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Factors Affecting Pre-Travel Planning of Families Netnographic Study of Facebook Group "The Travel Diary"- A Case Study

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Article Information

Abstract

This study explores the factors influencing the pre-travel planning of families, focusing on how online social media communities, particularly Facebook, shape these decisions. The research problem addresses the need to understand the holistic factors that families consider, particularly those traveling with children or elderly parents, using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework. A netnographic approach was employed to analyze posts from the Facebook group "The Travel Diary" over an eight-week period. Thematic analysis revealed key factors influencing travel planning, including traveler characteristics, transportation choices, destination safety, accommodation, budgeting, and baby-related and food-related arrangements. Community recommendations played a significant role in decision-making, often seen as more credible than professional travel agents. This study extends existing literature by identifying previously unexplored factors, such as baby-related and denied-boarding issues, while emphasizing the role of online communities in shaping destination choices. Limitations and suggestions for future research include expanding the study to other social media platforms and conducting longitudinal analyses.

1   Introduction

The role of social media in shaping travel planning behavior has been widely acknowledged, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube serving as significant tools for gathering and sharing travel information (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Nezakati et al., 2015). Travelers often seek recommendations, shared experiences, and advice from social media communities, which influences their decisions at various stages of travel—before, during, and after the trip (Book et al., 2018). Social media, therefore, plays a vital role in altering perceptions of destinations and shaping travel preferences (Tham et al., 2020).

The scope of this paper includes an extensive review of relevant literature, followed by a detailed explanation of the research methodology, which emphasizes the use of netnography to gather data from online communities. The findings are discussed in relation to traveler characteristics, travel arrangements, and external influences like community recommendations. The paper concludes by highlighting the study's contributions to the field, addressing its limitations, and providing suggestions for future research, such as the need for longitudinal studies and comparative analyses of various social media platforms.

The themes from the eight-week observation were traveler characteristics, travel characteristics, destination characteristics, travel arrangements, and sources of recommendations. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, some factors that have not been studied yet in literature were food-related and baby-related arrangements.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Social Media During Travel Planning

Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube play a vital role in integrating and engaging people in an online social setting. Travelers consider the shared knowledge, experiences, and recommendations on these social media websites as an important source of information when planning their travel (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Chan & Guillet, 2011; Nezakati et al., 2015; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

The information shared in social media communities aids decision-making in the pre-travel, during-travel, and post-travel stages (Book et al., 2018). Studies have shown that pre-travel and post-travel behaviors differ significantly (Bae et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2019).

During the pre-travel stage, travelers use social media communities to facilitate the information search process (Liu et al., 2013), searching for relevant information and seeking recommendations for micro and macro-level decisions (Lima et al., 2019; Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017). On a micro level, travelers ask for details about hotels, must-visit places, activities to do, and local cuisines (Jażdżewska & Jagnuszewska, 2017). Social media communities also aid travelers when making macro-level decisions like deciding on which destination to visit (Bakr & Ali, 2013).

In the post-travel stage, travelers use social media platforms to share their tourism experiences, highlighting what they enjoyed and did not (Fakharyan et al., 2012). These narrations are often aided with visuals such as photos and videos from the trip that would guide other users in the planning stage of travel (Lee et al., 2014).

Most travelers consider recommendations from family and friends more credible than travel agents' recommendations (Hsu et al., 2006). The same behavior applies to online community settings, where suggestions provided from member's personal experiences are strongly valued and influence travel planning and choices (Bae et al., 2017). Suggestions provided by the community members alter the destination image in the minds of travelers and impact pre-existing attitudes towards destinations or places to visit. The more close-knit the communities are, the stronger the influence of their recommendations on destination image (Tham et al., 2020).

Despite this knowledge, much of the research on travel planning through social media has focused on individual aspects, such as accommodation decisions, transportation choices, or the influence of social media recommendations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2018; Woodside & MacDonald, 1994). There is a gap in the literature regarding a holistic understanding of the broader themes families consider when planning travel, especially when accounting for specific family dynamics, such as traveling with young children or elderly parents. Previous literature has also directed future researchers to gauge user engagement on social media through real-time insights to investigate its impact on the destination preferences of the traveler (Tham et al., 2020). This study aligns with these directions as it explores the influence of social media in the context of recommendations provided by members of online communities. Additionally, while structured interviews have been a common data-gathering method in previous research, unobtrusive methods like netnography have rarely been employed to analyze how real-time, unfiltered community interactions affect travel planning.

2.2   Factors Considered During Travel Planning

Existing literature has segmented tourism behavior studies into different factors sought during travel planning. A study by Woodside and MacDonald (1994) divided the choices related to leisure tourism into eight categories: accommodation choices, destination

areas and routes, activities to do, mode of transport, restaurant recommendations, must-visit attractions, purchases, and destination choices.

Others have also established similar frameworks that explain the travel planning process, which broadly falls under the classification presented by X. Liu et al. (2020) (Table 1).

Table 1. Frameworks Explaining the Travel Planning Process

Author (Year)	Frameworks
(X. Liu et al., 2020)	Transportation, accommodation, food, attraction, shopping, entertainment
(Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002)	Destination, travel party, attractions, activities, timing, route
(Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006)	Travel partners, destinations, expenditure, activities, travel dates, attractions, transportation providers, length of trip, rest stops, food stops
(Zheng Xiang et al., 2008)	Accommodation, activities, areas, attractions, events, information, places, restaurants, shopping
(Xiang & Gretzel, 2010)	Accommodation, hotel, activities, attractions, park, events, tourism, restaurant, shopping, nightlife
(Plank, 2016)	Destinations, accommodation, attractions, activities, experiences

The above categorizations help develop a deeper understanding of the factors in the travel planning process through social media (Zheng Xiang et al., 2008). The level of planning travelers undergo during the pre-travel stage is affected by the perceived complexity of the trip (Dellaert et al., 2014). Elaborate planning is done by seeking information about a variety of factors like transport, activities, visa processes, documentation, and requirements for complex trips. Conversely, when planning for trips that are perceived as straightforward, the pre-travel stage is relatively simpler in terms of information sought from an online community (Tham et al., 2020). The underlying goal of using these communities in travel planning is to ensure a manageable itinerary (Fakharyan et al., 2012; X. Liu et al., 2020).

On a macro level, literature has acknowledged the complexity of choosing a destination to visit (Battour et al., 2017; Masiero & Qiu, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Since context is integral to deciding a location to visit, it is important to understand factors that influence the user's decision-making process (McCabe et al., 2016) and how they go about finalizing their choice. Travelers vary in their purpose of visit, characteristics, household composition, and preferred choice of destination (Lamsfus et al., 2015), which enables or

constrains the choices that the traveler makes during the pre-travel stage (Lee et al., 2018; Marcevova et al., 2010; Marder et al., 2019). During this stage, the information and recommendations shared by community members influence the selection of the desired destination choice (Mohsin & Ryan, 2004; Nyman et al., 2018) by removing destination options from their awareness based on the context (Crompton, 1992). This also signifies the impact of subjective norms on the traveler's intention to visit a particular destination during the pre-travel stage (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016).

2.3   Underpinning Theory

The overarching theory used to categorize the factors in the study is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Ajzen introduced the theory of planned behavior (TPB) in 1991. The TPB states that a person's behavior is determined by their intentions, represented by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The construct of attitude represents the positive or negative evaluation of one's behavior. The second construct – subjective norms – refers to perceptions regarding society's approval or non-approval of performing a particular behavior. Perceived behavioral control is the third predictor of intention and represents the perception of the behavior's easy or difficult. Existing schemas as a result of past experiences and anticipated hurdles have also been found to impact perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

In this study, attitude is proxied by destination characteristics like accommodation, things to do at the destination, etc. The recommendation sources, such as online communities and referrals, represent the subjective norms. Perceived behavioral control encompasses travel arrangements, travel characteristics like travel safety, and traveler characteristics like family composition, etc. This aligns with a previous study, where satisfaction related to the destination was categorized under perceived behavioral control. The intent in this model is the purpose of the trip, which impacts the actual behavior.

The TBP model has extensively been used in the context of accommodation decisions (Han, 2015), overall destination choice (Al Ziadat, 2015; Milberg et al., 2023; Quintal et al., 2010; Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016), travel behaviors exhibited (Goh et al., 2017) and the influence of pro-environmental behavior in traveling (Han, 2015). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first to holistically assess destination

characteristics, sources of recommendation, travel arrangements, travel characteristics, and traveler characteristics.

2.3.1   Position within CCT

Within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), this study is placed under the Socio-historic Patterning of Consumption dimension, where institutional and social structures influence how people consume goods and services (Otnes et al., 1993). In the current research, the Facebook community is the social structure that influences members' travel planning.

Linking this CCT structure to the Institutional Logics Perspective (ILP), this Facebook group has its logic and rules defining what is possible. The members of this group act as a close-knit community since they address each other as friends and family. Therefore, "The Travel Diary" group acts as a platform at the meso-level, allowing the community members – macro-level institutions – to prescribe, at a micro level, what is doable or not doable in their pre-travel planning stages.

3   Methodology

Ethnographic research was conducted to understand what factors affect travel planning through online social media communities. Netnography is an adaptation of the ethnographic way of research on online mediums (Kozinets, 2015), which adopts a multimethod approach for analyzing content (O'Reilly et al., 2007). This qualitative method allows a glimpse into people's lived experiences through their activity in these online communities. Since user interactions, especially in the case of travel forums, are largely voluntary and personal, the insights gathered would be real and managerially actionable.

The platform monitored for the netnographic study was a Facebook group called "The Travel Dairy." Over eight weeks, each researcher had to analyze posts created by the community members and their subsequent comments. Hence, a rotation was created, where each researcher observed and logged relevant posts every three days. Researchers maintained separate immersion journals, where shortlisted posts, the duration of immersion, and their reflections were included.

To maintain uniformity of method and data collection between researchers, a criterion was set for shortlisting posts relevant to the research topic. Initially, as the study

focused on families and couples planning to travel, this became the first basis for filtering suitable posts. Additionally, the deep data for this study was defined as posts containing comprehensive text and supporting visual elements. This aided the creation of underlying categories and themes.

Once the collection period was concluded, the data was further refined for analysis. The posts were categorized according to family composition: traveling as a family versus traveling as a couple. Since the latter category entries were fewer, they were removed from the analysis. At this point, the focus of the research topic narrowed down to how families plan for travel using the Facebook group. Of the initial 359 entries, 199 remained for thematic analysis.

A manual process was adopted for the thematic analysis to construct codes and themes. First-order codes were created by analyzing every post and listing new codes as columns as they emerged. If a code was present in an entry, a value of 1 was entered in the column. These codes were clubbed together as second, and third-order codes based on their similarity. This was then used to identify the overarching themes. Direct quotes from the posts and comments were used as evidence to support the research findings. This would also mitigate the risk of distorting the context of the post. For easy identification, a unique identifier was assigned to each entry.

To follow ethical protocols, permission was sought from the group admin before observation and data collection. Anonymity was maintained by hiding community members' names and profile pictures.

4　Findings and Discussion

Through analyzing data relevant to the research, three types of posts emerged: posts that sought recommendations without prior research, posts that sought recommendations after conducting prior research, and post-travel experiences shared with the group.

"Please help me decide on an enjoyable trip for a family of 4 including 50+ parents for the next week" [TTD005]

"Travel guide for parents of little ones… PREPLAN… DURING FLIGHT… DESTINATION… HAPPY TRAVELS" [TTD020]

Those posts that had conducted self-research had one or more aspects of their travel decided and asked for suggestions for the undecided details.

"Any family friendly and budget friendly you guys can recommend for Bangkok or Phuket?" [TTD002]

4.1   *Traveler Characteristics*
People on Trip

In line with the research done by Pan & Fesenmaier (2006), where "travel partners" are central to the overall travel plan, this study found the impact of various household characteristics on travel planning. Posters indicated traveling with their spouse, children, parents, and other adults in a travel group.

"… need suggestions for a trip… with 2 kids… What are best places to visit so kids can enjoy the most. This trip is only for my kids…" [TTD059]

Transportation

The data analysis showed two broad areas under transportation: mode of transport and factors affecting choice of transport. Some posters asked for suggestions about the general mode of transport they should adopt when traveling. In contrast, others asked about the feasibility of a particular type of transport like a car, bus, train, airline, bike etc.

"Can you guys help guide best way to plan this, fastest mode of transportation with details?" [TTD001]

"Planning to travel to northern areas of Pakistan by train and return by airplane" [TTD153]

"Need suggestions for good bus/coach service from Karachi to Quetta for families" [TTD165]

"I'm traveling to Turkey...we are planning to rent a car for the whole trip… is that feasible, and is the process smooth?" [TTD011]

The major choice determinants of transport mode, according to existing literature, are the length of travel, cost of traveling, transport infrastructure, attitudes towards mode of transport, household composition, and characteristics, including the presence of young

children (Bursa et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2017). This study builds upon existing literature by finding that other factors like hassle-free travel, travel safety, airport and airline facilities, and transport accessibility influence the chosen mode of travel.

"...please someone guide me regarding Batakundi, what is the road condition… Is it safe to travel with one-year old baby and okay to travel in one car with 5 people in it…" [TTD027]

"Hey guys! Does anyone know what the cheapest flight option right now would be for out of pak?" [TTD037]

"I would like to book a ticket that has a layover in Riyadh (around 90 hrs)… we are travelling with a 20 months old baby girl" [TTD123]

4.2   Travel History

Consistent with scholarship on the role of travel history in the selection of tourist attractions and destinations (Wallace et al., 2008; Yim et al., 2004), community members also exhibited similar behaviors when deciding on a destination to visit.

"… I have travelled to Saudia Arabia, Turkey, and Malaysia whereas my husband has traveled to Turkey(twice), Malaysia (twice), China, Indonesia, and Singapore. Now we want to travel within a few months… which country should we apply for… considering our travel history…." [TTD004]

4.3   Accessibility

Regarding the impact of physical and mental impairments on travel planning, research has found a very high impact of the impairment on holiday destinations and the ability to travel (Drews & Schemer, 2010). Posts observed during analyses also highlighted the significance such impairments have during the pre-travel planning stage.

"and kid who is ADHD so we need to be very calm for him so he can enjoy too very hectic plan will give him anxiety n he will only cry so we dont want desert safari coz of motion sickness for him" [TTD139]

"Please note we will have a disabled family member with us so we need the most convenient location" [TTD032]

4.4 Budget

When analyzing the posts, the study identified the influence of budget on travel planning, wherein travelers inquired about expected expenses, deal packages, the feasibility of a decided budget, extra costs, and the possibility of discounts. This is consistent with previous studies that found budget as a major constraint for travelers, highlighting the price-conscious nature of some travelers. In contrast, others are less concerned about their expenses, preferring luxury in their trip (Krishna et al., 2021).

"...we want a reasonable (cheap option) one…" [TTD077]

"...Your suggestions along with expected traveling expenses will be highly appreciated." [TTD086]

"...What holiday or vacation option I can have in a budget of 2lac, for 2 adults and a 4-year-old girl" [TTD069]

"Weekend getaway… budget around 75k to 100k…" [TTD034]

"Planning to visit Dubai… any apps or deals which provide discounted tickets to different activities…" [TTD083]

"We will have to pay some extra money to rebook our flight… If we will have to rebook what will be the charges?" [TTD124]

4.5 Duration of Stay

Literature establishes that the most critical part of travel planning is determining the length of stay (Alegre & Pou, 2006) as in most cases, this decision needs to be taken in advance due to several factors like flight availability, time constraints, etc. (Almeida et al., 2021). Similarly, this study confirms the findings in the previous literature.

"...if we have 3 days, so which places we can travel easily…" [TTD012]

> *"We are planning trip to England (Manchester and London) in last ten days of October… is Etihad a good option?" [TTD060]*

4.6 Travel Related Problems

In addition, the study also found that the posters also inquired about problems such as denied boarding and seat selections. Such issues need to be addressed on an urgent basis, and they impacted the trip.

> *"…I require immediate assistance… the family was denied boarding passes due to the absence of a Turkish visa. Could someone please verify whether a visa is necessary even when the family had no intention of exiting the airport?" [TTD052]*

> *"The seat selection for flight from Doha to Birmingham does not go through… Qatar airways could not give me a solid reason… they have less than 48 hrs left in travelling… seat selections is paramount…" [TTD160]*

4.7 Destination Characteristics

4.7.1 Accommodation

Concerning accommodation choices made by tourists, previous literature suggests that price, convenient hotel location and good hotel service are the most influential factors. This study confirms these findings and expands on the contributing factors by incorporating aspects like accommodation safety and facilities.

> *"…Also suggest budget friendly hotels…" [TTD000]*

> *"I need honest opinion for all the three hotels mentioned above in terms of cleanliness, room service, shuttle service and location." [TTD015]*

> *"We recently stayed in "The Bedrooms Boutique Hotel"… Decent hotel in a decent neighborhood… Safe…" [TTD002]*

> *"Can you pls recommend places where we can stay. We are looking for places that have a kitchenette included" [TTD142]*

> *"We are travelling to Singapore and Malaysia… I'm looking for kids' friendly resort in Langkawi, any recommendations?" [TTD073]*

4.7.2 Itinerary

As mentioned in the literature, activities undertaken during travel can range from being recreational to being an outlet for people to de-stress by simply enjoying the scenery of their destinations (De Vos et al., 2013). The same was observed in this study, where posters had asked community members to give suggestions on the types of activities they could take part in, including the places they should visit by highlighting their preferences or reviewing their chosen activities.

"We are travelling in January… please pour in your suggestions… being a nature lover, what cities we should consider…" [TTD013]

The findings in this study corroborate with existing literature that establishes the length of itinerary as a major influencer on travel planning and behavior (Chen et al., 2022)

"Anyone has visited Bosnia recently and can share the itinerary and places to visit with family in 5 days?" [TTD003]

"Is this itinerary okay for Istanbul? We are staying at Taksim iA. We need to keep it slow as have 2 toddlers." [TTD049]

4.7.3 Travel motivations

Analyses of the posts also reveal four motivations when choosing a destination to visit: escape/relax, fun, enjoyable, and nature. This aligns with previous findings by Pearce and Lee (2005), which generated 14 motivational factors travelers have when visiting a place, including the four factors mentioned above.

"Please help me decide on an enjoyable trip… We need to relax the trip and avoid traveling and hectic routes… find some fun activities like chairlift etc." [TTD005]

"Was looking for some serene and calm place nearby Karachi to enjoy long drive and Nature… which came out to be perfect gateway near Karachi to enjoy with family". [TTD055]

4.7.4   Weather

According to Hadwen et al. (2011) and Hamilton & Lau (2006), the posts observed during this study demonstrated how

"We are planning a short family trip… pls give suggestions as to where we can go and ofcourse not be too cold…" [TTD014]

"Has anyone been to Baku late september early october, if yes then what was the weather like?…" [TTD046]

4.7.5   Destination Safety

This study established that the destination's safety is another important factor considered by travelers during the pre-travel planning stage, which is consistent with scholarships on the impact of perceived risk and safety on the choice of international vacation destinations (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998).

"Is Brazil safe country for family?" [TTD075]

4.7.6   Food Related

Adding to the literature on destination characteristics, this study found that travelers also consider food-related factors while planning their trips. These include food availability at their accommodations and other dietary considerations, such as halal food.

"can you please recommend resorts that… is all-inclusive…" [TTD011)

"I am planning to visit Milan… please share some information regarding Halal food…" [TTD014]

4.7.7   Sources of Recommendations

Prior Research

According to the literature, technology like the internet has played a pivotal role in a traveler's information search stage (Benckendorff et al., 2019). This information fulfills a

range of goals, from finding the price of a hotel to discovering activities and attractions at their chosen destinations.

"...our research is just based on the info and videos available online..."
[TTD067]

"...hotels in my range in madinah as the list comes in booking.com or in agoda is coming so expensive..." [TTD103]

While some posters found the information acquired useful in their planning, others had to resort to online communities.

"For anyone see has been there, how was your experience... Unfortunately, YouTube is plagued with not-so-great videos... Any input will be greatly appreciated!"
[TTD184]

4.7.8   Community-Sourced Travel Advice

Online communities serve as important sources of information and recommendations for travelers as they connect travelers to others in the community who have had prior experience. According to the literature, recommendations from these community members are the most preferred and influential sources in the travel decision-making process. Data analysis found that the information most sought out was about destination, accommodation, and activity choices.

"...Thinking of Alpine Nathigali, not sure about PC Bhurban rates. Please share personal experiences..." [TTD034]

"I've been doing some research, but there are so many options out there, and I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed... looking for a destination that's: Budget-friendly, Kid-friendly, Beach paradise... please share your experiences and recommendations..."
[TTD030]

"…Should we cover Green Canyon or is there any other place that you'd recommend…" [TTD008]

"…help me decide on an enjoyable trip… Swat-Kalam-Malam Jabba, Skardu, Kashmir, Hunza-Naran" [TTD005]

Additionally, it was observed that in response to such queries, community members often gave referrals to websites, social media pages and personal contacts.

"Someone i know took a travel group from Canada and they had an amazing time. I can share the link here for you. (link to Instagram page)" [TTD042]

"You can reach out to GoZayaan PK for hotels… (link to website)" [TTD006]

4.7.9 Travel Arrangements

Amongst other factors impacting the travel planning stage, baby-related arrangements like baby food, carriers, and safety also emerged as key aspects for families traveling with young children.

"ISO cabin approved strollers… Does Abu Dhabi airport provide any facility so that I don't have to carry my child?" [TTD004]

"Is it safe to go to Arang Kel...with two-year-old kid??…" [TTD004]

"Can we take Tetra milk pack for infant in Turkish airline??" [TTD004]

Documentation

A crucial aspect of travel planning is the visa application process. Consistent with previous scholarship on the effect of visa policies on tourist travel planning and perception about the destination (Duerrmeier Rizzi, 2014), this study found posters inquiring about various aspects of the visa process that influenced their pre-travel stage planning. The previous literature also found some aspects of the visa application process, like the application cost, time of application, probability of denial, ease of the process, and documentation required to make a strong case, as significant influences on a traveler's preferred destination choice. This study observed similar behavior in the travelers. Further,

posters also inquired about traveling with different passports and other issues like delayed passports for dependents.

"My question is that out of Australia, New Zealand and Canada which country should we apply for which has higher visa ratio and safest considering our travel history,family and appointments aspect!" [TTD010]

For instance, several posters inquired about the likelihood of visa approval based on their travel history and family situation while other traveler sought advice on how to manage an application complication when applying for a family trip:

"...am tying to apply for Canadian visa with my family! Husband wife and 2 kids under 2! I am unable to submit my application because it is asking me to submit the custodian form which isnt applicable in our case because we will be traveling together solely for tourism. Can someone please guide" [TTD044]

Concerns about the visa implications of traveling with different passports or visa types were also common. For example, one poster highlighted potential issues when family members held different travel documents:

"Wife will travel on Pakistani passport on umrah visa while husband and kid will be travelling on saudi tourist visa, if wife applies for Umrah visa alone, is there any risk of rejection…, although travelling together on foreign passport…" [TTD067]

Moreover, travelers sought advice on avoiding visa-related complications entirely, with some preferring destinations that did not require a visa. Others encountered logistical challenges, such as delayed passport issuance, which affected their travel plans:

"...any other place without the hassle of getting a Visa" [TTD097]

"My and my husband planning an international trip in nov and we applied for our baby's passport on October 10th. Because of the shortage and delay in passport's delivery our travel agent asking to at least book the ticket using any dummy passport no. Which can be changed later on by calling airline's CS. As we know that holiday season starting

and tickets will get expensive day by day. Now what do you guys suggest ? Passport office saying it can take upto 3-4 weeks more" [TTD198]

These examples reflect how visa requirements and related bureaucratic processes significantly influence travelers' decision-making and planning stages.

Others

In addition to visa-related concerns, travelers also sought advice on various practical aspects of travel planning to ensure a smooth and enjoyable trip. These queries often revolved around the need for local tour guides, booking appointments in advance, purchasing SIM cards, preparing for different weather conditions, and understanding luggage restrictions. Furthermore, some posts highlighted health-related requirements, such as vaccinations, that travelers needed to be aware of before embarking on their international journeys.Other posts inquired about booking a tour guide for the trip, possibly for ease.

"Do we require local guide or we can travel on our own." [TTD095]

Further, some posters sought advice on app appointments before visiting, buying sims, packing appropriate clothes, and the possible restriction of taking electronic items on the flight.

"...app appointment is very mandatory, have the screenshot ready..." [TTD041]

"We can buy data sims as we don't have much need for regular calls or messages so which data sim should we get? Please advise." [TTD156]

"...Azerbaijan Weather from 25th Sept to 7th October. Will we need warm clothes..." [TTD173]

"...wanted to seek advise about the overall rule with regards to cabin luggage... Spare mobile phones (used without box) and 1 Android tab(used)?" [TTD197]

Another aspect of travel planning highlighted by the posts was vaccination-related queries and the requirement for such certificates for international travel.

"...we don't have polio vaccination certificates... is it mandatory for Dubai travel? If yes then how soon can we get it and where from?" [TTD168]

Some of the main themes that emerged from the analysis are summarized in the table below.

Table 2 Summary of Findings

Theme	Findings
Types of Posts	- Posts seeking recommendations (before/after research)
	- Post-travel experiences shared
Traveler Characteristics	- Impact of household composition on travel plans
	- Traveling with spouse, children, parents, and other adults
Travel History	- Past travel experiences influence future destination choices
Accessibility	- Physical/mental impairments affect travel planning
	- Need for calm environments for travelers with ADHD, disabilities
Transportation	- Mode and feasibility of transport (car, bus, train, airline)
	- Factors: travel safety, convenience, cost, infrastructure
Budget	- Budget constraints: inquiries about costs, deals, discounts
	- Some travelers prefer luxury while others are budget-conscious
Duration of Stay	- Duration affects trip planning (advance decisions based on availability)
Travel Problems	- Denied boarding, seat selection, and travel documentation issues
Accommodation	- Price, location, service, safety, and amenities are key factors
Itinerary	- Suggestions for itinerary length and preferred activities
Travel Motivations	- Motivations: escape, relaxation, fun, enjoyment, nature
Weather	- Weather concerns impact destination decisions
Destination Safety	- Safety is a significant factor in choosing a travel destination
Food-Related Concerns	- Halal food availability, all-inclusive options
Sources of Recommendations	- Technology and online communities are key sources of travel advice
Community-Sourced Advice	- Travelers seek suggestions on destinations, accommodation, and activities
Baby-Related Arrangements	- Concerns about strollers, baby food, safety during travel
Visa and Documentation	- Visa policies, family passports, application complications influence plans
Other Practical Aspects	- Local guides, SIM cards, appointments, health requirements

5   Conclusion

5.1   Theoretical Contributions

This study enriches the existing literature on travel behavior by identifying the diverse factors influencing travelers' destination choices, particularly in relation to household composition and individual characteristics. By integrating concepts such as accessibility, travel history, and safety concerns, the research expands the understanding of how personal circumstances and social dynamics shape travel preferences. Additionally, it highlights the significance of motivations and practical considerations, such as food availability and travel documentation, thus offering a more nuanced framework for

analyzing travel decision-making processes. This theoretical advancement aids scholars in refining models of consumer behavior in tourism, addressing gaps related to demographic diversity and travel accessibility.

5.2 Practical Contributions

The findings of this study have significant implications for stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry, including travel agencies, destination marketers, and service providers. By understanding the specific needs and preferences of diverse traveler groups—particularly those with accessibility challenges or unique family dynamics—practitioners can tailor their offerings to enhance customer satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, insights into the importance of safety, budget considerations, and local amenities allow for the development of targeted marketing strategies and improved service provisions. This practical guidance enables industry professionals to create more inclusive travel experiences, ultimately fostering stronger connections between travelers and destinations while addressing the growing demand for personalized travel solutions.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This research study has added to the existing literature by discovering factors that have not been previously researched – to the best of the researcher's knowledge – yet have a significant impact on pre-travel decisions like baby-related and food-related arrangements and travel-related problems such as denied boarding and seat selection.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations that give way to further research. The current research was a cross-sectional study spanning eight weeks that focused its observations on a single Facebook group. Future research could employ a longitudinal study so that insights on during and post-travel decision-making can also be analyzed. Furthermore, a comparative study of different social media groups related to travel can be undertaken. The insights gained from such research will be more specific and actionable to a target audience. These groups can include female-only or solo travel groups.

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