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SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISM PROMOTION: THE CASE OF TRAVEL MARKETERS FACEBOOK FAN PAGES AFTER NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

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Abstract. *Purpose* – the purpose of this research is to systematically understand the behavioral and emotional aspects of potential tourists and investigated the conceptual model in the context of the travel marketers' (TMs) facebook fan pages.

Research methodology **–** the present study performed the two-step SEM approach suggested. the first step involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which was used to validate scales for the measurement of specific constructs proposed in a research model and SEM followed.

Findings – the supportive part of the conceptual framework studied how the cognitive (information source, social interaction ties, design characteristics) and effective (entertainment) factors influenced attitudes.

Research limitations – the key limitation of this topic may belong to the propensity of the sample to embody the population. This also has a certain influence on SEM exploration.

Practical implications – this study provides important guidelines for fan pages' designers and marketers in the tourism sector especially during the time of destination image crisis.

Originality/Value – this research was the earliest to relate the prototype willingness model on travel and tourism Facebook fan pages. In a sense, this research offers a basis for acclimating the prototype willingness model to the touristry social media setting.

Keywords: facebook, Nepal, tourism, earthquake, travel marketers, destinations, social media.

JEL Classification: M31, M37, M39.

Conference topic: Digitalization of Business Processes: Trends, Challenges, Solutions.

Introduction

Nepal was shattered by 7.8 magnitudes Richter scale of the earthquake on 25th of April 2015, This tragic event resulted in a tourism crisis, harming Nepal's tourism infrastructure, public image and, consequently, its ability to attract tourists and visitors. It is, therefore, necessary to highlight the use of social media for destination image promotion.

Tourist bureaus in some nation-state have seized the benefit of the functions of Facebook fan page as it can enrich the popularity of destinations and appeal potential travelers' attention. Communication via fan pages is a technique to build up the association among fans and the travel sector, as well as a valuable asset to convey brand value (Amaro, Duarte, & Henriques, 2016). Emotional and personal storytelling is a powerful technology for socializing and creating influence for travel and philanthropic tourism (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017). In order to better understand the use of social media by Nepal's tourism marketers (TMs), two-stage studies (pilot; primary) have been conducted. The research area of this study has not been developed and therefore belongs to the quasi exploratory nature. Nonetheless, the ideal conscripted in this evaluation integrates the subjective norms, behavioral willingness and prototype image smitten with unintentional decision making. The vital problem not been responded so far is: In what way do cognitive dogmas for instance design characteristics, information basis, social interaction ties plus emotional credence (entertainment) impact participants' approach concerning the fan pages of TMs Facebook.

1. Review of literatures

Indeed, a number of studies focusing on different tourism contexts (e.g. hotels, airlines, travel agencies) have found that social media is actively used as a marketing tool in the industry (Shao, Zhang, & Li, 2017). Since 2015, most of the academic research on social media has been carried out. In the academic world, many researchers focus on the role of social media in tourism, as a new topic. Based on the theory of psychological accounting, this paper further demonstrates that tourists' perceived value of social media is significantly related to tourism information (Kim, Lee, Shin, & Yang, 2017). Social relational data rooted in social media (on top of users' online reviews) also affected the user's travel behavior and recommended quality (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017). The literature on social media in travel businesses recommended that added effort is necessary to realize the profitable input of social media to the travel businesses (Bello-Orgaz, Jung, & Camacho, 2016).

A big chunk of travel information search results is rooted in social media, and that can be identified as motivational factors for tourists' travel knowledge sharing in social media (Di Minin, Tenkanen, & Toivonen, 2015; García-Palomares, Gutiérrez, & Mínguez, 2015). Researchers found that a large chunk of tourism information came from social media, also the incentive factors for tourist knowledge sharing in social media were identified (Heberling & Templeton, 2009). A destination is defined by Rein, Kotler, and Haider (1993) as the synopsis of all discernment, opinions, and impersonations that individuals have of a particular destination. In such context, three corresponding layers build the image: evaluative, emotional and cognitive i.e. impressions, beliefs and perceptions (Oender, 2017). This three-tier viewpoint moreover appears in non-tourism literature over and above be able to research the public appearance of enterprises and institutions.

Our background study on touristic sites image formation offers us a couple of notable arguments that can be the significant effects of this research. Foremost, even if countless previous literature conveyed rational proof on the background of destination image, under the background of social media, there are few types of research on the impact of different dimensions of information quality on the development of destination image. Moreover, in times gone by, a lot of studies have been carried out in the location of the West. For case in point, a famous researcher named Pike found that of the 142 destination image papers published between 1973 and 2000; only 25 were for research in the Asian context. We, therefore, believe that our study fills this gap and highlights the significance of the research perspective in the Asian scenario.

2. Research design

First, the official presence of tourism marketers on Facebook is discovered by data mining, and then Nepalese tourism marketers' social media publications are assessed by content checks on their Facebook fan pages. From the text 'includes the origin of unique factors, consumer participation, and contribution, adoption, ease of use and new tangles. This study is also based on benchmark analysis and online questionnaires. The following destinations are the benchmark samples: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Kavre, Sindhupalchowk, Dolkha, Rasuwa, Dhading, Tanahun, Pokhara, Chitwan, and Lumbini. Then, the frequency and visibility of these themes are quantitatively determined, and the previously used literature is used in tourism research, including the study of tourism and mining media versions and the survey of Nepal's national tourism strategic preparation credential. Half of the interviews were conducted in five districts of Nepal, including TMs social media. One of them was an open questionnaire. The internal stories before and after these interviews provide a better understanding of how TM implements and locates its online marketing strategy in Nepal. Opinion pollsters from Nepal's Tourism Bureau were interviewed, asked open-ended questions and commented on the answers.

Another type of data is from the data of tourism operators, 26,000 e-mails were selected and 1563 questionnaires were collected. The effective rate was 6.01%. Tables 1 give the population profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (source: Panta, 2015)

Demographic characteristics	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (n = 981)	Male	392	40
	Female	589	60
Age (n = 989)	18–19	396	40.0
	20–24	482	48.7
	25–34	95	9.7
	35+	16	1.6

End of Table 1

Demographic characteristics	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnicity (n= 982)	Gurkhalis	817	83.2
	Newars	30	3.1
	kshetri	41	4.2
	Magar	9	0.9
	Muslim	5	0.5
	Bahun	54	6.1
	Madheshi	26	2.0
Average time spend per week on Facebook fan page (n = 989)	Less than 30 min	951	96.1
	30 min-60min	17	1.7
	1–3 hours	11	1.2
	More than 3 hours	10	1.0
Number of TMs Facebook page memberships (n = 980)	1 membership	287	29.3
	2–4 memberships	533	54.4
	5–10 memberships	104	10.6
	More than 10	56	5.7

Throughout 2015, there were 31,235 posts on Tourism Marketers (TMs) Facebook pages, of which 15,496 (49.6%) were self-published posts by TMs, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. In general number of posts for Nepalese district TMs in 2015 (source: composed by authors)

Districts	Total posts	Total posts TMs	% Posts TMs on Total posts
Kathmandu	8467	2665	31.5%
Lalitpur	3341	2320	69.4%
Bhaktapur	2993	1469	49.1%
Pokhara	2644	1330	50.3%
Chitwan	2889	815	17.9%
Lumbini	2077	535	25.7%
Kavre	1649	963	58.5%
Sindhupalchowk	1615	1109	68.6%
Dhading	1524	968	63.5%
Rasuwa	1484	1449	97.6%
Tanhun*	1399	1040	74.3%
Dolakha*	1153	833	72.2%
Overall Total	31,235	15,496	49.6%

Tanahun (lower overall), Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Pokhara are areas with large followers. Nearly all posts posted by TMS in 2015 included snapshots (> 82%) and were tracked through links (> 11%) and short clips (> 6%). However, in 2015, the main growth occurred in areas such as Dolkha (+8146.7%), Lumbini (+493.4%) and Tanahun (+188.1%) because their Facebook pages were recently created and opened to the public and fans. Because of this in Table 3, the number of fans/users in early 2015 was very small.

Table 3. In general statistics of Facebook users and yearly alteration in 2015 (source: composed by authors)

Districts	Users (beginning of the year)	Users (closing of the year)	Change (%)
Kathmandu	135,112	228,888	69.4
Lalitpur	154,256	225,522	46.1
Bhaktapur	66,687	77,172	15.7
Pokhara	66,123	89,246	34.9
Chitwan	54,998	79,189	43.9
Lumbini	11,306	67,121	493.4
Kavre	13,759	34,260	149.0
Sindhupalchowk	13,234	29,132	120.1
Dhading	17,338	29,668	71.1
Rasuwa	19,976	22,821	14.1
Tanhun*	4,566	13,156	188.1*
Dolakha*	109	8,989	8146.7*

* Smallest region

2.1. Determinants of participants

This part center on the features controlling district-TMs-Facebook-pages followers' activities and their participation and analyze them separately. More exclusively, the general populations of postings initiated by Nepalese district TMs during 2015 their analysis and their relationship with different variables: i) post type; ii) post distribution; iii) TMs postings time span; iv) frequency of posting. As noted earlier, most of the Nepalese regional TMs are apt to post mostly snapshots. The analysis shows that snapshots and videos are also the type of content that elicits most comments in Figure 1.

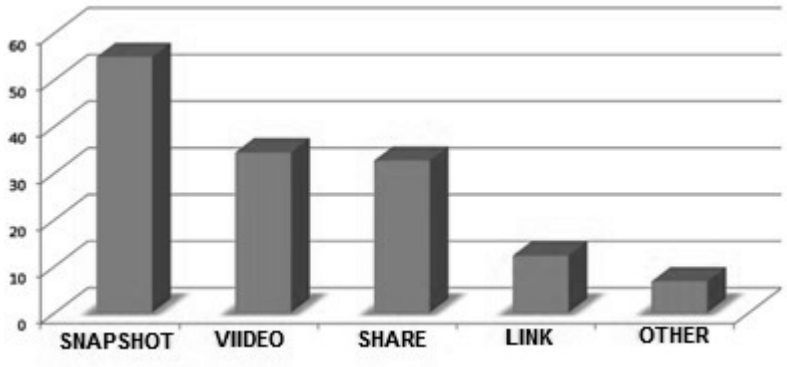

Figure 1. Standard generic participation for fans' actions based on posts types (source: composed by authors)

Consequently, the scholar infers that the element like entertainment of travels' fan page generates an encouraging approach to the fan page. Focused on the confab above, this research suggested the following postulates:

H1: Info origin has an encouraging effect on the attitude of fan pages.
H2: Social relationships have a constructive impact on fans' attitudes.
H3: The fan page design features have an optimistic impression on the attitude of fan pages.
H4: Progressive impact of entertainment is on fans' attitudes.

Lam et al. evidenced that there existed a confident correlation between subjective norms, attitudes and behavioral intention (Salas-Olmedo, Moya-Gómez, García-Palomares, & Gutiérrez, 2018). Thus, this study projected the following postulates:

H5: Attitudes have a confident impact on fans' behavioral intentions
H6: Behavioral intention of the fan page is very much impacted by subjective norms.
H7: Willingness behavior toward the fan page is very much swayed by attitude.
H8: Willingness behavior toward the fan page is very much swayed by subjective norms.
H9: Behavioral Willingness toward the fan page is very much swayed by the mental prototype.
H10: Behavioral intention toward the fan page is very much swayed by willingness behavior.

The contemporary research reflected the intention and willingness to join in travel and tourism fan pages a noble sign of end-user developmental buying revolution concerning the products of the particular destination brand. Hence:

H11: Behavioral change toward the tour products is very much impacted by behavioral intention towards the fan page.

H12: Behavioral change toward the tour products is very much impacted by the behavioral willingness towards fan page.

Grounded on the above postulates the resulting model was projected as see Figure 2.

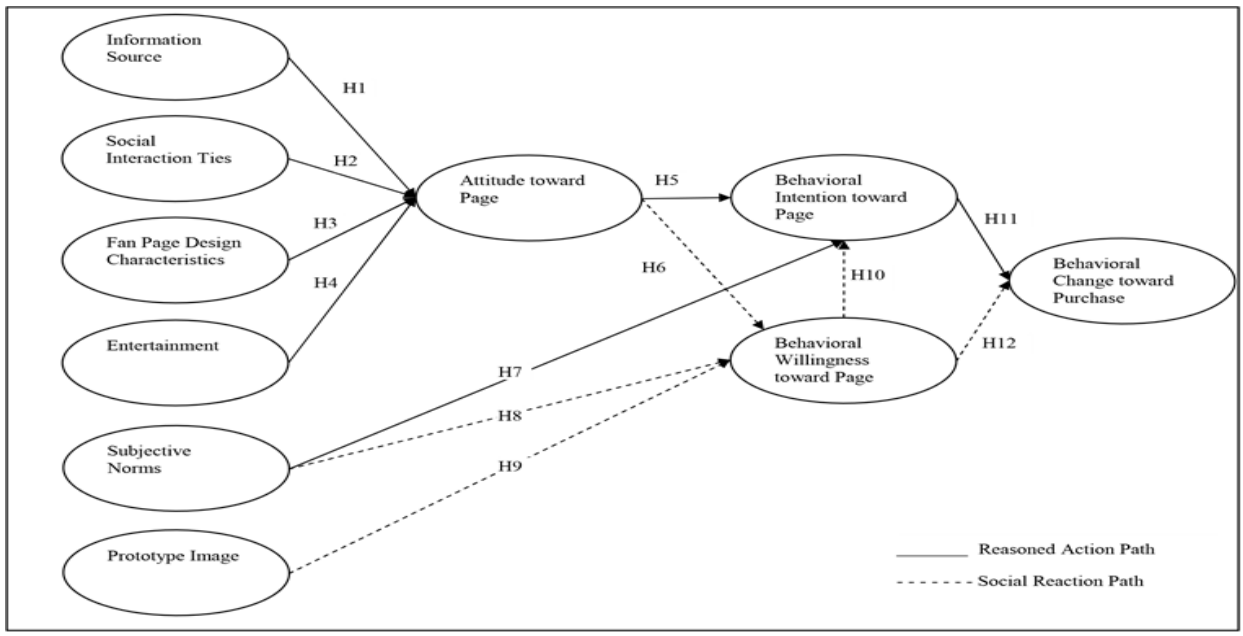

Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Model (source: Sessions, Wood, Rabotyagov, & Fisher, 2016)

3. Research methodology and data analysis

This study investigated six TMs Facebook fan pages, which included (1) Travel to Nepal: once is not enough! (TTN-ONE), (2) Volunteer and Travel Nepal (VTN), (3) Nepal-Travel(NT), (4) WH Nepal Travels(WHNT), (5) Travel in Nepal(TN) (6) Travel Management Group of Nepal (TMG NEPAL)(Table 4). In addition, participants had the chance to indicate any other destinations brand that they were members of the fan pages. Among the 1,131 usable responses more than 35% were from Travel to Nepal: once is not enough!, 16.9% from Volunteer and Travel Nepal(TTN-ONE), 9.8% from Nepal-Travel, 6.9% from WH Nepal Travels, 9.8% from Travel in Nepal, and 3.9% from Travel Management Group of Nepal (TMG NEPAL). Additionally, 14.3% of the data were from 62 different destinations brands including Dream Trip Nepal, Golden Gate Holidays Travel Treks Nepal, and Backpacking Budget Traveling in Himalaya.

Table 4. Brand Profile of the Sample (source: Panta, 2015)

DBOs and TMs	Frequency	Percent
TTN-ONE	191	16.9
VTN	434	38.4
NT	111	9.8
WHNT	78	6.9
TN	111	9.8
TMG NEPAL	44	3.9
OTHERS	162	14.3

NVivo software was used by authors to code data obtained from semi-structured interviews to independently classify vocabulary and patterns in the data. NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. Taking into consideration the existing literature on tourism and hospitability, coding is done using a recursive advance of data correlation. Further, the enhancement of analysis is made possible by mingling the data obtained from an interview with the quantitative. On the whole, a magnitude of argument materialized from this progress (like intrinsic relations of TMs with Facebook followers, issues and the idea of social movement, viewers' expansion, tackle to levy the efficacy of Facebook exploit) present a deeper perceptive of the outcome of the quantitative scrutiny.

The present study performed the two-step SEM approach suggested as in ref. (Sessions et al., 2016). The first step involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which was used to validate scales for the measurement of specific constructs proposed in a research model (Torland, Weiler, Moyle, & Wolf, 2015). and SEM followed. Table 5 and Table 6 are the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of our constructs respectively.

Table 5. The Summary of Construct Information (source: Sessions et al., 2016)

Construct	Mean	SD
Information Source	3.69	1.63
Social Interaction Ties	4.78	0.84
Design Characteristics	5.48	1.24
Entertainment	4.00	1.33
Attitude toward fan page	5.17	1.06
Subjective Norms	3.49	1.33
Prototype Image	4.97	0.96
Behavioral Intention toward fan page	4.36	1.34
Behavioral Willingness toward fan page	4.52	1.28
Behavioral Change toward products' purchase	4.02	1.15

Table 6. Latent Variable Squared Correlation Matrixes (source: authors' calculation)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1. Information Source	**0.90**									
2. Social Interaction	0.56	**0.91**								
3. Design Characteristics	0.61	0.64	**0.93**							
4. Entertainment	0.74	0.60	0.66	**0.91**						
5. Attitude	0.72	0.85	0.73	0.71	**0.90**					
6. Subjective Norms	0.50	0.35	0.21	0.54	0.45	**0.97**				
7. Prototype Image	0.51	0.52	0.54	0.60	0.61	0.39	**0.83**			
8. Behavioral Intention	0.78	0.65	0.61	0.72	0.86	0.63	0.56	**0.89**		
9. Behavioral Willingness	0.69	0.58	0.56	0.59	0.77	0.50	0.54	0.86	**0.87**	
10. Behavioral Change	0.71	0.54	0.44	0.63	0.69	0.66	0.48	0.87	0.78	**0.93**

4. Empirical findings

4.1. Uniformity test

The consistency of the measurement is suggested by using the maximum similarity method to measure the consistency of the two efforts of the structure. It is characterized by the "repeatability" of measurements, and the sorts of dependability comprise the control of measurements over time or subject matter. Three styles of uniformity were designed, including reliability of the individual item, overall reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) from sub-scales (see Figure 3). Cronbach Alpha has practiced to trial the reliability of an individual item. It is suggested that the critical point should be greater than 0.7 (Y. Kim, C. K. Kim, D. K. Lee, H. W. Lee, & Andrada, 2019). Whereas AVE and

composite reliability were practiced to check the consistency of structures or latent variables. Comprehensive reliability is the consistency of a summary measure. AVE is the index variance described by common factors. It is suggested that the composite reliability should be higher than 0.7 (J. Li, Xu, Tang, Wang, & L. Li, 2018) and the average value extracted should be better than 0.5 (Miah, Vu, Gammack, & McGrath, 2017). The coefficients alpha of 10 latent variables are between 0.96 and 0.72, the composite reliability is between 0.97 and 0.88, and the AVE is between 0.97 and 0.83.

4.2. Validity of constructs

The validity of constructs is related to the correspondence between measurement and other constructs. The measurement of additional constructs should be effective and consistent, and the resultant correlation with target measurement should be reasonable in theory. The validity of constructs is usually suggested using correlation. The relevance and rationality of target measurement are considered to support or challenge the effectiveness of its constructs. The validity of constructs essentially contains convergence validity and discriminatory validity. Convergence validity is the unit to which a process is hypothetically parallel to other operations (Hunt & Harbor, 2019). By determining whether the maximum likelihood load estimated by each index on the underlying construct is significant, the confirmatory factor load can be estimated from the measurement model. In Figure 3, it shows that at 0.001 level of significance, all confirmatory factors exist. For that reason, the convergence effectiveness of the measures in this research was acceptable. Discriminant validity explains the fact to which the operationalization deviates from other operationalization that had better not ideally be comparable to it. The discriminant validity was calculated by equating the square correlation between AVE values and constructs (Murphy, Chen, & Cossutta, 2016). The outcomes revealed that the squared correlation between the two groups is less than AVEs, which pointed outfitting discriminant validity in Table 6; and Table 7 is the aggregation of latent variables.

4.3. Supportive path of the conceptual model

Figure 2 projected the underlying associations between four endogenous and six exogenous latent variables. The four endogenous constraints towards fan pages are a behavioral willingness, behavioral intention, attitude and behavioral change toward travel-related buying and the six exogenous latent variables are design characteristics, info source, entertainment, social interaction ties, prototype image, and subjective norms. The maximum likelihood estimation method is used to project the structural equation model. The outcome revealed that the general fitting was acceptable as detailed in Figure 2. ($\chi 2$ (602) ≈2104, $\chi 2/df \approx 3.50$, NFI ≈ 0.93, RMSEA ≈ 0.05, IFI ≈ 0.95, TLI ≈ 0.95, CFI ≈ 0.95, $p \approx 0.000$,). Moreover, all paths in SEM at the level of 0.001 and 0.05 found to be supportive and significant. Figure 3 demonstrates β value (standardized path coefficients) for each supportive path of the conceptual framework.

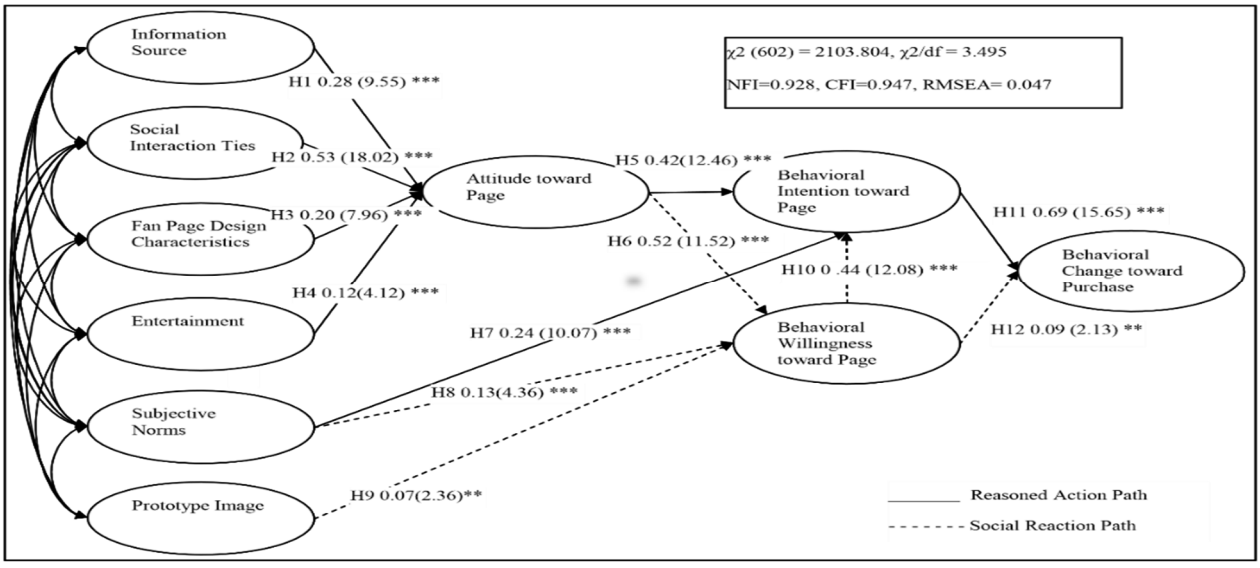

Figure 3. β value and t-Values for Pathways in the Conceptual Framework (source: Sessions et al., 2016)

Table 7 demonstrated the support of our all assumptions especially, positive and significant relations among entertainment, social interaction, information source paths and design features towards fan pages (accepting H1 to H4). Behavioral intention towards fan pages showed significant associations among attitude and willingness towards fan pages and subjective norms (supporting H5, H7, and H10). Finally, it is clearly illustrated that in a change of travel purchase, behavior willingness and intention have a greater role which supports our H11, H12.

Table 7. Results of SEM and support of postulates (source: composed by authors)

Postulates	Paths	Weights	P	Effect
H1	"Information Source to Attitude toward Fan page" a	0.284	***	+
H2	"Social Interaction Ties to Attitude toward Fan page" a	0.539	***	+
H3	"Design Characteristics to Attitude toward Fan page" a	0.204	***	+
H4	"Entertainment to Attitude toward page" a	0.125	***	+
H5	"Attitude toward Fan page to Behavioral Intention toward Fan page" a	0.429	***	+
H6	"Attitude toward Fan page to Behavioral Willingness toward Fan page" a	0.534	***	+
H7	(Behavioral Intention) Subjective Norms	0.228	***	+
H8	(Behavioral Willingness) Subjective Norms	0.129	***	+
H9	(Behavioral Willingness) Prototype Image	0.074	0.009	+
H10	Behavioral Willingness toward Fan page Behavioral Intention toward Fan page	0.440	***	+
H11	Behavioral Intention toward Fan page to Behavioral Change toward Purchase	0.699	***	+
H12	Behavioral Willingness toward Fan page to Behavioral Change toward Purchase	0.088	0.033	+

*p < 05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.0
Table taken from [Murphy et al., 2016].

Conclusions

This study showed that emotional and cognitive factors swayed potential travelers' attitudes towards taking an active part in fan pages of TMs. The outline presented fans' behavior towards facebook pages are firmly swayed not only by psychological cognitive factors but also by entertainment and other hedonic aspects. This research buzzes understanding that psychological factors do make sense when we try to apprehend what inspires participants. The supportive part of the conceptual framework studied how cognitive and emotional factors affect attitudes. This research offers imperative direction for designers of fan web pages and marketers in tourism sector especially during the time of destination image crisis.

Furthermore, managers of travel agency are supposed to figure out creating clusters of members with similar common interests on fan pages to intermingle with them. Consequently, TMs should frequently post expedient or valuable tips and links to the group, as well as suggestions that readers may be interested in. Through publishing exclusive content on particular destinations, fans get feelings of a part of a special team and compel them to choose the destination as their potential travel destination. Nevertheless, the essence of virtual groups is that participants ruck together based on like benefits as well as intentions. In addition, direct communication between travel product purchasers and TMs marketers through the online chat function on the TMS fan page may possibly be an actual approach to form resilient interaction ties and travelers loyalty. The key limitation of this topic may belong to the propensity of the sample to embody the population. This also has a certain influence on SEM exploration.

Disclosure statement

We declare that we do not have any competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties.

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