older users are predominantly found on Facebook, mainly looking for information or review-based content. The study aims to achieve deeper insights on how different demographics interact with social media advertising content, which messages are most appealing, and how these trends influence their perceptions of the authenticity and trustworthiness of advertising by incorporating the groups. The main goal of this research is to gather qualitative evidence which can illustrate how social media influence differs and aligns across age groups. The study aims to assist in developing age-inclusive and responsive advertising and marketing campaigns, thus making a significant contribution to the theory of marketing and the practice of tourism.

Semi-structured interview questions were created to investigate how social media advertising affects travelers' choices. These enquiries will focus on how visitors engage with various forms of social media content, which platforms they use, and which content most influences their choice to travel to Dublin.

The research topics and sub-questions of the study was explicitly reflected in the interview questions. Qualitative research methods have also been used in the past to examine the work of tourism marketing and social media advertising studies. For example, a recent study by Ulukok and Saygili (2024) and Hussain *et al.* (2024) used qualitative techniques, such as content analysis and in depth interviews, to examine how media platforms influence travellers behaviour and decisions. Therefore, the studies demonstrate the effectiveness of qualitative

research in gaining a comprehensive understanding of how visitors respond to online content, which is essential for designing targeted social media campaigns.

Moreover, this study used qualitative methods like focused group interviews and content analysis, which are perfect for examining distinct viewpoints and experiences regarding social media content. Saunders et al. (2019) assert that qualitative approaches offer design flexibility. The researcher modified questions according to participants' answers, applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, which is perfect for examining distinct viewpoints and experiences regarding social media content. Saunders et al. (2019) assert that qualitative approaches offer design flexibility. The researcher modified questions according to participants' answers, applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis while integrating tourism reports, scholarly research, and market studies to enhance conclusions via triangulation.

Qualitative research comes with limitations such as insights subjectivity and bias. First, the subjectivity bias arises when the results of research are centred and measured around the researchers bias, thus bias is introduced. However, these restrictions can be reduced by employing a variety of data collection techniques and triangulation, which involves comparing information from focus groups, interviews, and content analysis. Another important limitation to be considered is the generalizability.

It is important to mention that mixed and quantitative methodologies were taken into consideration. It can provide a broader understanding. Although there is a risk of losing specific details. To some extent, social media impact could be measured through quantitative techniques. However, those techniques do not delve deeply enough. Ultimately, qualitative methods were chosen to comprehensively understand the behaviour of the visitors.

This study adopts a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist ontology, which aligns with social reality as context-specific and socially constructed (Bryman, 2015). It also aligns with qualitative methodology, which is centred on knowledge which is experienced and constructed, and not on static truths. This study looks at how visitors sculpt their perceptions of social media content, which in turn allows the researcher to explore the perceptions and actions of the participants. The interpretive ontology of this study regards social reality as constructed and looks at the multifaceted, context-dependent meanings that social media travellers provide social media advertisements. This aligns Amis (2011) and follows the tourism behaviour research tradition of Damiasih (2025), who argued that qualitative research uncovers the emotional and psychological dimensions that influence travel decisions.

4.2 Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

This study used snowball sampling to recruit participants, which is helpful for reaching hard-to-access populations (Naderifar et al., 2017). The first steps of the recruitment process began from my personal and academic circles, and those contacts then referred others from their wider networks. This method increased the number of participants and also increased trust because the referrals were from contacts.

Participants' recruitment commenced with the dissemination of an invitation email (Appendix 1) to initial contacts. The email effectively detailed the study's purpose, engagement criteria, the voluntary aspect of involvement, and guaranteed confidentiality. It was written in a way that was both informative and ethical, which is what best practices for qualitative research recruiting say to do (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The initial contact was very important for the snowball sampling process as the elderly participants were able to invite their friends, which organically expanded the sample.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative research often uses purposeful sampling to identify participants who can provide relevant and in-depth information. This research study centred on both international and local travellers who engage with social media promotions related to Dublin in the preceding six months. This facilitated the gathering of detailed accounts that represent varied travel motivations and experiences. All participants were sent an invitation email (Appendix 1), including the study's objective, eligibility criteria, and consent procedure.

4.3 Data Collection from Participants

Data was gathered in the middle of July through face-to-face interviews, Teams video calls, and written interviews in cases where verbal interviews were impractical. This blended approach offered convenience and accessibility to participants in different geographical locations. Participants were fluent in both Portuguese and English; therefore, interviews were conducted in both languages. Because of the level of comfort some interviewees had, parts of the interviews were done in Portuguese.

The participants were audio recorded with full consent and anonymity ensured, and subsequently transcribed and translated into English. Also, some of the interviews were conducted in a written format, with answers written by the interviewer. AI tools will assist with the initial translation, enabling more effective management of qualitative data. It also mentioned that for guaranteeing correctness, each transcript was manually examined and corrected following academic and ethical best standards, particularly when direct quotations are utilised in the dissertation. Direct citations were carefully examined to ensure faithfulness to the participants' original meanings, even when condensed responses provide greater interpretive flexibility.

With permission, most of the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Initial transcriptions and translations from Portuguese to English were done using AI tools like Microsoft Teams' Automatic Transcription and ChatGPT. For interviews where the participant did not verbally respond but rather provided responses in writing, full notes were recorded to capture the precise wording. All transcripts were verified and corrected manually to ensure precise compliance with the scholarly and ethical standards, including policies for quoting directly.

4.4 Qualitative Research Interviews - Interview Instrument and Procedure

The data collecting method was facilitated by meticulously crafted tools aimed at ensuring ethical rigour consistency, and harmony with the study aims. Appendices 1 to 4 delineate their respective functions in participant recruitment, informed consent, and data collection.

4.4.1 Appendix 1-4

The recruitment process commenced with the distribution of an invitation email (Appendix 1), detailing the study's objectives, qualification criteria, and ethical guarantees, including anonymity, voluntary participation, and the ability to quit at any point. The email was sent to initial contacts and the language employed was ethically appropriate and comprehensible, keeping to the guidelines established by Sauders *et al.*, (2019) for clear and polite communication in the recruitment for qualitative research.

An interview script (Appendix 2) was used at the beginning of each conversation to maintain a uniform introduction and ethical briefing throughout all interviews. The script contained a verbal reminder of the study's objectives, the participants' right to quit at any point during the interview, and confirmation of consent for recording the session. It allowed building relationships and established a respectful, safe environment for open discussion. This facilitated participants' comfort and awareness before the commencement of formal questioning.

Prior to the commencement of the primary interviews, participants were presented with a concise series of demographic inquiries (Appendix 3), including age, gender, and occupation. The background information set the study and allowed the researcher to investigate trends related to generational or regional variations in social media usage.

The main interview in this study consists of open-ended questions in some of them not openended, and it will explore participants' experiences with social media content and how it influences their decision to visit Dublin (Appendix 4). The investigation seeks to find out how people utilize specific platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, as well as TikTok and the content they engage with (photos, reviews, and influencer posts) and its impact on their decisions. This made it possible to identify the social media content influence on traveler's social media decision making. The sample consisted of twelve participants who frequent social media, have been to Dublin recently, are currently in Dublin, or are planning to visit soon. This ensures adequate usability experience in regards to Dublin's social media content and captures multiple perspectives on interaction with social media.

Before data collection, the interview guide was pilot tested with one individual from the target demographic. It is possible to say that this experiment enhanced the phrasing, sequence, and clarify of the questions. The pilot feedback was used to modify the definitions for enhanced accessibility and to guarantee that the inquiries generated significant and appropriate replies.

To sum up, the integration of these tools enabled a meticulously developed and morally robust methodology for data collecting. The use of pilot testing and flexible interview methodologies enhanced the credibility of the research process.

4.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

This section outlines the methodology applied to analyse qualitative data obtained from semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to discern patterns and insights pertinent to tourists' views and reactions to social media advertising. Qualitative data collected are rich, detailed, and non-numerical (Saunders, 2019). When done well, qualitative research enhances quantitative methods by providing light on study topics that call for more contextual knowledge than just numerical data (Busetto, 2020). It is essential to mention that in this study, primary and secondary data are the two basic categories of data acquisition. In the present study, to guarantee integrity and depth, the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews were evaluated utilising a methodical four-step procedure (Quinlan, 2019).

Firstly, all transcripts were read carefully, and predetermined codes aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework were applied to arguments that are pertinent to important ideas such as evaluation and authenticity perceptions. Secondly, statements found via preset coding went through open coding, in which excerpts are reread and coded more precisely while remaining true to the participants' language to capture subtle meanings. Finally, these open codes were arranged into more general categories, putting related codes in one group to find underlying trends in the data.

The interviews were transcribed, translated, and subsequently analyzed for identifying patterns, recurring concepts, and relevant quotations to develop important themes aligned with the study topics. To maintain reflexive self-awareness in the research process, the self-researcher reflection after each interview and recorded field notes on the body language of the interviewee, unexpected reactions, and my own feelings. This approach aided in explaining participant responses while avoiding bias in interpretation. Although formal field notes were not systematically gathered, there was an effort to set aside personal views and consider the impact of the researcher's identity and interests on the interpretation of the data. Given my background in tourism and international education, I practiced reflexivity with regard to the biases I brought with me during data collection and interpretation.

As part of the interviews, field notes were taken to track contextual observations, emotional tone, and reflections, thus sparing the researcher and the research interpretation from bias.

Ultimately, to complete the analysis, emergent themes were identified and described as interpreting how these categories relate to tourists' perceptions and social media advertising. This approach uses both deductive and inductive coding, which helps keep the participants' true voices while also giving the analysis a clear structure. The researcher did the theme analysis, accompanied by supervisory review to ensure coding consistency and validity. It

enables the researcher to develop powerful, significant themes that directly impact the goals of the investigation.

4.6 Research Ethics Considerations

The entire research procedure was conducted with careful attention to ethical issues. All participants were asked for their informed consent, guaranteeing that they are aware of the study's objectives and their part in it. Participants were guaranteed secrecy and anonymity, and their data was protected. Also, their participation was voluntary, with the ability to leave at any time without consequences.

Every piece of information gathered was safely kept and utilised just for this research. The use of AI transcription tools presents the possibility of translation inaccuracies. However, they were addressed through manual verification. The small, intentionally selected sample emphasises depth over breadth, aligning with qualitative research traditions. The study provides detailed insights into the participants' decision-making processes based on their interactions with social media information, even though its qualitative approach restricts generalisability. By collecting information from interviews and content analysis, triangulation will help to reduce the subjectivity that comes with qualitative research.

Chapter 5 - Findings & Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive and theoretically informed analysis of the impact of social media on participants' travel decisions and experiences through the presentation and examination of qualitative results derived from their responses. It is plausible to assert that the insights offered by passengers, particularly from older and more experienced generations, trust levels, usage patterns, and interactions with digital travel content. Data enables us to make discoveries that are not possible with intuition or common sense (Bergin, 2018).

The research titled "Scrolling for Opportunities" examines how travellers interact with digital information along their decision-making process, from inspiration to post-trip sharing, and how these interactions provide marketing changes for destinations.

This chapter provides key themes that emerged from the analysis of the findings of this study:

- Social media platforms and travel behaviours
- Impact of content kinds on perceptions and decisions
- Stages of travel decision-making
- Generational disparities in involvement
- Comprehensive reflections of participants

Each subject is examined through participant quotations, linked to relevant ideas, and finishes with concise bullet-pointed summaries.

Analyzing attitudes and behaviors shaped by online information and social media through the lens of social media, social media has the most impact in the daily arena, changing the nature of social and travel relations (Haji, 2025). This includes travelers since they rely on social media like Instagram and Facebook to find places and plan activities. One may argue that these social networks provide travel information, however they may lead to shallow engagements and overly critical attitudes toward the travel destinations. This also stresses the need of marketers in the travel industry to strike a balance between actual portrayals and overly tempting representations to elicit satisfaction and trust in the travelers. As earlier discussed in the Appendices, the respondents in the study agree that the social media portrayal of travel destinations is often overly idealized, leaving the travelers disappointed.

Within this analysis, this chapter considers the outcomes connected with the literature review, together with the research query “How can the aspects and information shared from platforms be an opportunity for strategical marketing? What advertising content effectively influences travel decisions?” Here, the researcher looked into information collected from twelve travelers, examining visitors, ongoing visitors, or potential visitors to Dublin, and paying special attention to social media’s role in shaping and determining their local experiential perceptions and decisions.

The participants' identities were kept confidential, and the results are categorised by prominent themes that emerged from the data, including tourists' use of social media, content preferences, perceived authenticity, and the factors influencing their selections. Each theme is critically discussed about existing literature to extract useful information for destination marketers.

5.2 Demographic Data of Respondents

Participants were asked to complete a short set of questions consisting of demographic questions (Appendix 3). Age, gender, occupation. Also, questions about their relationship with technology and platforms were made. The questions were concise, voluntary, and aimed at ensuring participant comfort. This chapter presents the demographic profile of the participants.

All twelve subjects indicated everyday utilisation of social media channels. In this study, eight of the twelve participants were aged 25-34, while the remaining four were 55 or older. This suggests that, due to a reduced number of elderly participants, the sample predominantly consisted of younger individuals engaged on social media and typically adept with digital technology. However, a broader sample was made, bringing older participants and showing the way that they behave with the advancement of technology and social media in their daily lives. In total were 8 participants between 25-34 and 4 participants aged 55+.

Reflection is a collective that is active online and skilled in the use of social media strategies. The age information corresponds with the research that indicates older individuals are becoming more engaged on social media sites such as Facebook (Siguencia, 2025). It is important to consider the change in the social media use of older and younger audiences in relation to how marketing strategies in tourism should shift.

Demographics question provided insights into the reasons behind people coming to Dublin, how social media advertising content is viewed and used by digitally engaged travellers, which is the focus of this study. Most participants indicated that their presence in Dublin was for leisure. This corresponds with tourism trends recorded by Fáilte Ireland (2023), showing that family visits and leisure activities rank as key reasons for visiting Dublin.

An interesting finding was that every participant indicated using technology and social media daily, irrespective of their age. This shows that social media advertising reaches a diverse demographic, highlighting the importance of analysing their perceptions and interactions with destination content, a context essential for understanding the results. Also, participants of all ages engaged with technology, as smartphone ownership for those over 65 increased from 13% in 2014 to 53% in 2019 (Zahay et al., 2021), broadening the reach of social media advertising across different age demographics.

Table 1: Background of the Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Purpose of Visiting Dublin	Occupation	Use of Social Media	Use of Technology
Participant 1	25-34	Female	Visiting Friends	Professional Student	Daily	Daily
Participant 2	25-34	Female	Leisure	Professional	Daily	Daily
Participant 3	25-34	Male	Leisure	Professional	Daily	Daily
Participant 4	55+	Female	Visiting Family	Retired	Daily	Daily
Participant 5	25-34	Female	Leisure	Professional	Daily	Daily
Participant 6	25-34	Female	Visiting Family	Professional	Daily	Daily
Participant 7	25-34	Female	Leisure	Student	Daily	Daily
Participant 8	25-34	Female	Visiting Family	Professional Student	Daily	Daily
Participant 9	55+	Female	Visiting Family	Retired	Daily	Daily
Participant 10	25-34	Female	Visiting Friends	Professional	Daily	Daily
Participant 11	55+	Male	Visiting Family	Retired	Daily	Daily
Participant 12	55+	Female	Visiting Family	Retired	Daily	Daily

Table 1 illustrates the demographic and background attributes of the twelve participants included in this investigation. The age distribution reveals that four individuals are aged 55 years or older, while the majority, eight out of twelve, fall within the 25-34 age range.

Regarding gender, the sample predominantly consists of females, with three males and nine females participating.

Participants predominantly said that their principal motivations for going to Dublin were leisure or familial trips. More precisely, five participants came over for leisure activities, six were visiting their families, while one came to meet a friend. This shows a reasonable balance between leisure travellers and those visiting family or friends. Emphasising many factors that may affect the utilisation of technology and social media in travel. Of the participants, three were retirees, four were students, and five were employed professionals. Because the participants span different life stages, the analysis captures a variety of socioeconomic factors and their potential impact on technology use and travel behaviour.

Participants engaged with social media and technology daily, indicating that visitors to Dublin from various age groups interact with digital content. This underscores the extent to which social media influences travel decisions and the necessity to customise platforms and content for various age demographics.

As noted, Table 1 illustrates a sample which has similar technology use, but differs demographically. Given the high penetration rate of social media amongst different demographic groups, it is likely that destination marketing strategies that use social media are relevant across all visitor age, gender, or occupational groups. However, it is important to note the high proportion of females and the age group of 25 to 34 years as limitations when generalizing the findings to the larger tourist population.

5.3 Interview Responds

This chapter reports the outcomes and interpretations based on the interviews, as well as the findings that data analysis has yielded. To enable a thorough examination of the data, the findings have been synthesized into key themes. The guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews are found in Appendix 4. Thematic analysis provides a framework for the systematic identification of patterns and provides a robust answer to all key questions of the study. In this chapter, the primary focus is to examine the impact of social media on the image and the marketing strategies of the tourists, answering the research question and drawing on the findings of the literature review.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Exploring Social Media Platforms Use and Travel Habits

This chapter explored platform choices and usage habits. Individuals aged 25-34 engage actively on TikTok, and predominantly on Instagram, adopting short-form videos and reels for planning purposes. Instagram and TikTok were the most favoured applications for discovering travel-related content, particularly among users aged 25-34. Younger visitors turned to TikTok and Instagram for instant inspiration and visually rich encounters, which aligned with Wangqus (2024) emphasis on active, goal-oriented media consumption. Older travellers preferred YouTube for precise, structure material, confirming Ball-Rokeach and DeFleurs (1976) claim that reliance grows as users attempt to eliminate ambiguity and increase decision confidence.

The significance of visual content was highlighted by the group members, who used Instagram Reels and Stories for exploring Dublin's cafes, restaurants, and attractions. Participants 3 and 7 indicated that TikTok is a resource seldom endorsed on traditional travel websites. This corroborates the findings of Ulokok and Saygili (2024), who contended that user-generated content (UGC) significantly influences travel decisions among younger travellers. Instagram was described by Participant 4 as "easy to access" and Participant 6 said that "Instagram give more precise information". These comments show how easy and useful Instagram is for people who want to quickly learn about their location. TikTok was described by Participants 3, 6 and 7 as "quicker and practical". The author also said that Facebook is appealing to older users who express a preference for more informative content. It is important to mention that Participant 12, who is more than 55+, argued that Instagram is difficult to use for her, consequently, she preferred Facebook.

According to these results, to attract younger tourists, Dublin's local companies and destination marketers should concentrate on producing short-form videos and genuine video content that is designed for Instagram and TikTok. It is crucial to maintain an education and community-focused Facebook presence for the senior population.

The key insights and theme conclusions are:

- Instagram and TikTok are essential platforms for younger demographics, prioritize concise, genuine videos.
- Facebook and YouTube are favoured by older demographics, necessitating and emphasis on extended, informational material.
- Accessibility and usability significantly impact platform selection.

The findings support the argument made by Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) that visually focused platforms improve travellers' creation of an image of their location. Participant made a statement that "I trust content from people who are just like me, it feels more real". This study indicates that tourists prioritise content from other visitors above official pages, reflecting an increasing trust in peer reviews compared to brand-generated content.

These findings indicate that destination marketers and local businesses in Dublin should prioritise short videos and authentic video content tailored for Instagram and TikTok to effectively attract younger viewers. Establishing an educational, community-focused Facebook presence is crucial for engaging the elderly demographic and cultivating their trust. It indicated

that younger travellers desire rapid visual stimulation, but elderly travellers appreciate depth and familiarity.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Influence of Content Types on Tourists Perceptions and Choices

This section analyses how different types of social media content shape tourists' perceptions and choices, incorporating participant findings together with literature review to emphasize impacts on Dublin tourism marketing.

Participants regularly emphasised the impact of user-generated content (UGC), videos, and comments on shaping their viewpoints. A multitude of participants appreciated the succinct, visual insights provided by short-form videos on TikTok and Instagram Reels. As Participant 8 observed, "When I am looking for places to go, I love watching short reels. It shows me everything I need to know without wasting time." The third participant stated, "TikTok is quicker and more practical to check tips and see what is worth visiting". It aligns with Ulukok and Saygili (2024), who argued that short videos encourage unplanned interaction. Participants 11 and 12 (55 +) on the other hand, who supported Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that older generations prefer longer-form, informative content, preferred thorough YouTube videos.

Furthermore, the reliability of the remarks was found to be significant. As stated by participant 11, "I really enjoy read the comments because people will tell the truth about the information given." This corroborates the results of Ismail et al. (2023) and Aboalghanam et al. (2025), who noted that eWOM is impactful on the destination. Although influencers were discussed, a good number of the respondents were not supportive of their material, considering it too much of a business pitch.

For example, participant 8 showed an interesting reflection about it saying that normal people tend to say the truth and they the positive and negative side of the destination. This finding aligns with the research of Aboalghanam *et al.*, (2025), which posited that most participants found user-generated content (UGC) more engaging than influencer-generated material. Their findings indicate that authentic traveller-generated content, including narratives, reviews, images, and digital media, enhances perceptions of a location and elevates the desire to visit.

The key insights and theme conclusions are:

- Participants think that UGC is more reliable than stuff from influencers.
- Short movies make younger tourists want to interact with them right away.
- Older travellers feel better when they read longer, more thorough information.

- Comment sections are a very important way to create trust.

What emerges from the results reported here is that across all demographics, genuine traveller comments and content promote confidence.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Travel Decision-Making

In this section, examined how respondents use social media throughout their travel decisionmaking process, connecting results to literature, emphasising implications for tourism marketers, and examining everything from location selection to in-trip behaviours.

Respondents noted specific aspects related to social media use during travel journeys. Some participants reported using social media at every stage of the trip. As an illustration, Participant 7 mentioned that "I research a lot beforehand, during the trip I like to post so my friends can see, and afterwards I continue to post". This behaviour aligns with Huang *et al.* (2024), who demonstrate that younger visitors actively engage with digital information during their travels, conceptualising tourists as co-creators of destination experiences.

Conversely, participants aged 55 and older predominantly conducted research before travelling, employing YouTube and Facebook, and abstained from posting during their journeys to completely immerse themselves in the experience. This reflects Franco (2023) ideas who served that elderly tourists seek information security before making a commitment and spend more time in the phase of contemplation. Building in these findings, it is valuable to mention that Participant 3 indicated using social media to find local advice after making a reservation, which is consistent with Buhalis and Laws (2008) ideas and supported by Yin *et al.*, (2024) findings, said that travellers are still active information seekers after making a reservation.

The key insights and theme conclusions are:

- Younger travellers: a cycle of interaction that happens before, during and after.
- Older tourists focus on preparing and getting ready for their vacation.
- Even after making a reservation, social media is still useful for improving arrangements.

The chapters results show that younger travellers actively utilise social media throughout their journeys, whereas older travellers primarily interact with social media before their trips for information and reassurance. Individuals choose to disconnect during travel to concentrate on the experience, relying on extensive knowledge to guide their decisions.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Variations Across Generations in Social Media Engagement and Travel Preferences

This section explores the generational disparities observed in participants' social media utilisation and travel preferences. Integrating expertise with current research to highlight significant implications for destination marketing strategies.

This analysis revealed a distinct generational pattern from the data, individuals aged 25-34 utilised Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for travel preparation purposes. It demonstrated their preferences for short, visual, and authentic content, reflecting Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), on how social media impacts the daily decision-making process of digital natives. On the other hand, respondents aged 55+ used Facebook and YouTube and some of them do not have Instagram and any of them have TikTok.

In accordance with Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model, which proposes that older consumers utilise platforms they believe to be more convenient and helpful, they preferred in-depth YouTube videos to boost their confidence before travelling. Furthermore, older people favoured concluding judgements through agency or familial recommendations, perceiving social media as ancillary rather than principal, supporting Leung *et al.*, (2013) that older travellers integrate traditional channels alongside digital tools.

The key insights and theme conclusions are:

- Platform and content preferences are influenced by age.
- Younger tourists prioritise visual immediacy, whereas senior passengers value informational profundity.
- Destination marketing strategies must utilize dual content methodologies.

In conclusion, these results reveal that generational differences significantly influence travellers' decision-making processes, including their choice of social media platforms and preferred content types. Younger individuals rapidly and consistently make travel selections by distinctly preferring visually engaging and concise information from platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Conversely, older participants favoured more deliberate and cautious decision-making, often seeking additional validation from conventional sources prior to finalising their vacation plans.

5.3.5 Theme 5: Participants' Reflections

Several general findings emerged across all themes:

- Platform selection is based upon age: Instagram and TikTok appeal to younger tourists, while Facebook and YouTube attract older demographics.
- Authenticity fosters trust: User-generated content outperforms influencer product.
- Engagement phrases vary by age, although social media maintains influence throughout the whole trip duration.
- Excessively ideal content may lead to discontent, openness improves credibility.
- Dublin tourism marketers should use a multi-platform, authentic focused approach, utilising concise, genuine video content for younger demographics while preserving instructive, instructional material for older travellers.

In their overall reflections, respondents argued the positive and negative aspects of using social media for travel planning. Most of the participants pointed out how easy and accessible social media platforms are for finding real local experiences. For example, Participant 7 said something crucial for the development of the ideas of this study: "social media is in our lives to make things easier for us to avoid us making wrong decisions, and to give us all the information we need. So, it's necessary to use it responsibly and always check if what you are reading, seeing, or watching is true". It facilitates and makes it easier and quicker to explore.

Also, according to earlier research, social media provides rapid access to knowledge and ease, yet (Chan *et al.*, 2020). It also raises issues related to selective imagery, commercial bias, and misinformation (Fedeli, 2020). Consequently, it can be asserted that although participants perceive social media as a facilitator of informed decision-making, critical analysis and information triangulation remain essential to avert exaggerated expectations and potential dissatisfaction in travel experiences. It is true that using critical eye while analysing social media information is essential since it keeps travellers informed about its manufacture characteristics and commercial goals (Lan *et al.*, 2025).

Participants commonly reported that it is very important to collect information about the destination before going, especially about the culture and always respect the local culture and costumes.

The key insights and theme conclusions are:

- Social media serves as a powerful discovery instrument but necessitates a careful approach.
- Excessive romanticization may frustrate tourists.
- Authenticity and inspiration should be balanced in destination material.

These results suggest that social facilitates planning and encourages discovery, but to prevent disappointed, it must be critically evaluated.

5.4 Summary of the findings and analysis.

The presented chapter showed the answer of the participants in relation to the studies goals. Overall, it is clear to say that this study proves that YouTube was commended for offering thorough and specific information, which was seen to be perfect for people looking for an extensive understanding of places, restaurants, and useful advice such as must do or must to avoid in the destination. Participant 6 said, "I use YouTube for more complete content with more details". Longer videos on YouTube were chosen by several participants because they helped them "feel the mood" of a location. Instagram became the main source of short videos (reels) and trip inspiration. It was considered as being simpler to use and offered instant access to information, making it an essential tool for seeing "how trips went" and getting concise advice.

One of the younger participants, Participant 4, noted, "I use Instagram because it is easier to access the information. The platform just by thinking about something it already shows me exactly what I want. I mostly look for videos in Reels. The platform was described as more attractive and discerning by the youngers. Certain participants appreciated TikTok for its rapidity, impartiality, and capacity to deliver prompt, practical guidance. Their brief videos demonstrated considerable success in eliciting spontaneous engagement and achieving viral status. Older participants preferred to use Facebook (55+), specifically for in-depth posts and videos. Some of older participants they also do not have Instagram accounts or TikTok accounts.

The data revealed that social media has become indeed a crucial tool for information across both groups, there was agreement on collecting and decision-making at several phrases of travel. Pre-trip is the moment for researching and planning, During the trip some participants utilised social media to share their experiences in real life, however most of them preferred to

live the experience and private. Post-trip participants said that they use the platforms to share photos with friends and to maintain memories through posts and stories.

As a central focus, trust showed the strongest attention from participants who expressed a substantial focus on preferred trust sources. Travelers or common people were preferred over major influencers for trustworthiness, because unlike influencers, monetized content creates a facade, these narratives were not paid to showcase the best version. The results showed that while the content was assumed to be authentic, trusts like the comments were considered to be an authentic account since they were real persons who can confirm the reality and share firsthand knowledge.

This aligns with source effect, which posits that individuals are more inclined to trust user-generated content (Abdeladhim, 2025). Also, influencers were viewed with suspicion, especially if they only emphasised positive aspects. However, trust increased when they also talked about diverse events or when their content was seen as realistic. This is because it is commonly believed that influencer work involves saying "anything" for marketing purposes, which consequently develops suspicion.

Moreover, visual authenticity was significant as content depicting complete environments rather than merely appealing fragments or attractive corners was perceived as more genuine. On the other hand, photos that were unduly altered or appeared to be phoney created a lack of interest, which furthered the perception that the quality of the information and images was more essential than quantity of likes or comments.

Findings indicate that social media often creates unrealistic expectations by romanticising destinations and showing only "their best parts" with reality frequently diverging, as seen in experiences of Paris being less glamorous or cleaner than expected, reflecting the "herd mentality" effect. Factors contributing to disappointment included overcrowded or overly commercialised places, safety concerns, unexpected social issues such as visible homelessness in Dublin, and unresearched using "Portunhol" in Spain. Many participants believed that social media representations of Dublin matched its natural beauty, culture, and lively pub atmosphere despite these discrepancies.

Participants engaged with social media content through various methods, including liking methods, including liking and commenting to express interest and actively participate, sharing or sending content to friends' post-trips to convey personal experiences and photographs, and saving posts to organise information and establish travel folders for convenient reference.

Comments are particularly beneficial for requesting or disseminating comprehensive information. To preserve memories and share experiences, many produced tangible materials, including reels and images both during and after to their travels.

Tour agencies were viewed by participants as being too expensive and having unattractive digital advertising. They said that adopting more competitive pricing, improving digital marketing with interactive, real-world-reflective content, and collaborating with reliable content producers to successfully engage target audiences were among the main suggestions. To increase overall advertising impact and customer engagement, it was also recommended to prioritise short, realistic video content, keep traditional advertising for less digitally active segments, promote user-generated reviews to boost credibility, and combine digital empathy with UX research.

Findings revealed that younger generations use social media more intensively and intuitively for travel planning, while older generations are increasingly engaging with platforms for information gathering, favouring YouTube and Facebook despite finding Instagram more challenging to use. Participants also said that agencies should provide more educational content on Facebook for Olders and provide more visual, dynamic content on Instagram and TikTok for younger audiences.

Also, participants emphasised the importance of cultural respect and researching what "not to do" at a destination. It was thought to be crucial to comprehend local customs rather than imposing one's own cultural norms to prevent miscommunication or rude conduct. Cultural authenticity became a desirable feature, and Dublin's combination of the old and the new, pubs, and rich past were seen as authentic. However, overemphasising authenticity may lead to contrived or marketed encounters, which could compromise sincerity.

In conclusion, the findings indicated that social media is integral to the complete travel experience, encompassing preparation, inspiration, and post-trip sharing, with travellers prioritising authentic, trustworthy information from ordinary individuals over that of influencers. Although social media provides an abundance of information, it simultaneously fosters unrealistic expectations and unforeseen difficulties. These findings underscore the necessity for cost-effective, real, and focused digital advertising in tourism, utilising brief videos and authentic content providers while maintaining transparency and cultural sensitivity.

This chapter offers a critical analysis of the study findings concerning the aims, research questions, and existing literature. It goes beyond mere description to clarify the significance, relevance, and originality of the discoveries, including unexpected findings, while also considering their practical and theoretical implications, as well as limitations.

6.1 Main Contributions of the Study

This thesis makes four main contributions to the literature on social media and the tourism industry related to marketing.

1. It shows that there is a definite gap between generations when it comes to how they use social media and what various types of information they enjoy. Younger tourists tend to want brief, visually dynamic content, while older travellers tend to like lengthier, more descriptive forms.
2. It goes against the idea that advertising guided by influencers is always effective by showing that people of all ages trust User-Generated Content (UGC) more. They also prefer comments from real people.
3. It shows how important the social-cultural environment, particularly perceptions of safety and apparent homelessness, in establishing destination image, and demonstrates how social media both reinforces and contradicts these impressions.
4. It underlines travellers' increased cultural awareness, with participants actively seeking knowledge on local customs and courteous conduct, implying a need for culturally informed digital material.

These contributions are explored in depth below, along with references to relevant literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications for Destination Marketing. Organisations (DMOs).

6.2 Discussion of the key findings and Interpretation of Results

As mentioned in the literature review, social media has emerged as an essential element for influencing travellers' perception and decision making, especially in metropolitan areas such as Dublin. Numerous studies indicate that online content greatly impacts the image of a place.

As this research shows, the platform is used mostly for the appropriate purposes for each generation. Younger travelers, which are the travelers aged between 25 and 34, preferred short and visual content such as Reels and Stories, thus found TikTok and Instagram very effective. On the contrary, older travelers, especially those above 55, are usually looking for useful content which supports past research showing that this age group prefers using YouTube.

This research reinforces the idea perceived authenticity applies mainly to content created by users, suggesting that tourists ascribe higher value to reviews, videos, and comments compared to marketing by influencers. For the modern traveler, social media serves an emotional and informational function, where trustable advertising, sponsored content, and conventional advertising are out of the picture and user-generated content rules instead (Lama, 2024).

The results validate the original research objectives, showing that tourists are more swayed by genuine content produced by influencers. This aligns with Ayeh *et al.* (2013), who identified credibility as a crucial factor in the effectiveness of travel content. The first question in this study sought to explore how social media content and platform-specific affordances could serve as strategic tools within tourism advertising. The purpose of the sub questions were to establish the ranking of tourist attention acquisition platforms in relation to Dublin, including the ranking of their content value in decision making weight.

This research identifies differences across generations in the use of different platforms for different content. As an example, the 25 to 34 year old age group favours quick and visual content on Instagram and TikTok due to its motivational and inspirational value. On the other hand, participants 55 and older tend to utilise YouTube for information that is much more thorough and builds their confidence. A possible explanation for this might be the greater emphasis older tourists place on information security and cognitive reassurance before travel, prompting people to pursue thorough and organised content that facilitates intentional decisionmaking. This corresponds with prior research indicating that older customers exhibit greater risk aversion and favour content formats that provide depth and reliability, in contrast to the rapid, visually oriented media that attracts younger audiences.

As explained by Participant 1, the first impression of Dublin's social landscape revolved around the implications of homelessness. There is evidence that social ills, like homelessness, can

damage the reputation of a place, which might discourage travel to certain areas. They might associate social problems with safety and other related infrastructure factors, undermining a destination's appeal (Seo, et al., 2021). These perceptions can be amplified or lessened by social media. Although negative exposure can lead to greater concern, it also provides opportunities for advocacy or other efforts aimed at improving a place's reputation (Tham et al., 2020).

The findings validate Media Dependency Theory in the digital era and Wangqu's (2024) perspective on purposeful and active reliance. In order to satisfy their decision-making criteria, tourists deliberately selected platform-specific formats; unfiltered representations of problems like homelessness or safety have just as much of an impact on the perception of a location as promotional material.

A major concern mentioned was the view of Dublin as a safe place for individual female travellers. This is a significant aspect for numerous solo travelers. Studies indicate that women's travel choices are significantly shaped by the perceived safety of the city. Social media platforms influence perceptions by emphasising safety features or expressing concerns over potential risks (Otegui-Carles, *et al.*, 2022)

The most obvious findings were the essential function of user-generated content (UGC) comprising reviews, genuine videos, and comment threads, in establishing trust and shaping decision-making. The ability to explore and investigate places online is handy in planning trips, as it fuels excitement while also, in some way, informing a decision. Dublin-based marketers, as an example, need to adapt their practices. This is because as the focus group showed, their influencer content was viewed as less credible compared to peer content, unless influencers were candid about their agenda. This shows the need for culture-neutral multi-tiered marketing that focuses on brand trust, relevance, infused age-appropriate information, and narrow demographic data.

Another notable insight from the focus group results comes from the first glance idea. Culturally educated travellers were thought to be more attentive to the geography and sociology of the location they were about to visit. A number of participants stressed the need to observe the socially accepted protocols and behaviours, more so for Dublin, which is regarded as a refined destination. Today's tourists tend to be more educated and conscious of the region's history, language as well as the socio-political dynamics of the place they visit. As one of them suggested, the understanding of travel tourism should include the advantages and disadvantages of the visited, as social media should promote etiquette alongside tourism highlights.

This data goes against the previously held assumption that advertising through influencers is effective across the board (Hudson and Thal, 2013). The data reveal that the participants, particularly the 25-34 age group, are increasingly critical of polished content. Participant 8 remarked that “normal” folks convey both positive and negative things about the place, implying that such a perspective is helpful.

The perceptions can be further critically analysed within the framework of Digital Information Credibility Theory (Ismail *et al.*, 2023), which highlights the influence of perceived trustworthiness of digital sources on user engagement and decision-making. As for older participants, they leaned towards YouTube and Facebook due to the channels being structured and filled with information, providing them with the required depth and credibility information of importance. Younger participants were inclined to the visually appealing and more energetic YouTube and Instagram, supporting the engagement and immediacy focused Media Richness Theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986).

This distinction highlights an overarching shift in shifting online behaviour and how rapidly decisive action is needed is fulfilled by succinct and powerful content. While older models, and the Technology Acceptance Model Davis (1989) or the Uses and Gratifications Theory by Katz *et al.*, (1973), provide useful insight on motivation and platform choice, these shifts indicate that more recent shifts in digital behaviour require newer models. An understanding of classical and contemporary frameworks provides an explanation to scholars concerning not just the shifting and evolving user behaviour, but the social media constant ideas that persist during the contemporary era.

The findings further highlight a paradox relating to visual attractiveness. Short videos can capture interest and potentially become viral (Ulukok and Saygili, 2024). Participant 1 expressed scepticism about the large population of homeless individuals in Dublin on social media, which sharply contrasts with the idealised representation of cities typically seen online. This disparity, along with numerous other participants’ expressions of disillusionment, demonstrates the stark contrast between social media representation and reality.

6.3 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis offers several theoretical contributions. It builds on the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis 1989) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz *et al.*, 1973) by illustrating that platform selection not only considers ease of use but also the platforms’ fit for certain cognitive

tasks. It improved upon the Digital Information Credibility Theory (Ismail et al., 2023) by addressing the gap in trust across different age groups concerning User Generated and influencer content. In addition, the study uses Media Richness Theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986, updated by Lu et al., 2022) in the context of tourism, demonstrating how the richness of a given platform affects the audience's decision-making speed and subsequent actions.

Lastly, it undermines the core intent of Image Theory (Chon, 1990) by embedding sociocultural context, arguing that unfiltered and unedited images of a destination that expose the stark socio-economic realities can counter, as much as, promotional images influence the perspective of visitors.

6.4 Practical Implications

The results offer both practical importance and theoretical value to local tourism businesses and destination marketing organisations (DMOs). It is important to mention that user-generated content (UGC) has become increasingly significant, which in turn has drawn attention to influencer-focused strategies as a component of digital tourism, thereby expanding its literature. This substantiates Chon's (1990) destination image theory, which affirms imagery impacts any given visitation satisfaction afterwards. Advertising should involve direct engagement with visitors to the destination and display tangible promotional materials as they truly are, absent the exaggerated marketing or beautified images. Social media platforms serve as both reflections and enhancers of visitor incentives, mirroring cultural norms while influencing new expectations (Lama, 2024).

In this study, authenticity should always be at the core of the content strategies. As participants showed greater trust in authentic experience content compared to polished, influencer-style ads, tourism promotions should strive to market User-Generated Content (UGC) through hashtag initiatives and sharing traveller photos and reviews, as it builds trust and strengthens the emotional bond.

Marketing efforts should match the platform and age group. For instance, TikTok and Instagram for short videos for youth and Facebook and YouTube for comprehensive information for older travellers. Segmented strategies enhance engagement with distinct groups. Additionally, travel content must evoke emotions rather than solely provide information, highlighting authentic experiences, local atmosphere, and community engagement. Amplifying the likelihood that a post will be shared fosters organic growth. Offering ideas before the trip, engagement tools

during the trip, as well as follow up after the visit, keeps travelers engaged throughout the entire journey.

Businesses now require a more human and empathetic approach through a digital platform that fosters trust by engaging directly with users, showcasing user-generated content, and being attentive to their feedback.

This study has raised important insights, such as avoiding assuming that social media is beneficial or effective just for young individuals, as social media is connected to everyone, even older individuals. Older people are learning to use the technology, and this study showed that all ages rely on social media when it comes to tourism. However, it can go beyond it. To illustrate that, social media influences not only travel locations but also trip planning, expectations, and sharing after the trip. It also inspires and provides information, connects, as well as engages seniors, sharing reliable information which underlines the importance of tourism planning for all ages.

An example of this finding is targeting younger spectators with short, dynamic visuals on Instagram and TikTok, while addressing older viewers with more in-depth content on YouTube and Facebook. Another implication is equally balancing feedback, evaluations, and differing opinions when building trust and prioritising that aspect. This includes the marketing of usercreated content by means of hashtags, competitions, or through community sections. Operators and marketers should avoid unrealistic or heavily edited photos, as this may create false expectations and lower tourist satisfaction.

In conclusion, these recommendations are based on participants' pronounced preference for transparent and comprehensible information. Moreover, studies suggest that social media may promote sustainable tourism by informing visitors about local customs and acceptable behaviours, as highlighted by numerous participants who valued cultural context in their planning process.

6.5 Limitations

The methodological limitations of this study are numerous, impacting the generalisability of the findings presented. There are noteworthy insights that can be drawn from this study, but it is equally crucial to acknowledge the limitations. Perhaps the most critical limitation is that the sample specifically composed of four participants above the age of 55 is too far too small to

support the age-related generalisations. Future studies may employ a more representative sample strategy encompassing all age categories. These conclusions are questionable due to a lack of data sources. Integrating observational data or usage analytics to validate self-reports would strengthen these claims. This study did not account for differences in socio-economic status, education, or travel frequency, all of which are likely to influence social media usage behaviour. Although participants expressed their views, generalisability may be limited by sample size and cultural bias (Brazilian participants). However, these results are in line with what other researchers have found throughout the world, which makes them more credible.

In the future, it would be intriguing to investigate the long-term impacts of social media advertising on tourist loyalty and destination image retention, specifically concerning user-generated material created by users in contrast to sponsored content.

The research underscores meaningful region-specific impacts of social media networks on the behaviour of travellers, even with the limitations highlighted earlier in the research. The findings are of utmost importance for users of modern technology, social media, and an active segment of the population.

6.6 Recommendation for Future Research

In future research, it may be beneficial to include different countries for a comparison of cultural differences regarding social media use, conduct quantitative research with a bigger sample size to confirm these qualitative findings, and analyse the effects of certain types of user-generated content on satisfaction for users after visiting. It is anticipated that AI as well as virtual and augmented reality will enable more engagement through individualization, providing opportunities for user participation in pre-travel simulations.

To validate the identified generational patterns, further research should analyse quantitative and qualitative data in crossover comparison, along with studying the lasting effects of user-generated content as opposed to influencer content on loyalty to the promoted destinations.

6.7 Conclusion of the Discussion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that many travellers are using social media for inspiration as well as for information. Its contributions range from revealing generational gaps to focusing on authenticity and the socio-cultural aspects of life while suggesting practical tourism marketing and theoretical tourism marketing. There is a call for trust-based, multiplatform, culturally driven, and inclusive tourism marketing for varying groups of travellers.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

In this investigation, the goal was to examine the influence of social media advertising on tourists' views and decision-making, especially in Dublin. Drawing from two age groups, 25 to 34 and 55+, this study with twelve participants share qualitative insights on how user-generated content (UGC), short-form videos, and platform-specific content greatly influence travel decisions.

The findings suggested that visiting different places calls for experiencing and knowing the cultures and personal stories of the locals rather than depending on influencer-style marketing. Focus group members responded positively when provided with personal stories and experiences. This resulted in increased participation and interaction through the use of comments and personal videos and also through the use of social media.

The qualitative approach used in the study process revealed that it was possible to have a deeper understanding of visitors' attitudes, content choices, and platform use. The semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights across different ages regarding the most fundamental gaps around data needs and platform engagement. While older participants opted for Facebook and YouTube for more thorough information, younger participants sought inspiration and quick insights on Instagram and TikTok. This indicates the need for tailored approaches for platform-specific advertising. This generational divide shaped the study's most important conclusions and proved the reliance on tailored, audience-centric, segment-based strategies.

The research illustrates how entertainment is fused with the other operational activities through the use of digital materials by travelers. The content that users come across while scrolling their social feeds, especially through peer reviews and short clips, alters their perceptions of particular destinations and drives them to make certain travel plans. The emotional tone and the visual narrative also reshape the travelers' perceptions to a great extent. This study found that dynamic ads are less effective than static ads, evoking elements of discovery or relaxation through short videos. Beyond offering information, social platforms cultivate emotional relationships with prospective travelers.

This study offers significant insights, although its qualitative approach limits the applicability of the findings in all contexts. Future studies might combine different approaches to carry out experiments aimed at identifying which content types promote the greatest levels of engagement and trust. This research centres on Dublin, illustrating how various platforms and

authentic content influence travel decisions. User reviews substantiate that Facebook and YouTube are more effective for older travellers, while Instagram and TikTok appeal to younger ones through short, authentic posts.

Ultimately, social media is more than just a promotional tool; it is a collaborative platform that shapes the perceptions of tourists based on trust and authenticity. Digital strategies that match different generations' habits can boost customer satisfaction and make ads work better. So, this study showed that it can create great opportunities for marketers. However, this thesis also showed the need for inclusive content that builds trust in the current digital tourism landscape, where travellers are constantly scrolling for opportunities and direction for their upcoming adventures.

.Chapter 8 - References

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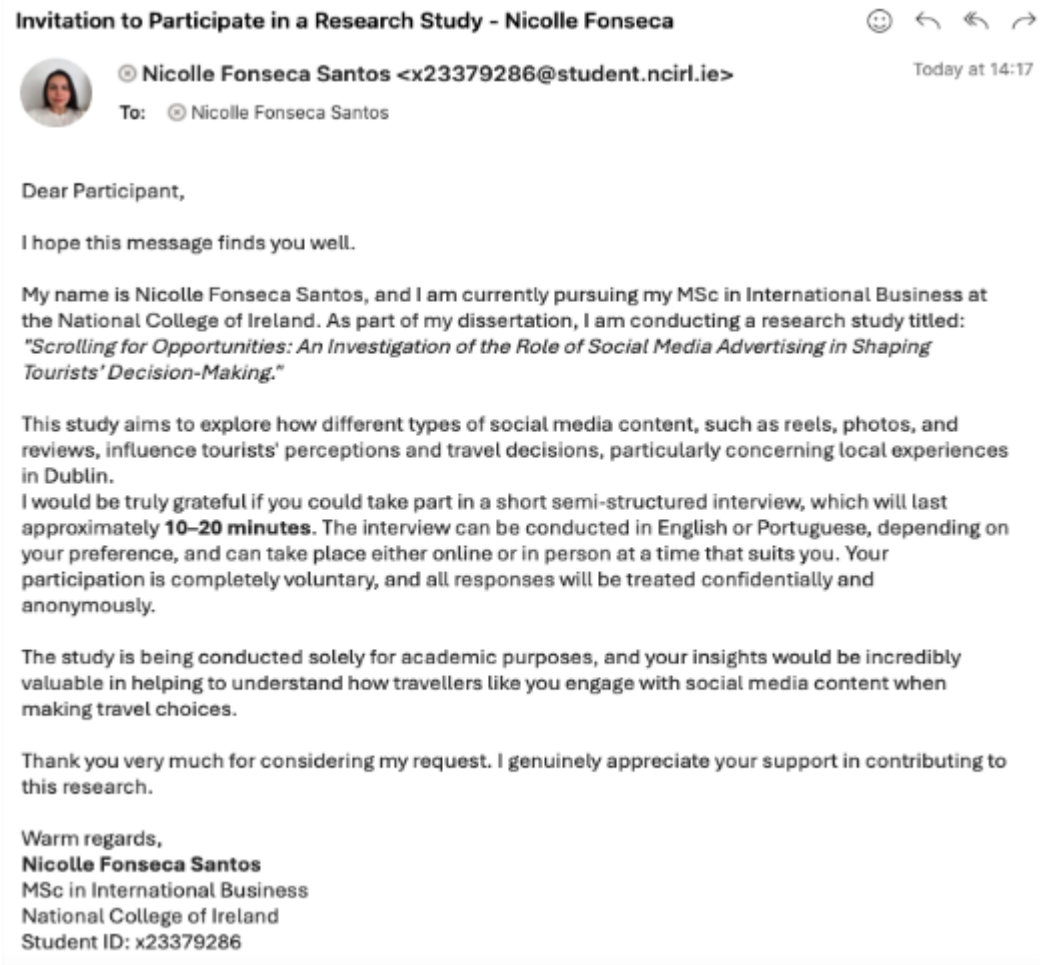
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Invitation Email



As part of the participant recruitment process, a formal invitation email was distributed to all prospective participants. The email explained the terms of participation, which included a semistructured interview that could be done online or in person for 10 or 20 minutes, depending on participants option. It emphasised the importance of privacy of all information gathered, the voluntary of participation, and the freedom to discontinue at any moment. Responses were requested from participants were interested in taking part. As shown in the image above, it provides the invitation email that was sent to all participants. It is an example sent to me for testing.

APPENDIX

2:

Interview

Script

Interview Script – Nicolle Fonseca Santos

National College of Ireland |

Scrolling for Opportunities: An Investigation of the Role of Social Media Advertising in Shaping Tourists' Decision-Making.

Exploring the impact of Social Media Platforms Perception and Travel Choice: A case study in Dublin

Hello, how are you today?

Firstly, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today! My name is Nicolle, and I'm a master's student at the National College of Ireland. I'm currently working on my dissertation, which explores how social media advertising influences people's travel decisions, especially when they're considering visiting Dublin.

This chat will take around 10 to 20 minutes. It's important to inform you that there are no right or wrong answers. I'm just interested in your honest thoughts and experiences. Everything you share will be kept private and anonymous. If you ever feel uncomfortable or want to skip a question, that's totally okay. And if you'd like to stop at any time, just let me know.

Our session will start with demographic questions, just to help me understand your background, and then move forward into the main questions about your social media habits and travel experiences.

Before we begin, do I have your permission to record this conversation? It's only for research purposes, and the recording will be kept securely.

APPENDIX

3:

Demographic

Question

Interview Questions for Participants

National College of Ireland

Scrolling for Opportunities: An Investigation of the Role of Social Media Advertising in Shaping Tourists' Decision-Making.

Exploring the impact of Social Media Platforms Perception and Travel Choice: A case study in Dublin

Demographic Questions

Age:

What is your age group?

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–55
- 55+

Gender:

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Purpose of Visit to Dublin:

What is the main reason for your visit to Dublin?

- Leisure
- Business
- Cultural exploration
- Visiting family
- Other: _____

Occupation:

What is your current occupation?

- Student
- Professional
- Entrepreneur
- Retired
- Other: _____

Use of social media:

How often do you use social media platforms?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Weekly
- Rarely
- Never

Use of Technology:

How often do you use digital devices (smartphones, laptops, tablets)?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Weekly
- Rarely
- Never

APPENDIX 4: Interview Questions for Participants

1. Which social media platforms do you use the most when thinking about travel? Why?
2. When you are thinking about going on a trip, do you usually check out social media to learn more about the place? What kind of content do you look for? For example, videos, travel trips, local tags, hashtags, stories?
3. Have you ever chosen to visit a destination primarily because of content you encountered on social media? If so, what specific aspects of that content influenced your decision?
4. Have you ever come across a post that made you want to go visit Dublin? What stood out to you the most?
5. Have you ever gone somewhere and found it was different from what you saw online? How did that feel?
6. Do you trust content more from influencers, regular users, or official tourism pages? Why?
7. What type of content makes you want to visit a place more?
8. What makes you think Dublin is an authentic or interesting destination based on what you see on social media?
9. When you are planning a trip, at what point do you usually turn to social media before you go, while you are there, or after you have come back? And how do you use it? Do you save posts, tag locations, post stories, watch reels, or something else?
10. Have you ever come across travel content that turned you off from visiting a place? Maybe too crowded, or the photos seemed overly edited?
11. Do you usually trust posts that have lots of comments, likes, or shares? Does that influence your decision?
12. If you've already been to Dublin, what matched (or didn't match) what you saw on social media?
13. Do you think people at your age use social media differently when planning trips? How so?
14. How do you normally engage with travel content online? Do you just scroll past and watch it, like it, comment on it, save it, share it, or just view it?
15. How do you think tourism companies could promote destinations better to people your age? What type of content catches your attention the most?

16. Is there anything else you would like to share about how social media affects the way you choose where to travel?