

# Impact of Social Media Influence on Domestic Camping Tourists' Motivation in an Island Country

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**Abstract:** 'Camping is not time spent but invested'. Camping one of the best forms of spending time out in the open and marveling at the wonders of this creation. When it comes to the best camping places in the world Sri Lanka stands on the top of the list. Sri Lanka is an island with a land which contains enormous places from the high mountain chains and large plains to beaches and lagoons, from wildlife safari points to dense forests. It is simply inconceivable how many spots in the ways of a camper's preference list this figure is irresistible. The purposes of this research are to determine how social media influence has an effect on the motivation of the domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research to examine the impact of content type, information quality, attractiveness, peer pressure, and content exposure to travel motivation. The participants were selected by employing cluster sampling technique, with 923 of them responding to the research by providing data both in form of text data through response to questionnaires and content analysis. The findings reveal positive and meaningful correlations between all the dimensions of social media influence and the travel motivation, with appealing visual images as well as peer pressure influencing travel motivation most prominently. They clearly demonstrate how social media affects tourism decisions especially where it is specialized like domestic camping. The present study gives important implications for Sri Lankan tourism marketers as it is revealed that excellent social media utilization, relevant and appealing content, and customer experience as seen in reviews may positively influence motivation towards travelling domestically.

**Keywords:** *Camping Tourism; Content Frequency and Exposure; Information Quality; Social Media Content; Tourists Behavior; Travel Motivation; Visual Appeal.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The tremendously fast development of social networks has a significant impact on the tourism industry as it has changed the behavior of people when choosing a traveling destination. Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are some of the common social media that play the role of passing information, inciting latent travelers, and influencing perceptions to people regarding destinations (Gretzel., 2017). In the context of camping tourism these are virtual selling platforms which provide aesthetic appealing depictions of specific places with emphasis on spectacular natural tourism experiences. Research further has indicated that social media posts in the form of user-generated content and that can be pegged as influencer marketing remains highly effective in inspiring travelers through appeals to their curiosity, desire, and call to adventure (Mirzaalian & Halpenny, 2021). Camping tourism as a subcategory of nature tourism has increasingly spread worldwide and in Sri Lanka since it pays

attention to the outdoor recreation and environmental conservation aspects. Biological and geographical characteristics in Sri Lanka include forest, beaches, and mountains that lend themselves well to camping. Advanced social media technology has allowed tourists promote their camping experiences to the larger community hence helping to guide fellow tourists on what they should consider doing or not doing by promoting the benefits or otherwise of the experience (Akilani & Wanniarachchi, 2023). This has become important for the domestic tourists since they mostly depend on information passed around through Social Media platforms in regard to their planned itineraries.

Interaction with service providers from potential tourists is also promoted by social media adding onto the impact of social media on travel motivation (Leung et al., 2013). Convenience from reviews also means that domestic tourist can quickly make decisions regarding camping destinations, facilities and activities. In addition to this, the posts that such

influencers post make camping seem trendy by presenting it as great, cheap way of going on a holiday rather than the conventional methods recommended by Zeng and Gerritsen (2014). However, the above characteristics have highlighted the increasing importance of social media influence analysis and called for more research on the motivation of domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka. This study, therefore, aims at filling this research gap by exploring the extent to which social media influences travel behaviour and motivates domestic camping lovers. Social media has become a norm in people's lives and has impacted consumers' behavior in the various Industries like the tourism industry. Three popular forms of social media that have risen to interact with visitors include Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (Gretzel., 2017). Thus, these outlets are efficient for international tourism promotion, but their influence on domestic tourism, especially camping, is not very well understood. Campsite tourism is preferred because it is locally available and because many such camping tours are in the natural settings and are affordable and sustainable. However, the motivational factors resulting from social media usage for this particular market in Sri Lanka has not gained the necessary comprehension (Akilani & Wanniarachchi, 2023).

Prior literature indicates social media plays a paramount role in the decision-making process of tourists through availability of information, stir of aspirations and perception alteration regarding destinations (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). The attractiveness of nature-related images and videos approved by friends in social networks is especially important for domestic camping tourists. However, there has been a dearth of research in understanding how such influences are developed into motivation and behavior related to domestic tourism among the Sri Lankan consumers. This gap is especially apparent in Sri Lanka because sites that are based on natural features and specially adapted for camping are more common but these are currently not being effectively marketed (Dias et al., 2024). In addition, the level of inter-connectivity that social media influencer's, user-generated content, online communities have in the promotion of domestic camping tourism in Sri Lanka is unknown. This knowledge is crucial to the formulation of specific strategies for marketing and improvement of domestic tourism. In view of this, this research seeks to explore the role of social media in influencing the motivational factors of domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka as well as provide marketers and tourism planning authorities with useful information on digital marketing and tourism planning and development.

➤ *The Following Objectives Guide this Study:*

- To examine the extent to which social media platforms influence the motivations of domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka
- To explore the role of social media influencers and user-generated content in shaping the perceptions and preferences of domestic camping tourists.
- To identify the key features of social media content that effectively promote domestic camping tourism in Sri Lanka

This study is important as it fits into the research gap of the effects of social media on domestic camping tourism in Sri Lanka which is still a relatively under-developed but promising sub-segment of the tourism economy. By exploring social media, influencers and user-generated content impact on travel motivations, the research offers useful information for the tourism marketing parties, including policymakers and other industry players. These findings can be used to improve the effectiveness of online advertising, encourage responsible tourism, and increase the domestic tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka through the exploration of its natural resources more effectively. Furthermore, the research could help to expand the theory of how technological networks affect specialized tourism segments, presenting recommendations applicable to other nations in the early stages of tourism development. Overall, the research reveals that using social media as a travel inspiration source increases the importance of understanding the nature of the role of social media in influencing the motivation of domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka. Therefore, through filling this gap, the study hope to offer practical recommendations regarding the use of social media for advertising domestic tourism and, consequently, for boosting its sustainability.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has shifted to play an important role in controlling behaviour of travelling, giving information and motivation of tourism in the world. This section presents a literature analysis of previous research on the use of social media in tourism with an emphasis on its impact on domestic camping tourists. The structure of the review includes the theoretical framework of social media influence, its effects on motivation of tourists, and influencers and UGC for promoting camping tourism.

### A. *Social Media's Impact on Tourist Motivation*

They maintain that social media use influences consumer behavior based on several theoretical models. Another common paradigm is the model of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), according to which, perceived ease of usage and perceived relevance defined how the participants utilize social media stages for travel planning (Davis, 1989). Kaplan and Haenlein (2014) postulated that expanding on TAM, social media is a highly engaging communication tool which intensifies user interactions and, therefore, can be a strong weapon in the sphere of decision making. For camping tourists, these sites, especially Instagram, are an excellent way of getting a feel of the destinations physically before making actual travel plans. Luo and Zhong (2015) reported on the Uses and Gratifications Theory asserting that users go to social media to satisfy anticipated needs for travel entertainment, information, and social interaction, all of which are sources of motivation to travel.

The findings suggest that social media play a profound role in tourism as they act as sources of inspiration and information for tourists. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) pointed out that beautiful pictures on social media evoke such

emotions as curiosity and desire – the factors that have substantial impact on travel intentions. As for domestic camping tourism, one can note that social media is a powerful incentive due to the opportunities to share photos and videos that convey picturesque views and extraordinary experiences. Similarly, in the Sri Lankan context Akilani and Wanniarachchi (2023) noted that social media proactively provides information to the domestic tourist about destinations and places that he or she may not know of. This is especially true for camping tourists who need rather specific data on particular locations and their accessibility along with available facilities. Moreover, Gretzel. (2017) pointed out that the real-time updates and the reviews that the potential traveler reads from other customers who have traveled before add credibility, which is likely to encourage a potential traveler further.

### *B. The Role of Social Media Influencers*

Social media influencers are primary to the behavior of the tourism kind and promote different destinations and tourist activities. The recommendations provided by influencers are perceived to be more credible than any promotional message enacted in a commercial advertisement (Mirzaalian et al., 2021). In camping tourism, influencers play a dual role: stylish presentations of spaces and being able to prove that camping can be fun and cheap. Guerreiro et al, (2019) did a study and found that tourist's perceived risk decreases by use of influencers content in unfamiliar places. This perhaps is felt most among domestic tourists given their ability to 'humanize' experiences through narrative. For example, Sri Lanka based camping influencers are likely to focus on best practices, which goes a long way in mitigating risks linked to outdoor travel. Likewise, Devendra (2024) pointed out that sustainable tourism corresponds with influencers' concerns with environmentally friendly choices; thus, they recommend tourists choose camping over accommodations.

### *C. User-Generated Content and Peer Influence and Challenges and Ethical Concern*

The concept of user generated content (UGC) has gain significance as an influence in deciding travel motivation. While influencer content is generally produced by influencers and other similar individuals, UGC is posted by the common user, and as such, makes the content more relatable. Yoo et al. (2024) noted that perceived peer-generated content (reviews, photos, and videos) creates trust among potential tourists. When it comes to camping tourism, UGC shares personal experiences, thus helping potential travelers decrease their risk and giving them reasons to go through with such a journey as well. Thus, the UGC that the Sri Lankan domestic tourists often turn to, for example, when in search of camping locations, include TripAdvisor and Facebook (Ratnayaka et al. 2024). Hiking photos and camping facility reviews that raise awareness on great viewpoints, secure camping places, and usable amenities are key motivators. Namely, researches of Chung and Koo (2015) proved that due to the comments sections and forums, these social media enable users to clear doubts as well as experiences in order to improve the motivation to travel.

Social media is an effective means of tourism promotion but it does not go without some troubles. While highly controlled content might set very high expectations, tourists may not be satisfied when they inevitably fail to meet these benchmarks (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). For camping tourists, this can mean a lot since reality does not always meet the anesthetized images posted on social media. Also, they point out that the increase in popularity of influencer marketing is questionable for its ethicality because of transparency. The opinion leaders may create awareness of certain destinations in order to make profits out of it, yet they might not reveal that they were sponsored. Other studies by Wu et al. (2025) had highlighted on the use of ethical behaviors in influencer marketing to retain the confidence of the audience out there.

### *D. Hypothesis Development*

#### *➤ H<sub>1</sub>: There is a Positive Relationship between Social Media Content Type and Travel Motivation*

Content type is essential in determining travel motivation as it exposes the audience to different forms of visual and written communication including image, videos and text. This choice and abundance, greatly determine the tourist attitudes and behavioral intents. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) stated that through integrated visuals and texts on such sites as Instagram and You Tube, the users are made to be eager to travel to new places. Sharing the actual life-stories and experiences make it more or less realistic and could actually appeal covered geography's camping enthusiasts, those who want to or planning to. In addition, Choi et al. (2022) discussed that the videos that present realistic activity and beautiful scenery elicit emotions that build the need to engage in the activity. Information like an elaborate timetable and other travel chart provides the element of utilitarian value in the sense that it assists the traveller in planning his trip. As a combination, these content types address the psychological and practical need that underlie travel motivation. Other findings also show that diversification of content supports the achievement of different format interests of target customers and increases audience interest, which in turn affects their decisions (Sigala, 2015). Hence, the convenience and range of social media content positively correlates with increased motivation for travel, particularly to specialized, locally-based pursuits such as domestic camping.

#### *➤ H<sub>2</sub>: There is a Positive Relationship between Information Quality and Travel Motivation*

There is a positive relationship between social media information shared and travel motivation due to the perceived trust and reliability and. Reliable, comprehensive, and timely information makes the targeted audiences have a favorable perception of the destination. In their study, Gretzel (2017) posit that information quality draws more clarity around decisions and minimizes uncertainty particularly to first-time campers. Kang and Schuett (2013) further proposed that information pertaining to safety measures and camping sites, as well as weather conditions would determine the willingness of tourists to plan camping. It must also be noted that social media platforms that offer reviews, ratings, and

first-hand experiences from users are particularly effective because they give the perception and feeling of authenticity that is a key driver. While, the low quality information creates perception errors and thus reduces the interest in camping. Further, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) opine that value relevance is achieved when content is properly structured and elaborated because it conforms to the informational demands of new age travelers and seems to make distant places more manageable and therefore more attractive. High-quality social media content therefore acts as a veritable weapon that helps to decrease the mental workload burden regarding planning to a certain extent enhancing the confidence of the tourists to engage in camping experiences.

➤ *H3: There is a Positive Relationship between Visual Appeal and Travel Motivation*

The aesthetics of the content posted on social media platforms are quite impactful on the motivation to travel, especially when it comes to the experiences, such as camping, where the look of the sites is crucial in marketing the location. This is real culprit in inciting the emotions and thus the desire to visit the respective destination through unique high quality photos or videos. In their study, Kim et al. (2020) ascertained that aesthetic visuals are a key cue that leads to the experience of wanderlust, thereby impacting traveling behaviours. Sites such as Instagram and Pinterest base themselves on the news feeds containing bright images, and the latter would be perfect for endorsing activities and locations that have not been extensively advertised, like camping. In Lin and Huang's study (2018), the proposition for consumption through images and videos makes the potential travelers to brainstorm about those settings, which enhances the motivation to travel. In camping, they are associated with beautiful views, the fire, and various activities related to being outdoors, which may give the psychological thrust on escape as well as stimulation the camping enterprise requires. Furthermore, Tussyadiah, (2020) state that, educationally creative posts positively affect user engagement and their ability to disseminate content, as many users tend to prefer eye-catching post over others. Therefore, the image posted on the social media generate travel motivation by invoking an emotional response and interest.

➤ *H4: There is a Positive Relationship between Peer Influence and Travel Motivation*

Teacher example through social media especially through influence resulting from trust and perceived similarity greatly affect travel motivation. The concepts of reviews, shared experiences, friendly advice building a credible image of buying experience, which seems to be attractive for potential consumers. The authors Zeng et al. (2024) argue that endorsements by friends through likes, comments, and shares results in confidence in the quality of the camping experience. Incorporation of social media influencers and the camping experiences expressed by peers serves to attach another layer of desire to the motivation aspect of travel. According to Kar et al., (2021), the reason is that people will be inclined to pay more attention to content from their friends and family than actual ads. In camping, peer reviews and testimonials that are given regarding safety

aspect, amenities, and previous encounter are highly helpful in mitigating risks and increasing confidence while planning. In addition, Wang et al. (2021) revealed the impact of peers reaches not only the decision-making stage but also the engagement stage because users' travel behavioral choices are particularly influenced by their core network on social media. Interactions with the peers create a relevant sense of commonality with the activity of camping to the extent that it makes camping appealing to those traveling within the domestic setting. Therefore, as trust, repeatability and community aspects of the program, peer influence plays an important role in motivating the target group.

➤ *H5: There is a Positive Relationship between Content Frequency and Exposure and Travel Motivation*

Travel related social media content frequency and exposure play key roles in travel motivation since the content ensures that clients are consistently engaged and reminded of traveling. Constant exposure makes the posts related to camping feel natural and brings about the probability, of interest as well as action. According to Gretzel (2017), constant presentation of content helps to remind and to correct people's memory concerning the camping destinations in case they plan their trip.

When it comes to domestic camping, every feed on social platforms such as Instagram and Facebook providing users with updates on camping promotional and user-generated content constantly keeps users aware of the activity's benefits. According to Zhu and Zhang (2021), positive impressions of the specific stimuli which are carried through exposure increase with time due to enhanced interest and motivation. Furthermore, through the same algorithmic features, social media outlets encourage user interaction and content sharing by presenting to the user content that they would be interested in as per their interests and activity on the respective sites (Huang et al., 2019). Due to the high frequency of the interaction with the camping-related posts, the corresponding motivation to further experience these phenomena is boosted because of the constantly positive conditioning. Hence, concerning the fact that people, who might be interested in travelling, start to lose their interest and do not engage in camping, the content's frequency and exposure are critical factors.

Existing research also stresses the influences of social media to change motivation and behaviour of tourists in the context that has major implications for domestic camping tourism in Sri Lanka. Instagram, together with Facebook and YouTube, serve as effective means of advertising, whilst influencers and UGC build credibility. However, issues like expectation raise and ethical issues need to be resolved in order to maximize on the social media in tourism.

This research aligns with the existing literature in that it addresses a gap in the literature focusing on the different antecedents that specifically understand the particular motivations of the domestic camping tourists and provides useful information to the stakeholders in the Sri Lanka tourism industry.



### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design and Sample

This research thus uses both qualitative and quantitative research to establish the impacts of social media on travel motivation of domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka. The use of both qualitative and quantitative research data collection and analysis is called mixed-method design and approach and offers a holistic perspective of the research issue at hand (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2017). In using content analysis and the questionnaire survey, the study embrace both the qualitative as well as the quantitative results. The purposive integration of quantitative and qualitative paradigms is especially appropriate for this research because they can uncover both the richness and variety of the connection between social media and travel motivation. Qualitative content analysis allows exploring textual and thematic patterns of social media content, and quantitative survey brings reliable estimates of the relationships between dimensions of social media and travel motivation. Combined, this makes certain that the study captures the whole picture of the relationship between social media influence and travel behaviour as suggested by Hussain et al. (2024). The number of domestic camping tourists in this study is 369 and was chosen based on the number selection table prepared by Morgan. In this context, simple random sampling was used to comprise different geographic and demographic areas of Sri Lankan camping tourists. This study included in-depth interviews with ten (10) respondents, whose responses yielded valuable qualitative data for analysis.

#### B. Variable Identification

This study identifies Social Media Influence as the independent variable (IV) and analyses it using five different perspectives. Content Type indicates the distribution of different types of social media posts, the photos, videos, and descriptions of the real-life camping experiences that define the level of user interaction. Information Quality relates to the consistency, credibility and relevance of the post and updates posted by the user which reflects the attitude and perceptions of the users. Visual appeal communicates the aesthetic interest of images and videos that makes a consumer feel excited and prompts travel motivation (Kim et al., 2020). Peer Influence captures the reliance on the content shared by other users in establishing trust and trigger the interest of users who are yet to travel (Cheung et al., 2022). Finally, there is Content Frequency and Exposure, which underlines how often travellers meet the published content and their readiness to interact with it (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). The dependent variable (DV) in this study is Travel Motivation that refers to psychological and practical causes that lead to tourist engagement in camping activities which reveals their latent behavior and choice.

#### C. Data Collection and Analysis

The data on this study were collected mainly from Social Media platforms; Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook using content analysis. Consequently, content analysis is a technique based on identification, quantification and subsequent interpretation of themes, patterns or narratives

within text or visuals (Neuendorf et al., 2017). Thus, this analysis centered on the evaluation of the preference dimensions on social media using the influence factors in order to understand how such factors as the appeal of graphics operated to affect the perception of users. The analysis of the posts and the subsequent coding and categorization of them shows more detail on how social media shapes the domestic tourists. In collecting quantitative data, the researcher utilized a structured questionnaire among the sampled 369 respondents. The questionnaire contained questions that addressed the five dimensions of social media within the travel motivation domain with responses measured on a Likert scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) and 5 (Strongly agree). The survey also had demographic questions that acted as covariates in the analyses employed in the study; these were age, income, and educational level.

Coding for content analysis was based on the conventional thematic analysis method to come up with themes based on common features about social media influence. This approach made it possible to understand how varying dimensions of social media impact the travel motivations of domestic camping tourists. The data collected was quantitative in nature and was analyzed using regression analysis in order to establish the extent to which social media influence was a factor in travel motivation. To explain respondent characteristics and general tendencies, descriptive statistics were applied, while, to understand the relationships between certain variables as causes, inferential statistics were used (Field, 2024). We have strictly adhered to the ethical standards right from the inception of this research. They were told about the purpose of the study, and their response was given an assurance that they would be anonymous. In content analysis, only the public posts were considered to take the interest of user's privacy into consideration. The research also got the participants' consent and permission to carry out the survey.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative research means that there is a rich understanding of the research problem alongside a psychometric approach to the same. The literature review in an empirical study like Dwivedi et al. (2021) has also highlighted the importance of employing mixed methods in understanding the effect of social media on consumer behaviour. In addition, simple random sampling increases the generalizability of the study as the results can be generalized to the range of camping tourists in Sri Lanka. Combining thematic content analysis with regression analysis allows the study to meet both the exploratory and explanatory objectives of the research. The current study is underpinned by this mixed-methods design where both qualitative and quantitative paradigms have been adopted to study the impact of social media on domestic camping tourists in Sri Lanka. Since the study examines the scope of social media influence discriminating its dimensions, it offers practical implications for tourism stakeholders. The population sample obtained from simple random sampling and the application of a structured questionnaire increases the generalizability of the results and content analysis which augments the understanding of social media's role in creating travel motivations.

#### IV. FINDINGS

Below is a hypothetical Table 1 for the demographic variables of your research sample (n = 923), showing the number of responses and their corresponding percentages for each category. The demographic distribution of the sample also shows the age distribution: 32.5% of the sample are 26–35 years old, 23% are 36–45 years old. Distribution of respondents by gender shows 51.5% of male and 48.5% of female respondents. According to the education level, the majority of participants have a bachelor's degree (40.7%), and 27.1% participated in a diploma program. The monthly income of most respondents falls between LKR 100,001–150,000 (29.8 %) whereas 27.1% of the respondents earn LKR 50,000–LKR100,000.

According to the occupation, 37.9% people are from private sector and 19% are students. Actually, majority of them has prior camping experience in Sri Lanka, (59.6% to be exact). In terms of social media usage, the most used platform for sharing camping experience and getting information on camping is Facebook and YouTube with 51.2% and 45.8% respectively. It indicates that Instagram is vital in the advancement and organization of camping activities of Sri Lankan tourists. This demographic profile enables the establishment to have important information on the sample characteristics and their preferences to help in explaining the effect of the social networks in the travel motivation of the sample.

Table 1 Demographic Factor Analysis

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	(%)
Age	18-25	200	21.7
	26-35	300	32.5
	36-45	212	23.0
	46-55	150	16.3
	56 above	61	6.5
Gender	Male	475	51.5
	Female	448	48.5
Educational Level	Secondary Edu.	126	13.6
	Diploma	250	27.1
	Undergraduate	375	40.7
	Postgraduate	172	18.7
Monthly Income (LKR)	0-50,000	175	19.0
	50,000-100,000	250	27.1
	100,001-150,000	275	29.8
	150,001-200,000	126	13.6
	200,000 +	97	10.5
Occupation	Student	175	19.0
	Employed (Pvt)	350	37.9
	Employed (Public)	200	21.7
	Self-employed	126	13.6
	Unemployed/Other	72	7.9
Travel Experience	Yes	550	59.6
	No	373	40.4
Social Media for Sharing	Facebook	472	51.2
	YouTube	250	27.1
	Instagram	201	21.7
Social Media for Gathering	Facebook	275	29.8
	YouTube	423	45.8
	Instagram	225	24.4

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Validity of the Responses

Variables	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Load	Cron. Alpha
Social Media Content Type (SMCT)	5	3.85	0.72	0.85	0.89
Information Quality (IQ)	5	3.92	0.68	0.88	0.91
Visual Appeal (VA)	5	4.10	0.65	0.89	0.90
Peer Influence (PI)	5	3.78	0.75	0.84	0.88
Content Frequency and Exposure (CFE)	5	3.95	0.69	0.86	0.89
Travel Motivation (TM)	8	4.02	0.62	0.91	0.93

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, and validity for all variables in this study. The variables include a series of items measured on a Likert scale. On the mean values, the findings show that the mean for the

Travel Motivation was 4.02 out of 5, implying fairly high levels of agreement among the respondents. The S.D. values indicate variability to the responses all of which falls within the moderate range for all the variables. Factor loading for

each variable were estimated between the values of 0.70 and 0.91 and were, thus, greater than the recommended values of at least 0.60 for construct validity of the measures. All Cronbach's alpha coefficients are above 0.70 indicating

exceptional internal consistency. Mean of Visual Appeal is slightly higher than that of Information Appeal indicating that aesthetic contents on social media greatly determines travel motivation of participants.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

		TM	SMCT	IQ	VA	PI	CFE
TM	Pear. Co.	1	0.651**	0.702**	0.723**	0.684**	0.715**
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
SMCT	Pear. Co.	0.651**	1	0.628**	0.587**	0.557**	0.606**
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
IQ	Pear. Co.	0.702**	0.628**	1	0.665**	0.611**	0.632**
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
VA	Pear. Co.	0.723**	0.587**	0.665**	1	0.598**	0.640**
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
PI	Pear. Co.	0.684**	0.557**	0.611**	0.598**	1	0.624**
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
CFE	Pear. Co.	0.715**	0.606**	0.632**	0.640**	0.624**	1
	Sig. Val.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between Travel Motivation (TM) and the dimensions of Social Media Influence: There are five key factors namely: Social Media Content Type (SMCT), Information Quality (IQ), Visual appeal (VA), Peer Influence (PI), and Content Frequency and Exposure (CFE). It shows that all the correlations are statistically significant at the 99% Confidence level since all the Sig. Value are less than 0.05. They have also established a marked positive relationship between TM and all the independent variables. Greatest absolute coefficient found between VA and TM ( $r = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ); proving the claim that social media aesthetic appeals significantly determines the extent to which traveller motivation is enhanced among the respondents. Based on the findings, Content Frequency and Exposure (CFE) has been established to have a significant correlation with TM ( $r = 0.715$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) to show how frequent and visible content is effective in promoting travel intentions. Other dimensions are also significantly positively related to TM; Information Quality (IQ) ( $r = 0.702$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), Peer Influence (PI) ( $r = 0.684$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) and Social Media Content Type (SMCT) ( $r = 0.651$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Hence, these results reinforce the fact that destination information, content created by users, and multiple content domains have motivational effects. The inter-correlations among the independent variables are moderately strong and significant with IQ having the highest correlation with VA ( $r = 0.665$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that beautiful content will more likely contain quality information on the social media platforms and therefore affect travel decisions. The minimum inter-correlation coefficient is observed between SMCT and PI at  $r = 0.557$ , which is statistically significant at  $< 0.01$  level of significance. In conclusion, all the hypothesis stated in the context of this study concerning the relationship between dimensions of social media and travel motivation are confirmed through positive correlation which opens up prospect for subsequent research picking up regression analysis to work up the potential of the dimensions identified.

This content analysis targeted sampling by narrowing down the sources of information to pages belonging to the

top-ranked influencers on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram and collecting data based on their pages, uploads, followers, and video/post views. The analysis findings will seek to establish the effect that different types of content have on travel motivational factors, using the independent variables of SMCT, IQ, VA, PI and CFE. In influencers within the social platform of YouTube, the identified channel, Dinesh A Pathum, has produced 260 uploads and accrued 162k follower base while garnering 13,591,889 cumulative views. Man Saranna is not far behind with 176 published videos and 256K subscribers, for a total of 17,670,748 views. Another impressive performance has been demonstrated by the The Sailor and Trip Pisso that gather a significant number of viewers (30,769,566 and 35,185,914 correspondingly). As for the media content type, most of the YouTube channels contain interesting and relevant non textual and visual content which are created with high picture quality and well-arranged with the intention to focus most on viewers' interests of camping and traveling activities. The content frequency is relatively high and the brands engaged are constantly posting content across these channels, thus they are always reminded of their followers. Due to these characteristics it is believed that the influencers will help boost travel motivation to the intended audience.

In Facebook, the three most active page today is Man Saranna with 181K followers and 10.5K likes, Solo Hiker with 212K followers and 3.2K likes and Dinesh A Pathum with 38K followers alongside 37K likes. Yes, they may have less number of uploads and followers than YouTube, these pages are still active, and manage to get attention with post views up to 314K for Trip Pisso. Most of the time, Facebook posts are in the form of text and image and video with varied aesthetic values. The content is generally informative and not as instructive as, for example, YouTube, and is more likely to rely on user testimonies inordinate form, such as utilizing experiences or suggestions. The frequency of posts is somewhat less compared to YouTube, but not to the extent that they are out of sight, infrequently. Instagram also remains active in having the accounts of Dinesh A Pathum and Man Saranna with posts 1019 and 668 respectively and

18K and 102K followers respectively. Largely, Instagram aims to share feeds, primarily photos and short, entertaining, and informative videos about camping or traveling. Since they have fewer and more engaged followers than YouTube and Facebook, the influencers place heavier reliance on the

visual element of their content to create travel interest. The post frequencies are irregular, nevertheless, regular updates are useful to continuously share content with followers, stimulating the motivation to travel by means of visually appealing posts.

Table 4 Top five (05) Social Media Travel pages in Sri Lanka

Social Media	Page	followers	Upload	Views
You tube	Trip Pisso	382K	152	35.1
	The Sailor	335K	287	30.7
	Man Saranna	256K	176	17.6
	Solo Hiker	165K	163	11.0
	Dinesh A Pathum	162K	260	13.5
Face book	Trip Pisso	314K		
	Solo Hiker	212K		
	Man Saranna	181K		
	The Sailor	63K		
	Dinesh A Pathum	38K		
Insta gram	Man Saranna	102K	668	
	The Sailor	71.2K	2,633	
	Ceylon campers	20K	8984	
	Dinesh A Pathum	18K	1,019	
	Solo Hiker	11.5K	273	

A content analysis also indicates that the different social media platforms serve different purposes in shaping travel motivation. YouTube has the highest level of engagement as facilitated by detailed and informative videos with high visual appeal, in addition to making content shareable across other platforms, as provided by Facebook for different content such as peer-influenced posts. Instagram is easy to engage as its focus is on the images and it assists in gaining traffic through attractive looking images. Each of the platforms shows careful balancing between the content posting frequency and availability, which is needed to sustain continuous communication with the audiences, and thus, it can be stated that the relation between content type, its posting frequency and, its visual appeal plays the significant role in travel motivation.

Concerning hypothesis testing of this study, the objective is to establish the direction and degrees of association between social media influence dimensions and travel motivation. Consequently, for hypothesis H1, the study finds a positive relationship between Social Media Content Type and Travel Motivation with Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.651\*\* ( $p < 0.000$ ) suggesting that the types of content shared includes images, video and textual posts affects travel motivation. This supports the proposition that diverse content can help to improve tourists' attention to the practice of camping. Concerning H2, the results on Information Quality are clear and significant, as travel motivation is directly related to the Information Quality of the content published on social media (correlation = 0.702\*\*,  $p < 0.000$ ). This underscores the role that quality information in affecting travel behaviour. The case of H3 revealed that Visual Appeal has a significant and positive relationship SG Travel Motivation = 0.723\*\*,  $p < 0.000$  which supports the call for attractive and aesthetically appealing contents that could trigger an Tourism emotional appeal to travel. H4 also state that there is a significant positive relationship between

Peer Influence and travel motivation (Correlation = 0.684\*\*,  $p < 0.05$ ) This implies that Peer influence through reviews and shared experiences has a great impact on the level of trust and interest of potential travellers' or campers. Last, it is shown that there is a positive relationship between Content Frequency and Exposure with the travel motive where correlation is 0.715\*\* significant at  $p < 0.000$  level which shows that more the post frequency and post exposure more are the chances to stuck to travel content Motive is therefore enhanced. The findings of the hypothesis testing while supporting the argument affirmatively enhance the argument that influence through these dimensions of social media has a positive increased motivation of the targets towards camping activities.

#### A. Content Analysis

The findings shown the representation varied usage pattern among the travelers in search of camping information through Social Media in Sri Lanka. Instagram and YouTube are the main sources of daily inspiration among the frequent travelers and nomads using social media influencers as well as vloggers. Regarding the choice of sources, occasional travelers and low-budget ones mostly trust Facebook groups and YouTube to get tips, compare prices, and see recommendations, while travelers who look for adventures use brief and inspiring TikTok and Instagram. While family tourists use youtube and facebook mostly for tourist amenities and safety reasons, individual travelers and those who are sensitive to the environment use instagram and narrow forum to find quiet any ecological places. The former rarely use it actively and used only for weather and itinerary tips, while the latter use all the platforms for research and interacting with the audiences. In summary, social media proves useful for discovery, validation, or functional purposes depending on individual travel preferences and reflecting platform preferences corresponding with travel style. The results revealed how various forms of material



shared on social media platforms affect travel motivations to the campsite in Sri Lanka. The excellent photo and drone will attract the audience of frequent travelers or luxury camping and caravanning lovers, while the blog and vlog with detailed information on the area and cost will attract an audience of rational travelers and tourists who plan their trips in advance and try to save their money. Those planning an adventurous trip are interested in short dynamic videos regarding exciting activities while those planning a family trip are more interested in safety and comfort messages. Wildlife and nature lovers as well as basically anyone who is concerned with environment and social causes have a focus on animal sightings and sustainability related content and lastly, cultural travelers are here for experiencing the true cultural environments. For instance, budget travelers are excited to see single travelers in a camp, while photographers enjoy beautiful photographs of solo camping and glamor campers are interested in glamorous camping photos. The sum up of the responses prove that social media content has many objectives which are to provide basic trip-planning information along with generating an emotional bond and desire with the traveller and last but not the least, social media content does not appeal to all, each traveler segment targets and responds to different type of content in consonance with their requirement and plan of travel.

The responses also show that there is high value placed on social media information while planning for a camping trip depending on the travel classification. Concerning information utilization, safety and safety aware campers as well as individuals traveling alone or with families cherish the accuracy of the safety information and details of the facilities while budget wish to ensure cost related information developed from the sales and service process whereas wildlife enthusiasts cherish the environmental conditions. Greater significance to superior comfort facilities denotes the luxury traveler while environmentalism depicts the conscientious camper. In regards to credibility, respondents choose user-generated content more often than posts of influencers, tend to enjoy real, unadulterated material - but there are those who believe that influencers who freely show both the perks and the drawbacks of sponsorship are credible as well. Some travelers use coping mechanisms such as seeking for another source or seeking for a different kind of texts. The collective responses indicate that, although social media plays a significant role throughout the planning process, travellers are selective about the quality and authenticity of the information they seek depending on their concerns. The responses have shown how the use of pictures on the social media elicits strong motivational response towards camping sites. Stunning imagery, especially, aerial, scenic and atmospherical shots makes people feel an instant emotional connection and evoking a desire to travel, depending on the type of a traveler. Tourists are eager to explore new and spectacular views, extreme enthusiasts find themselves in dramatic territories, and those who value natural environments have an opportunity to experience untouched and wild territories. While the luxury traveler will focus on beautiful locations that allow them to feel comfortable, the family-oriented traveler seeks a beautiful area that will not adversely affect the safety of its members,

and the budget-minded traveler simply wants beautiful places that they can afford. Most of the respondents could remember specific posts that made them want to travel at that moment, and therefore, good graphics create impulse buying. Notably, visuals are not merely motivational – they help determine safety (for lone campers), sustainability measures (for environment-focused visitors), and family-friendliness. These responses together clearly indicate that visual content is often the first and first point of contact that quality reassures viewers and turns them into travelers.

This is evident in the responses whereby friends' opinions influenced the camping decisions as seen in social media. Hence, the appeal stemmed from friends and family or fellow travelers and their real life experience give a good reason for visiting those destinations; various types of travelers may respond to different elements of these posts. Tourists who have always dream of the thrills associated with adventure tourism are motivated by beautiful scenery, while those with their families are interested in the accessibility to child-friendly facilities, while travelers that are single are more likely to be interested in other recommendations given by the fellow travelers. The responses prove that word-of-mouth opinions are more credible than ads because they are real-life examples of someone's spending, conscious environmental changes, or even a relatively shared happy story of successful camping trip. Some of the respondents were able to point out actual concrete cases where a single post in the social media platform influenced their actual planning or preparation of trips, which shows just how strong the word-of-mouth could be in influencing travel. Thus, significant trust can be placed in peer reviews due to the candid approach to both positive and negative experiences, which enables travelers to make informed decisions concerning the preferences, be it luxury or budget traveling. And from the responses it has been evidenced that exposure to camping content on social media multiple times increases the travel motivation of the visitors. Recruitment posts, on the other hand, has several roles, including keeping frequent campsite-goers engaged and helping occasional campers gather the initial enthusiasm along with the information, which may be a concern for any traveler, whether it is safety or cost. One traveler segment is attracted to images of nature, another segment – to family-friendly places, and yet another segment notices glamping posts. Some of them pointed out that consistent exposure has a "keeping up" factor, where seeing the experiences of others makes a person feel like they also need to plan such a trip. The reactions particularly underline how more frequent exposure to camping destinations in Sri Lanka increases its appreciation and desire irrespective of the occasion such as scenery, novelty or utilitarian value. It grows the awareness of camping and turned mere interest into concrete travelling plans, which demonstrates how the use of algorithms on the social media platforms work to influence travel motivation with continuous presentations.

As the open-ended questions show, social media influencers are influential in generating ideas and inspiring camping trips in Sri Lanka chiefly due to their capacity to highlight lesser-known attractions and giving

recommendations. It is not surprising to find that travelers are more keen on following local businesses with real-life experiences (@SriLankaExplorers, @NatureLanka) than professional pictures with post-production effects; many of the respondents noted that they follow local influencers for equipment recommendations and guidance on locations to explore. Three factors are crucial in determining the trust followers placed in their influencers, namely, the disclosure of both the advantages and drawbacks of particular camping places, regular and accurate sharing of information, and authenticity in building relationships with followers. They especially do not believe in overly promoted material or celebs they think are insensitive to the sponsors than being sensitive to the brand. These findings suggest that the role of influencers is to lure through aesthetic images of Sri Lanka's terrains and also to warn that makes the traveler feel prepared. Instagram eco-tourism influencers (EcoSriLanka) get more trust resulting from practicing environmentally friendly policy as a result of increased environmental sensitivity in travelers. Finally, it has been identified that the videos which contain both glamour appeal and reliable and realistic tips and information positively affect the motivation to travel.

The findings thus suggest that there is a disconnection between information placed on the social media about camping destinations and what the travellers encountered since many of them expressed disappointment. Some admit that it can be when authors are sharing both sides, many complain about the unrealistic nature of most posts. Some of the common vices are failure to capture real-life constraints such as big crowds, unfavorable weather, lack of amenities, portraying situations that are much more luxurious than they really are, and most especially, info-washing of photos with technology. Such a selective perception results in disappointment when the visitors do not find the environment as they expect it to be, few amenities such as water and fireplace, overcrowded campsite. Some of the respondents pointed out that they start doubting the recommendations given by social media because they went through the experience of such disparities and some of them changed a strategy of choosing a trip by trying to find more extensive reviews. The responses raise an important ethical dilemma, which is whether content creators should present places in the most favorable light possible, or whether they should inform their audiences in a manner that will allow them to anticipate the realities of a destination. The responsibility of giving true and balanced content like the positive and negative points of traveling also enhances the satisfaction level of those influencers, which prove that travelers do not always go for the perfect shot.

According to the responses received, social media has worked tremendous on changing perspectives of camping to make it look attractive, achievable, and versatile in terms of travel experience. There are many respondents who stated that it was curated content that attracted their attention by awesome pictures of nature novelty travel adventures, but several respondents also say they became more conscious of the realities and effects of camping through social media. Regarding perceptions surrounding the responsible practice

of sustainable tourism, the respondents felt that social media serves as an effective method for teaching about sustainable engagement in various areas such as Leave No Trace, avoiding littering, and supporting eco-friendly campsites. This suggests that respondents are interested in influencers and content that provide both motivation and tips on how they can avoid negative impacts towards the environment. However, certain answers indicate concerns about the positive glamorization of Camping amid negative implication of social media in contributing to the same. In summary, the gathered information proves that social media is acting as an idealization of camping as an experience in the wilderness while simultaneously providing potential lessons in sustainability when viewed through a specific lens.

Credible evidence of the interrelated nature establishing social media's role in influencing the perception of camping tourism in Sri Lanka is obtained from the content analysis. Despite the beauty and adventurous stories these platforms like Instagram promote travel, often with focus on fun, beautiful and inspiring visuals, they tend to give little or no consideration to the difficulties that may be encountered during the process. Some of the respondents believe that the focus should be placed on the authenticity of the content and juvenile motifs, but with realistic surroundings. Social network becomes one of the ways to change the world for the better, and numerous environmentalists promote responsible camping. But this raises questions of over-commercialization or even what may be termed as somehow galvanizing content that may distort the perception of traveler. The given results can be discussed as the potential of social media for raising awareness about environmental conservation although there is a risk of its artificiality. People need reliable tips rather than just ideas because they are looking for credible information while travelling.

### *B. Hypothesis Testing*

#### *➤ H1: There is a Positive Relationship between Social Media Content Type and Travel Motivation.*

Clarifying the study's hypothesis, the Pearson correlation analysis established a correlation of 0.651 which is statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ , between SMCT and TM. This is in consonance with the earlier findings where visually appealing social media applications such as Instagram and YouTube influenced the traveling more often while the Facebook groups offered concrete physically ways of doing camping cheaply. Young and active people preferred dynamic TikTok/Reels content from traveling, while environmental tourists were more interested in sustainable posts. The high positive correlation indicated that it confirms the hypothesis that travel intent is increased by content types of visual, informational or community driven contents that are somehow specialized. However, it can be seen that the correlation is moderate and demonstrates that the content type only partially influences the overall picture of motivation, while the other factors such as individual choice of traveling and the degree of trust in the sources matter as well.

➤ *H2: There is a Positive Relationship between Information Quality and Travel Motivation.*

The present data analysis reveals that high-quality information (IQ) does improve travel motivation (TM) with a correlation of 0.702 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Pertaining to decision making, other crucial aspects that respondents felt were constructive to safety included sufficient details on the safety features of the cars, affordability and environmental factors which helped minimize perceived risks. On this account, the qualitative data indicated that passengers do not believe fake exaggerated information given by influencers but they believe genuine honest endorsements in form of personal experiences or detailed blogs or vlogs covering both advantages and disadvantages. What this implies is that IQ is an important component in as far as the development of credibility is concerned. Based on the results obtained in the present study, it is possible to claim that Information reliability is more important than the Content format. However, in the light of the ethical considerations noted earlier, the match between the glamorous depictions of social media constructed in the research with real life is somehow balanced, which suggest that quality needs to have an element of realism to keep people motivated.

➤ *H3: There is a Positive Relationship between Visual Appeal and Travel Motivation*

The most significant positive relationship is established between visual appeal (VA) and travel motivation (TM) with correlation coefficient of 0.723,  $p < 0.01$  showing that aesthetics have a significant influence on the motivation to undertake camping trips. Packaging aerial, scenic or atmospheric videos seemed to instantly create a relationship, especially with the instant engagement of adventure and luxury traveller. The interviews reaffirmed that visuals resulted in the advent of impulsive travel planning though there was an element of disappointment due to the circumstances of matching improper visuals with what was actually witnessed on the ground. The strength of this relationship means that visuals are the primary mode of appeal to the destination while the appeal is further enhanced when accompanied by practical considerations (safety or access indicators for the disabled). This ambiguity serves to strengthen the centrality of VA in making travel a motivation while at the same time signifying its dependency on the two other variables.

➤ *H4: There is a Positive Relationship between Peer Influence and Travel Motivation*

The obtained index indicates that there is positive relationship between peer influence (PI) and travel motivation (TM) equal 0.684 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Some of the respondents reported that they have been influenced by friends' status or family members' incident to plan for a trip as they trust word of mouth than paid ads. Other variables such as self-esteem, social comparison and social identity reduction supported the qualitative theme "social proof" in that trust was higher when peers focusing on both the positive and the negative aspects of a subject. However, the slightly less enhanced correlation compared to VA or IQ brings about the notion that even though PI has the impact, it possess a condition of skepticism based on certain encounters

with distorted content. To overcome such issues, there is often the saying that the ripple effect of peer recommendations that highlight their effectiveness in niche segments like the family travelers or the eco-campers mean a consistent effort.

➤ *H5: There is a Positive Relationship between Content Frequency and Exposure and Travel Motivation.*

The coefficient of 0.715 ( $t = 6.06$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) demonstrates that FCE increases TM, thus answering the first research question. Algorithm-enabled constant presence ensured continual engagement, and refresher posts specifically for uncomplicated normalcy of camping as a type of travel accommodation where people who do not travel frequently or travelers in general can book. An analysis of the qualitative data brought out the 'FOMO' factor, whereby reiteration on the now popular places created impulse travelling. However, consistent with the ethical concerns identified above, more curation without substantial information erodes trust gradually. The strong positive relationship suggests that more frequency leads to increased motivation but its effectiveness is a function of perceived credibility and realism to avoid outrage over what was falsely hyped about them.

This kind of effects—rather aesthetics capture attention, and substantiated messages maintain course—provided a complex environment in which content, on the one hand, has to be inspiring and, on the other hand, practical. As stated in hypothesis four and hypothesis five, peer influence and frequency increase the likelihood of imitation, but their effectiveness depends on trust, which is likely to be damaged by sensationalism. These should encourage a maintainable approach to the social media use that focuses on the factors that equally contribute to motivation towards promotion of travel.

## V. DISCUSSION

Sri Lanka's social media trend is still on the rise, thereby posing various impacts on research on consumers' behavior, communicational tactics, and market encroachment. According to Statista, as of January 2024 Sri Lanka has 7.50 million active social media user identities, 34.2% of total population 60.8% of total internet users. And while Facebook retains its influence as the most heavily targeted platform, the ad reach on it stands at 34.2% of population, followed steadily by YouTube at 33%. Relatively, Instagram recorded smaller ad reach at 8 % of the total population with the most improved figure by 25% from the previous year. The demographic breakdown reveals a concerning gender divide, as the number of male users is significantly higher on both Facebook and Instagram, making up 61.5% and 60.1% respectively. This data is very useful in terms of mapping population's digital activity, which is fundamental for evaluating trends and preferences, especially in such areas as tourism, where social media is highly influential when it comes to choosing a destination (Datareportal, 2024).

The following figure 1, represents the statistical breakout of social media usage in Sri Lanka by the year 2024 in terms of number of users in millions and as a percentage of the population. The following figure represents the statistical breakout of social media usage in Sri Lanka by the year 2024 in terms of number of users in millions and as a percentage of the population.

Figure 2, below presents the Sri Lanka Tourism Map that reveals the most visited campsites by the locals as found in the content analysis. General features on the map include district, roads, forests, and natural attractions that are worth exploring on this island. Some of the significant outdoor camping locations are Yala National Park camping, Horton plains camping, Udawalawa camping and many other usual camping grounds. Namunukula, Nuckels Mountain, Alagalla

are the popular mountain area for those looking for fun and peace, for the campsites options Ella Rock View Point and Devil's Staircase gives thrilling experience. Places like Hiriketiya Beach, Kalpitiya Beach, and Panama Beach are interesting locations for the beach camping.

Both Idalgashinna and Wangedigala Campsites are located in the middle of greenery and are perfect for a nature filled vacation. There is also cultural and historical aspect as such the Chariot Path and Madulsima Cave enhance dimension to the camping. Such sites are found within different districts and the accessibility to sites is well-connected through roads. All together these places form the land of multiple types of interests, so camping in Sri Lanka is a versatile and informative pastime for domestic tourists.

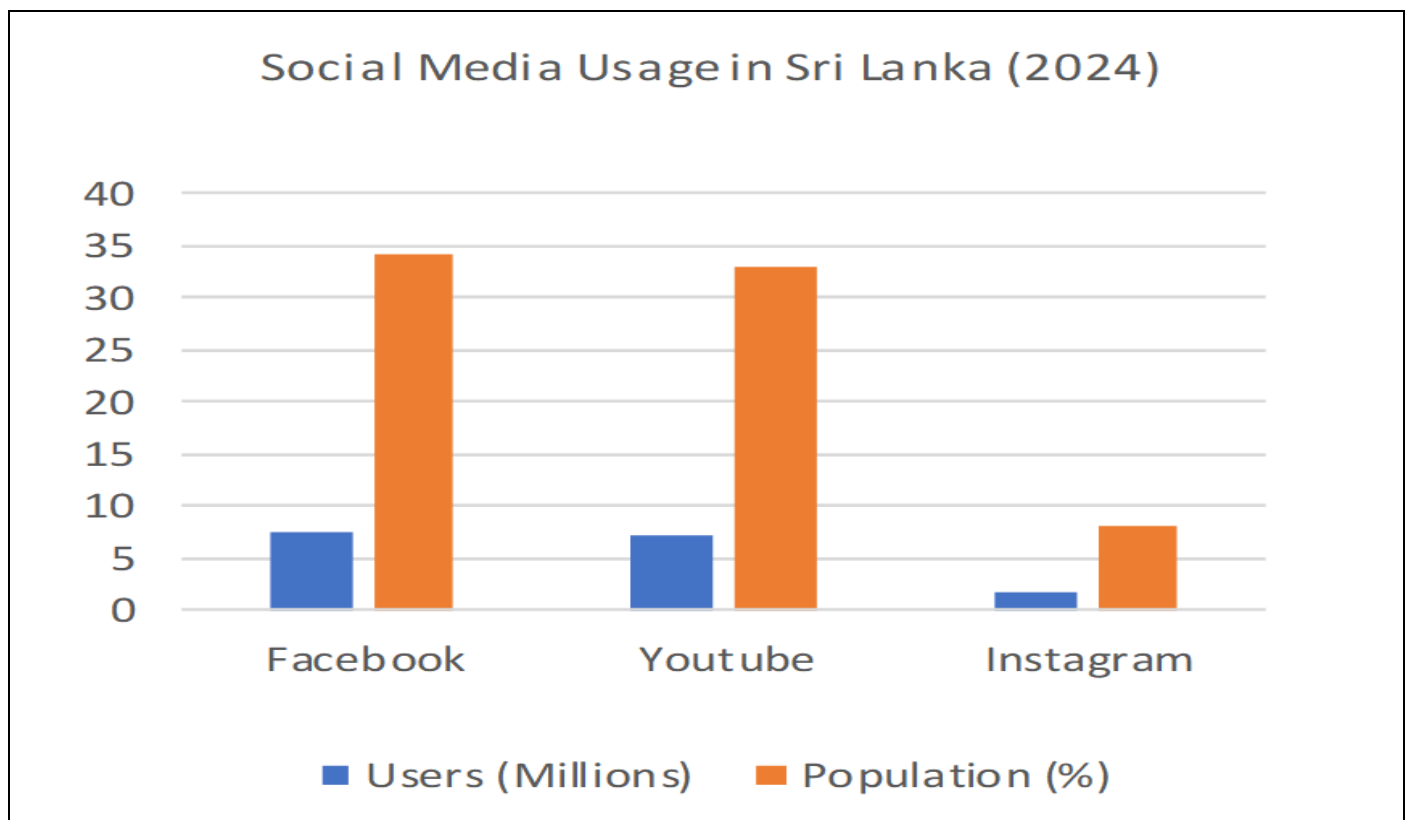


Fig 1 Social Media Usage 2024

Source: Statista (2024)





Fig 2 Sri Lanka Tourist Map

#### *A. Social Media Usage for Travel and Camping Information in Sri Lanka*

Social media platforms have therefore emerged as important source of information to the travelers, especially when it comes to specific area of interest such as camping in Sri Lanka. Moving on, the participants' responses provide information regarding the frequency of usage, the platforms they use, and the planning behavior of the participants accordingly to what has previously been discussed in the body of knowledge about travel and tourism. Time and again research has documented the impact of social media on travel since it plays a role of providing vision, updating and word-of-mouth publicity (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

From these responses, it has emerged that the traveling audience follows platforms such as Instagram and YouTube for daily motivation, which supports previous studies that point out that visually displayed media intensifies destination attraction (Mariani et al., 2016). On the other hand, casual users and those who are preoccupied with cost aspects find Facebook groups and YouTube to be most beneficial in searching for practical and cost-oriented information, this relates to the aspects of user generated content (UGC) in the development of trust and perceived risks (Ayeh et al., 2013). This simply means that the kind of social media used depends with the need to be met, for instance, Instagram and YouTube for visuals and experiences while Facebook as a community platform for advice. This is consistent with previous studies suggesting that given this picture-oriented platform of sharing (Instagram), it is suitable for destination marketing than Facebook in which peer-to-peer built-in groups (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Young adventure travelers and tech-savvy travelers also use TikTok and, to some extent, Reddit to plan their trips, highlighting the significance of short-form videos and specific online boards in this process (Abidin, 2021). This understanding is in agreement with the existing research that has established the significance of personal and detailed reviews in the context of the process of choosing accommodations (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier 2009).

When it comes to camping trips, users follow an elaborate process that entails; discovery (when they use hashtags and influencers' recommendations), validation (when they watch vlogs and read reviews), and orientation (where they assess factors such as the weather, safety, and costs). This is in line with the inspiration-research-booking model recognised in digital travel planning as noted by Gretzel (2017). The customers such as families and those doing sustainable trip and tourism for instance, they seek safety and environmentally friendly facilities which in totality show the change in attitude among the traveller towards ethical tourism (Han et al., 2018). This shows the platform is more inclined to disseminating real-time information from the social media platform rather than the conventional website, mes communicate dynamic content (Mkono et al., 2017). These results support previous research regarding social media's ability to alter travel behaviour, as well as current niches like TikTok in micro-content and Reddit and Facebook groups in crowdsourced advice.

#### *B. Social Media Content Types and their Influence on Travel Motivation*

The responses reveal the types of social media contents that influence travelers to visit camping sites in Sri Lanka, thus supporting the existing literature regarding the use of digital media in tourism. Based on this, high-quality photos and photos taken from drone have a significant impact on the frequent travelers and luxury campers as argued by Mariani et al., (2016) on the effects of visual appeal including visual cues in the attractiveness of the destination. There is evidence regarding the effectiveness of dynamic and action-related clips insisting on adventure and youth travel motivation which explains why short-form videos such as, Reels or TikTok attract adventure seekers and young travellers. In contrast, data-concerned and scientific-traveler-related factors involve more feature intenders and possible genuine vacation bloggers and Vloggers with informative values (e.g., costs or routes), reflecting that utilitarian values have a significant role in mitigating uncertainty and assisting in the decision-making process (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Travel inspiration that is linked to activities is also a key genre; people may plan a trip with particular activities in mind such as hiking, animal sightings, cultural events or performances, etc. For instance, it is evident that nature lovers as well as wildlife photographers or anyone with a focus on posts related to wildlife and plant and animal species are motivated to engage in biodiversity-oriented posts as highlighted by literature on the trends of experience and experiential travel (Han, Hswang, & Kim, 2019). Family travelers and members who prioritise safety in camps rely on posts carrying descriptions of activity such as campfire, group hiking, meals, among others in making decisions regarding suitability, thus the importance of social proof and relatability (Ayeh et al., 2013). Concerning solo-centered travel, the objects with a desire to get a gourmet glamping or a solitary tent relate to the notion that social media promotes self-branding and identity-based travel motivations (Mkono et al., 2017). Particularly, local stories or environmentally friendly practices are more appealing to the eco- and culture-oriented tourists in the framework of the change of the tourism values for the ethical and authentic one, (Hudson and Thal, 2013). Altogether this indicates that the different content in the social media reflects the multi-faceted traveler and where the visual and experience stimuli play a big part in inspiring the traveler while the informational and community aspect helps in actual planning. It could be inferred that content type did moderate traveler motivation therefore it is essential to create use of digital marketing strategies in tourism.

#### *C. Information Quality and Trustworthiness in Social Media Travel Content*

The findings support the hypothesis that the quality of obtained information and its source are critical to camping destination choices, which is in line with prior studies on online travel planning. Such detailed and accurate information about safety and environmental conditions of places is critical, and the study also established that high quality of informational content has a positive effect on perceived risks and travel intentions of an individual (Xiang



& Gretzel, 2010). While, budget travelers and family campers have practical concerns such as costs and child-friendliness which are in accordance with the use of social media to fulfill specific needs' theory by Ayeh et al. (2013), on the other hand, eco-travelers are more conscious about sustainability accreditation, similar to the niche content theory through Han et al. (2018). Perceived authenticity of UGC over influencer posts was a common theme partly supporting the findings indicating that peer reviews are considered more authentic than sponsored personal ones because they are non-commercial (Mkono et al., 2017). However, influencers who acted transparent (e.g., mentioning they were paid by certain brands, discussing some negative aspects) were considered trustworthy, thus supporting the researches, who pointed out the significance of parasocial authenticity in influencer marketing. Another source of gaining information was to check for more information from reliable sources through cross-referencing, which was especially evident more often with the more careful travellers; this is in equally a confirmation with the findings regarding the-sharing of travel information (Gretzel., 2017). All these findings together show that social media is a crucial source of information and travellers use several strategies to cope with credibility issues with information quality being a major factor in the destination choice.

#### *D. Visual Appeal's Influence on Travel Motivation*

The responses show that beautiful pictures relevant to social media and beautiful pictures, videos, and drone shots contribute to increasing the desire of tourists, especially those interested in camping locations. Specifically, dynamic visuals such as time lapse photographs/videos of the sunset can easily influence frequent travelers or the adventurers since such images lead to the feeling of the flow state and are related to an increase in the desire for travel (Mariani et al., 2016). Tourists who are interested in nature and environmental conservation also depict the environment which needs to be conserved while undertaking tourism activities, due to the increase in the demand for sustainability (Han et al., 2018). Concern to beauty of the site is associated by Luxury traveler and Family camper with comfort and safety as suggested by theories that claim that visual eliminates perceived risks (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). However, the two groups of spontaneous travelers and occasional campers mentioned that their travelling decisions could be made impulsively due to one single memorable picture, or visual cue (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2010). Another platform-based concern relates to the use of Reels, vlogs, amongst others in presenting destination realities because visuals that regularly users create, are considered to be more credible than those filtered by influencers, for instance (Mkono et al., 2017). Altogether, these insights underscore that inspiration is much more than the provision of information and ideas; it furnishes proof to bolster expectations and allay Doubts to enhance camper travel consideration speed across various segments.

#### *E. Peer Influence on Travel Motivation*

It can also be noted that the results have confirmed the influence of word of mouth information on travelers as far as camping locations in Sri Lanka are concerned. There is also

the recurring idea that individuals felt compelled to visit a particular destination, having heard or witnessed their friends, family members or fellow travelers discuss positive experiences from similar trips. This is in concordance with the social proof theory which postulates that when choosing a destination, individuals follow other people's actions as a means of coping with uncertainty (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). The study shows that each traveler type perceives and values peer content differently and only focuses on specific aspects: adventure seekers are reasonable by beautiful pictures and videos, families care about child-friendly offerings, and sustainability travelers need information about sustainability (Mkono et al., 2017). To their credit, there was a way, respondents rated a friend's suggestion higher compared to commercial information, confirming research in the user-generated content credibility in travel planning (Ayeh et al., 2013). The responses also explained how one sharer can bring in parties from his social networks to the destination resulting to a domino effect in the popularity of destinations (Gretzel, 2017). This peer influence is especially true for the first-time or the hesitant campers who are encouraged to go on traveling after seeing the people like themselves having good time, thus, highlighting the role of relevance for travel motivation (Han et al., 2018).

#### *F. Content Frequency and Exposure's Effect on Travel Motivation*

Thus, the results indicate that forced contact with camping-related information on the Internet strongly increases travel motivation through several psychological factors. This way, regular posts sustain check-frequency and first impressions that are crucial in achievement of the mere exposure effect in tourism promotion (Zajonc, 1968). There is increased desire among nature lovers and adventures by use of figures that depict scenes, supporting attention restoration theory stating that natural scenes promote travel motivation. The study shows that content frequency has various purposes for various travelers, including understanding that content is affordable for budget-conscious users (Xiang et al., 2015), perceiving that the destination is safe for solo travelers (Chen et al., 2021), and that camping as a family is normal to do (Ladhari et al., 2020). Notably, the FOMO effect is particularly apparent among casual travelers for which the content posted by friends exerts pressure to join (Li et al., 2022). For content creators, the more they are exposed, the more they get that professional FOMO going and the more they have the coverage of the destinations. The cumulative of all these indicate that algorithmic content distribution on the social platforms give camping content a self-feeding cycle through increased visibility of Sri Lankan camping contents boosts the interest in visitation across the various tourist customer type. This underlines the importance of continuous constant public figure-head through positive posts to keep the destination as the popular preference among travelers in saturated markets.

#### *G. Social Media Influencers' Impact on Travel Motivation*

The responses presuppose that social media influencers play an important role in constructing the camping destinations of Sri Lanka due to authentic narrative and visual economy predominant in social media feeds. Travelers

also consider influencers as a guide to new and unconventional destinations which is seen in @NatureLanka and @AdventureCeylon and dealing with useful information like gears and time travel. This concurs with the literacy that micro influencers are perceived to be most suitable for niche travel and tourism markets due to their credibility of influence (Abidin, 2021). There are certain influences on trust - again, respondents agreed with the fact that they like influencers to be truthful, providing information about sponsorship, providing both positive and negative views and some useful advice which are also postulated in the earlier study on building parasocial relationships in travel-related contexts by Bowden (2022). For instance, members such as @EcoSriLanka have credibility because they embrace sustainable travel that is seen to be becoming increasingly significant in the ethical tourism context (Han et al., 2018). However, there is doubt about the overreliance on such content as it is recognized as mixed with the help of money, and this is proven in the “commercial authenticity” theory of influencer marketing by Audrezet et al. (2020). Research indicates that while influencers act as inspirers through the visuals they present and as encouragers through the practical information they provide, the best results are achieved when a post’s content has both attractiveness to the eyes and utility (Mariani et al., 2019).

#### *H. Ethical Concerns and Expectations*

These concerns indicate an expectation of a false outcome of social media posts about camping destinations with only a handful of participants finding inconsistencies between the content that was posted on social media and their actual experiences. Some travelers criticized that influencers and peers tend to mislead their followers or peers about the attractiveness of specific camping areas since they hardly provide accurate information about the difficulties that campers are also likely to encounter such as encountering many people, poor amenities, and unfavorable weather conditions as spotted by Mkono (2019) where he mentioned concepts such as “Instagram versus reality” in tourism. It implies that there is selective information presented, thus, when a person visits such a place, he or she will be disappointed and that destroys trust in the influencer recommendations (Bowden, 2022). Respondents expressed particularly expressed dissatisfaction on the level of information disclosed on accessibility and environmental challenges specifically a growing ethical concern on sustainability in camping sites (Han et al., 2018). However, those who noticed that they were also getting balanced information from the influencers offering the pros and cons said they were happier, further backing up the study that notes that authenticity and disclosure improve source credibility (Audrezet et al., 2020). They state that there is a need for more ethical content production that is both beautiful and informative to lessen the chances of damaging reputations through negative word-of-mouth from frustrated visitors (Mariani et al., 2019).

#### *I. Social Media’s Impact on Camping Perceptions and Sustainable Tourism*

The responses clearly reveal that social media has changed the perception about camping as one of the travel

forms from something that is challenging to something more inviting, diverse and mainstream. Some of the common remarks made by the respondents were that the advertisements they viewed on the platforms such as Instagram contributed to their first impressions of camping as a visually appealing and exciting activity (Mariani et al., 2019). Yet, this has also set the expectation for a quite unrealistic, or even unrealistic, experience that is far from the realities of traveling, as some of the experiences posting on social media leave out all tangible difficulties that one may encounter (Mkono, 2019). Concerning sustainability, the respondents perceived social media as a very useful platform in highlighting sustainable camping practices within Sri Lanka. They stressed that advocacy through such features is useful in the dissemination of best eco-friendly practices including the Leave No Trace principles, waste minimization, and campsite sustainability, echoing the literature on the use of social media for sustainable tourism communication (Han et al., 2018). The responses especially pointed out that material shared by the influencers and recommendations from friends can help travelers understand the need for environmental conservation during camping, but several pointed out that this value can be rarely leveraged to the core given the focus on glamour and substance, which is according to Djafarova and Bowden (2022). Thus, the inspiring and educational functions of social media demonstrate the great opportunities for improving the responsible camping tourism taking into consideration the creating of programmes with the combination of beautiful views and local environmental issues (Xiang et al., 2017).

Credible evidence of the interrelated nature establishing social media’s role in influencing the perception of camping tourism in Sri Lanka is obtained from the content analysis. While other platforms serve to create this desire to travel in the most exotic locales by presenting captivating visuals and adventurous tales there is always some essential hitch missing, for example, the hard and rigorous aspects of traveling. According to the responses, consumers prefer genuine, medium-photographic content depicting the surrounding scenery and the reality. Social network becomes one of the ways to change the world for the better, and numerous environmentalists promote responsible camping. But this raise questions of over-commercialization or even what may be termed as somehow galvanizing content that may distort the perception of traveler. The given results can be discussed as the potential of social media for raising awareness about environmental conservation although there is a risk of its artificiality. People need reliable tips rather than just ideas because they are looking for credible information while travelling.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Based on these findings, this research proposes that social media plays a substantial role in the motivation towards travel, specifically in the context of domestic camping tourism in Sri Lanka and across multiple dimensions including the type of content shared, the quality of information presented, the aesthetics of the presented content, the influence of friends and followers, and frequency



of posts. The study has provided evidence to support the view that posts in social media draws on positive features such as interesting images, videos and reviews when targeting potential travelers to boost motivation in engaging in camping activities. The robust positive correlations demonstrated between these variables speak to the extent of the quality and appealing aesthetics of content in the prediction of travel intentions. In addition, peer influence arising from user generated content and reviews, and the replay frequency of travel posts were determined to have influence on travel motivation. The presented findings thus have practical implications for marketers and tourism boards that plan to market domestic camping experiences. For a search user to get to the desired destination there is need to address potential tourists, this calls for content marketing that provides equally in quality and variety social site such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Moreover, supporting the production of the content from users and reviews also can enhance the level of trust and relevant destinations in the sphere of camping. The tourism stakeholders should also ensure that their content should be frequently seen and available to log the awareness of the potential tourists. Besides, the findings of this study not only extend knowledge on social media's impact on motivation to travel in the linked context, but also offer prescriptive suggestions for tourism marketers in Sri Lanka and other comparative destinations. Future research could more systematically focus on the impact of different forms of social media or analyse the effects of social media driven motivation more on the long-term actual travelling behavior. Overall, this study validates, the importance of social media in today's travel decisions and going further underlining its capability to propel tourism, and in particular, this niche area of domestic camping.

#### A. Implications

##### ➤ *Government (Laws, Rules, Regulations, and Policies):*

The high level of social media usage in Sri Lanka raises the question of effective implementation of regulatory measures to address the issues. The government could also come up with policies that some certain forms of ethical and responsible disseminating of information particularly in matters regarding marketing of tourism. Measures directed at ensuring that the information posted on the social media is genuine may help prevent tourists from being influenced by false information. Besides, the government should work closely with social media companies to improve digital technologies, provide support for digital access initiatives and initiatives to promote the country's tourism sector to attract foreign visitors.

##### ➤ *Corporations (Social Media Platforms):*

Social media and Sri Lankan companies need to wake up and adopt the increasing usage and the changing profile of the consumers. Such sites as Facebook and YouTube that currently take a large share of the market can team up with local tourism offices to sort over geotargeted advertising material. Based on the findings of this research, organizations within the tourism sector should ensure that they interact with the users of the platform with an aim of designing travel experiences that will be personalized based on targeted

marketing. Moreover, there are benefits of incorporating AI in the analytics to get more information concerning the travelers which will help the corporations in customizing their services.

##### ➤ *Travelers' Advice:*

Twitter is found to be the most important source of information that travelers rely on to determine their travel plans, mode of travel, and even the hotels they will stay in during their travel. However, to fully realise these opportunities, visitors should critically analyze the information on social networks even distinguishing between the posts from other users and credible resources. Current travel advisories can for instance utilize social media as a tool to get real-time advisories on safety, culture and the physical environment. This can be enhanced by allowing other tourists to post authentic experiences and reviews that would complement the content for other travelers in the future.

##### ➤ *Other Stakeholders:*

Other interested parties including local traders, non-governmental organizations and government bodies as well as international organizations can also get information from trends in the social media. Local entrepreneurs can promote unknown products and services through the web-based communities, which can strengthen local tourism. Universities and research center can use the information gathered from social media to predict new travel patterns and social changes. While the above are benefits that Lankan applicants derive, international agencies can capitalize on these platforms in spreading messages on sustainable tourism practices in Sri Lanka. Extending these implications exemplifies how and where social media has an impact revealing its importance as a vital force in contemporary tourism and related industries.

## VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

There are several weaknesses that have been established in this study hence the findings should be interpreted based on the following: Firstly, the target population is restricted to 369 participants in the Sri Lankan domestic camping tourists. Self-collected data could also be bias; respondents may not always present their true travel intent or practice accurately. Further, the study mainly revolves around the concept of social media with regards to travel motivation aside from self-interests, micro and macro economic factors and environmental factors that might also affect the travel motivation. The above-mentioned limitations can be reduced in future studies by a sheer increase in the sample size and including the participants from the other part of the country. Future studies could also look at other antecedent variables like off-line promotions, or the socio-culture variable, and determine the trends in an extensive period beyond the time-frame adopted in the current study on the impact of social media on actual travel behaviour. Finally, the cross-sectional comparisons between different segments of the tourism industry could offer further understanding of heterogeneity of the impact of social media on travel motivation.

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