
The influence of social media on destination choice of Omani pleasure travellers

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Abstract: In order to gain a clear understanding of factors that affect destination choice, this paper sought to explore the influence of social media on Omani outbound pleasure travellers' destination choices. The main data collection method involved 35 in-depth interviews with actual Omani outbound travellers. The analysis process led to the development of five themes regarding the influence of social media on their destination choice. These themes have been labelled as *the credibility of social media information; the influence of age on the use of social media; the advancement of technology has a huge impact on using social media; the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and social media and traditional media complement each other*. Hence, based on these themes, it could be concluded that the majority of participants interviewed believe that social media has an effect on their destination choice. Finally, the contribution of the current study would result from aiding the tourism and marketing industries to understand the use and influence of social media on destination choice of Omani travellers (as representing Arab and Muslim tourists).

Keywords: destination choice; social media; Oman; outbound travellers; thematic analysis.

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1 Introduction

According to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the total number of Omani outbound tourists increased significantly by 13% between 2005 and 2010, and by 67% between 2010 and 2014. In 2014, the number of Omani outbound tourists reached over 3 million and their total expenditure reached US\$1 billion, which was a 12% increase over US\$962 million in 2013 (NCSI, 2016). Travel and destination marketers

are struggling to understand what influences people to choose a particular destination and such understanding is critical importance in developing appropriate marketing strategies (Zhang, 2009; Alsawafi, 2013). Previous studies in the tourism marketing field argued that without clear and accurate understanding of this issue regarding a specific market segment, destination marketers will not be able to effectively market their particular destination to people in this market segment or create and develop appropriate marketing strategies to attract targeted groups (Correia and Pimpao, 2008; Sparks and Pan, 2009; Alsawafi, 2013). In addition, identifying factors influencing individuals' destination choice is considered as a fundamental subject in tourism studies (Yun and Lehto, 2009; Merwe et al., 2011). Therefore, any attempt to investigate factors affecting destination choice may contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of travel behaviour in general, and travel behaviour of a specific market segment, in particular.

The factors influencing individuals' destination choice are dynamic and changeable (Alsawafi, 2013). Thus, ongoing review of the potential factors is essential to develop appropriate marketing strategies. One of these potential factors that may affect the choice of tourist destination is social media (Dina and Sabou, 2012). Pietro et al. (2012) suggest that social media has become a powerful tool for the choice of tourism destinations. Furthermore, an empirical study conducted by Park (2015) showed that the most influential media form for choosing a travel destination was social media, while brochure ranked the last. In this context, Cheung (2012) argued that fewer and fewer people enter the buildings of travel and tour agencies to search for their desired destination as a result of internet expansion and social media. This fact is supported by the results of Fotis et al.'s (2012) study which found that travellers from former Soviet Union republics found that social media sites are more trustworthy when compared to traditional tourism sources of information, such as official tourist websites, travel agents and mass media advertising.

The expansion of the internet and social media has resulted in major changes to economies in general and marketing in particular (Robnik-Sikonja et al., 2009). More than ever before, social media, shaping nowadays online communication systems, enables people to obtain and share information easily, influencing other people's views regarding all aspects of their lives including their travel and tourism decisions (Dina and Sabou, 2012). Patel (2015) argues that using social media for marketing has become a necessity to attract and convert new customers. The number of social media users increased dramatically from one billion users in 2010 to around 2.34 billion users in 2016 and is expected to reach 2.95 billion users in 2020 (Number of social network users, 2016). According to Hubspot (2014), 92% of marketers perceive social media as an important marketing tool for their business, with 80% finding their social media efforts increased traffic to their websites. Overall, previous studies and the increasing numbers of social media users tend to highlight the role of social media in individuals' travel behaviour in general, and their destination choice in particular. Hence, the current study attempts to explore the influence of social media on Omani outbound pleasure travellers' destination choices.

2 Research methodology

The nature of this study is explanatory and descriptive. Therefore, to accomplish its objectives, the qualitative method was used to obtain an understanding of the influence of

social media on Omani outbound pleasure travellers' destination choices. In particular, in order to broaden and deepen our understanding, qualitative data from in-depth interviews with actual Omani travellers were collected. Jennings (2001) pointed out that the choice of research methodology must be primarily subject to the study questions and to limitations such as time and resources. She also suggested that application of the qualitative method is more suitable for studies that examine the nature of a phenomenon. In this regard, McNeill and Chapman (2005) indicated that the qualitative approach requires extracts of verbatim conversation that give meaning to the 'why' and 'how' of the patterns. A review of the literature indicated that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used to collect data regarding the issues under investigation in the current study (e.g., Jennings, 2001; Zhang, 2009; Zellman et al., 2010; Alsawafi, 2013). In this context, Jennings (2001, p.129) argued that one of the most important attributes of qualitative methodology is generating "emblematic themes that arise during the course of study." Therefore, given the nature of the current study objectives, the qualitative method was selected.

2.1 Selection of participants

Only 35 participants were selected based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to sampling that is chosen based on specific characteristics or features (Coyne, 1997). The selection of the 35 participants in this study was based on the following characteristics:

- 1 they had travelled abroad during the last 12 months
- 2 they had accounts on any social media sites
- 3 participants should be over 18 years old.

Conducting 20 to 30 interviews is considered acceptable and acknowledged within the scope of social research to generate sufficient constructs to crystallise deeper meanings regarding the topic of conversation (Ginsberg, 1989; Warren, 2002). All the interviews took place during September and October, 2016.

2.2 Validity and reliability

In order to:

- 1 gain data relevant to the purposes of the research instrument
- 2 gather data with maximum reliability and validity.

The research instrument was pretested to establish validity and reliability, including conducting pilot studies for in-depth interviews and experts' opinions about the research instrument.

In order to obtain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the research instrument (in-depth interviews), a pilot study was conducted with a number of Omani residents. On the basis of the pilot study, some modifications were made to ensure participants could better understand the questions of the research instrument.

2.3 *In-depth interview procedures*

The main objective of using in-depth interview is to explore, understand and provide in-depth coverage of the individuals' perspectives on a particular idea or situation (Rubin and Rubin, 1985; Seidman, 1998; Silva and Correia, 2008). This technique's flexibility made it suitable for this study, as this flexibility enabled the researcher to gain and gather rich and detailed information regarding participants' experiences and opinions. Furthermore, using this technique allowed the researcher to adjust or alter the question wording and order smoothly in line with the flow of conversation (Bernard, 2000; Babbie, 2005). In this context, Walter (2006) also argued that in-depth interview was considered the most effective technique for examining experiences of potentially sensitive issues, such as the impact of social media on travel behaviour. The first section of the interview included open-ended questions which provided participants with some degree of freedom to illustrate their points and expand on their opinions (Liu, 2008), while the second and third sections included close-ended questions, i.e., questions with specific response options. The interview questions were developed from a comprehensive review of the literature related to the influence of social media on destination choice (e.g., Fotis et al., 2012; Dina and Sabou, 2012; Reddy, 2014; Kazakov and Predvoditeleva, 2015; Park, 2015; Barry and Pearson, 2015). Table 1 shows the semi structured interview questions linked with the research objectives.

For this study, the term 'social media' was defined for interview participants as encompassing any site, such as YouTube, TripAdvisor, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest, and Myspace that allows individuals, companies, non-governmental organisations, governments, and other organisations to create, share, or exchange their generated information, ideas, career interests, photos, videos, opinion and other forms of expression via virtual networks and communities. Using social media for tourism purposes was defined as accessing social media where the intent is to obtain information about tourist destinations and their related tourism products and services.

Table 1 Interview questions and research objectives

<i>Research objectives</i>	<i>Interview questions</i>
To explore the influence of social media on Omani outbound pleasure travellers' destination choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have an account in any social media sites? • Did you use social media to obtain information about tourist destinations? If you do not, is there any member of your family (who) uses social media to obtain information about tourist destinations? Do you trust the information you get from social media? • Did you find useful information about tourist destinations in social media that helped you in choosing the tourist destination? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for tourism purposes? • Are you still using traditional media to obtain information about tourist destination? And why? • In general, do you think social media influenced your destination choice?

Table 1 Interview questions and research objectives (continued)

<i>Research objectives</i>	<i>Interview questions</i>
To obtain demographic information about participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender, age, educational level, marital status, income and occupation (see Table 2)
To collect statistical information about their general use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you use social media sites to obtain information about tourist destinations? • Which of the following social media sites do you find most useful for obtaining information about tourist destinations? • Did you find useful information about tourist destinations in social media sites that helped you in choosing the tourist destination? • Do you use social media to share information or photos about your trips after returning home? • Do you think travel and destination marketers use social media effectively to promote their destinations? (see Table 3)

In the qualitative interview, the following procedures were followed prior to, and during, each interview:

- 1 First, potential participants were approached in public places (e.g., community sports areas, supermarkets, and public parks). They were asked if they had travelled overseas in the previous 12 months. In all, the researcher conducted 35 interviews. Conducting 20 to 30 interviews is considered acceptable and acknowledged within the scope of social research to generate sufficient constructs to crystallise deeper meanings regarding the topic of conversation (Ginsberg, 1989; Warren, 2002).
- 2 All the female participants were then asked if they wanted to be interviewed in the presence of their mahrams (such as their husband or brother), but all preferred to be interviewed alone in a public place.
- 3 The researcher then asked the participants if they were willing to be involved in the research, and if the interview could be digitally recorded. In each instance the participant agreed.
- 4 During the interview, the researcher immediately recorded each participant's important answers, and the responses were then verbally summarised for the participants to verify. In this regard, Liu (2008) argued that writing down the participants' answers in front of them gives them the impression that their answers are important, which may reinforce their interaction during the interview. The interviews each took approximately 35 to 45 minutes, with the average conversation lasting around 30 minutes.
- 5 Immediately after each conversation, the researcher spent 15 to 20 minutes organising the written notes that had been made during the interview in order to generate a brief summary of the significant points of that interview.
- 6 Finally, the digital recording of each interview was transcribed and typed up by the researcher. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, and transcribed in Arabic.

Hence, all quotations used in the following text are verbatim text, but translated into English.

2.4 Data analysis

In order to explore, understand, and provide in-depth coverage of the participants' perspectives on the influence of social media on their destination choice, it was decided that this study should focus on identifying themes within the participants' perceptions. Therefore, the data was analysed using the thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is a method used to analyse the qualitative data in order to identify, organise, describe and extract patterns from analysed data which eventually results in developing the 'themes' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In order to enhance the research's reliability and validity, the current study followed the six phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.16) to use the thematic analysis method effectively and efficiently. These phases are:

- 1 familiarising yourself with your data
- 2 generating initial codes
- 3 searching for themes
- 4 reviewing themes
- 5 defining and naming themes
- 6 producing the report.

In this context, Fielden et al. (2011, p.3) argued that following these phases allows "a clear demarcation of thematic analysis, providing researchers with a well-defined explanation of what it is and how it is carried out whilst maintaining the 'flexibility' tied to its epistemological position."

2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval for the current study was granted by the Scientific Research Department of Al Rustaq College of Applied Sciences (RCAS). Therefore, all personal information collected from individuals during this research will be kept confidential in accordance with the regulations of the Ethics Committee of RCAS. In order to protect participants' identities, the names of respondents were not required for the completion of the interviews. In addition, data collected from the participants was accessed by no one other than the researcher. Participation in the study was voluntary. Therefore, participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 The demographic profiles of participants

Thirty five in-depth interviews with actual Omani outbound travellers were conducted. The first part of the interview sought to obtain demographic information about participants, and how many times they had travelled abroad during the last 12 months. A

profile of those participating in the in-depth interviews is provided in Table 2. Of the 35 participants, slightly more than half, 19 (54%), were male and 16 (46%) were female. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 59 years of age, with a mean age of 36. Regarding their marital status, a descriptive analysis of the sample showed that the majority of participants (77%) were married. In terms of their educational level, 25 % of the participants confirmed that they had a diploma, 51% had a Bachelor's degree, 20% had received solely a secondary education, and 4% obtained Master and PhD degrees. The majority of participants received a monthly income of between 500 to 1,000 OMR (approximately US\$1,300 to US\$2,600 in 2016), making up 57% of participants; 14% of participants were earning less than 500 OMR and 29% had an income over 1,000 to 1,500 OMR. Most participants were working as public servants (57%), while the remaining participants were working in the private sector (43%). Finally, the average number of travel occasions was three times.

Table 2 The demographic profiles of participants in interviews

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Gender		
Male	19	54%
Female	16	46%
Total	35	100%
Age groups		
Below the age of 25	5	14%
Between the ages of 25 to 45	15	43%
Between the ages of 46 to 55	10.5	29%
Over the age of 55	35	14%
Total		100%
Educational level		
Secondary school	7	20%
Diploma	8	25%
Bachelor degree	18.2	51%
Master and PhD degrees	35	4%
Total		100%
Marital status		
Single	8	23%
Married	27	77%
Total	100%	100%
Income		
Under OR 500	5	14%
Over OR 500 to OR 1,000	20	57%
Over OR 1,000 to OR 1,500	10	29%
Total	35	100%
Occupation groups		
Public sector	20	57%
Private sector	15	43%
Total	35	100%

3.2 *General statistical information about participants' use of social media for tourism purposes*

In order to collect general information about their use of social media, participants were also asked five questions:

- 1 How often do you use social media sites to obtain information about tourist destination?
- 2 Which of the following social media sites do you find most useful for obtaining information about tourist destinations?
- 3 Did you find useful information about tourist destinations in social media sites that helped you in choosing the tourist destination?
- 4 Do you use social media to share information or photos about your trips after returning home?
- 5 Do you think travel and destination marketers use social media effectively to promote their destinations?

Table 3 summarises participants' use of social media sites for tourism purposes.

Table 3 Participants' use of social media sites for tourism purposes

<i>N</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>No. (%)</i>
1	How often do you use social media sites to obtain information about tourist destination?	Frequently	22 (63%)
		Sometimes	9 (26%)
		Rarely	4 (11%)
		Never	0 (0%)
2	Which of the following social media sites do you find most useful for obtaining information about tourist destinations?	YouTube	10 (29%)
		TripAdvisor	9 (26%)
		Twitter	6 (17%)
		Facebook	5 (14%)
		Instagram	5 (14%)
		Google+	0 (0%)
		Pinterest	0 (0%)
3	Did you find useful information about tourist destinations in social media sites that helped you in choosing the tourist destination?	Yes	19 (54%)
		To a degree	12 (34%)
		No	4 (12%)
4	Do you use social media to share information, photos or videos about your trips after returning home?	Yes always	22 (63%)
		Sometimes	7 (20%)
		No	6 (17%)
5	Do you think travel and destination marketers use social media effectively to promote their destinations?	Yes	12 (34%)
		To a degree	19 (54%)
		No	4 (12%)

The first question explored participants' use of social media sites to obtain information about tourist destinations. The findings showed that the majority of the participants (63%) used social media 'frequently' to obtain information about tourist destinations, while only 11% used them 'rarely'. When participants were asked about their most useful social media site to obtain information about tourist destinations, they reported that YouTube (29%), TripAdvisor (26%) and Twitter (17%) were respectively the most useful social media sites for the purpose. The third question in this part of the interview explored whether participants found useful information about tourist destinations in social media sites that helped them in choosing their tourist destinations. 54% of participants answered 'yes', 34% reported 'to a degree', and only 12% answered 'no'. The study also found that 83% of participants shared 'always' or 'sometimes' information, photos or videos about their trips after returning home, in social media, while only 17% of them said 'no'. The last question in this part of the interview examined participant' thoughts regarding travel and destination marketers' use of social media to promote their destinations. The findings indicated that 34% of participants thought that travel and destination marketers' use of social media was effective, and 54% thought that it was to some extent effective, while 12% thought that it was not effective.

3.3 The influence of social media on destination choice

The first part of the interview consisted of eight main questions focusing on the influence of social media on destination choice of Omani outbound travellers (see Table 1). The thematic analysis process that was applied to the transcripts extracted key concepts that were evident in the data. The analysis process led to the development of five themes regarding the influence of social media on their destination choice. These themes were essential in determining the perceptions of all the participants towards the influence of social media on their choice of destination. These themes have been labelled as: the credibility of social media information, the influence of age on use of social media, the advancement of technology has a huge impact on using social media, the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool and social media and traditional media complement each other.

3.3.1 The credibility of social media information

This theme revolves around the credibility of social media information. In general, the participants believed that social media has credibility, but that users should analyse and evaluate obtained information from social media critically before making travel decisions. This finding is in agreement with Dina and Sabou (2012) finding which showed that Romanian young people consider social media sites as trustworthy sources of information and they use them extensively for acquiring information before planning a trip. In more detail, the transcripts revealed the use of the following phrases regarding the credibility of social media information, which supports the findings above:

“..Critical thinking skills should be applied to information obtained from social media sites.”

“I depend on social media sites, traditional media and my friends' recommendations to make my travel decision.”

“..I generally trust social media sites, but as you know some people exaggerate their ideas or their feelings about their trips. They may ignore the positive things about destination and focus only on the negative things.”

“..I use social media sites to read what others shared about their trips (their reviews). Social media sites really help me to plan my trip.”

Within this theme, there was some evidence of a difference between the genders in terms of their confidence in social media. Female participants were more cautious regarding dealing with information obtained from social media than were male participants. This finding is in agreement with Powell and Ansic (1997) who found that females seem to be more cautious compared with men when making decisions.

Female participants said:

“..We are a big family; I spent hours just searching for the best accommodation for us before travelling to Malaysia. We wanted accommodation that has washing machine, contains at least three toilets and it should be near the city centre.”

Other female participants said:

“.. I do my own research even if my husband did that. I trust him but I want to make sure that all things are accurate and right.”

A single female participant said:

“..My family depend on me to bring information about available accommodation options at destination, the best attractions there and airfare deals, so, I have to do it carefully. They will blame me for any mistake or wrong decision. I do not want to regret anything.”

3.3.2 The influence of age on the use of social media

This theme highlights the idea that older people are less likely than young people to use social media (Perrin, 2015). To be more specific, the interview transcripts showed that respondents (over the age of 55) commonly used the following expressions which strongly support the above idea:

“..My daughter uses social media to look for information about potential destinations, events prices, hotels, photos and related services and then show me what she found.”

“..I asked my sons to gather information about destination activities, accommodation options, transportation and attractions from social media sites.”

“..To be honest with you, I rarely use social media sites to get information about the potential destinations, but my sons are good at using internet for information research related to the potential destinations.”

“..My parents always ask me to bring information from internet about the prices of accommodation.”

3.3.3 The advancement of technology has a huge impact on using social media

The third theme is derived from the perceptions of participants towards the role of advanced technology in the spread of using social media for tourism purposes. More specifically, according to the interview transcripts, the majority of participants strongly

believe that technological advancements have positive effect on the spread of using of social media which influenced travellers' travel behaviour and decision making.

"..Nowadays, people can easily use social media from their mobile phones to collect information about any destination."

"..I can now use my smartphone or my tablet to bring detailed information about any tourist attraction in the world effortlessly."

".. I use my phone to watch short clips in YouTube about any destination in the world."

"... Most people now have smartphones or tablets, so, they can easily open accounts in Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or other social media sites."

The growing use of internet and smartphones gives an insight as to how advanced technology affects and changes people's lives. The number of internet users increased dramatically from half a billion user in 2001 to around 3.5 billion users in 2016 (Internet Users, 2016). In terms of the widespread use of smartphones, Samsung and Apple companies, as examples, sold around 158 million smartphones in 2016 (Samsung and Apple, 2016).

3.3.4 The effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool

This theme describes the effectiveness of social media from the perspective of participants. According to the analysis of the interview transcripts, there was a united consensus that social media have the capability of attracting both marketers and customers (users). In this context, Kazakov and Predvoditeleva (2015) state that Russian female travellers first consider social media when they need information on a destination they plan to visit. In terms of marketers' use of social media, the annual report from the Social Media Examiner found that the majority of marketers (92%) have increased their exposure through social media, and they also had positive results in terms of traffic (Colwyn, 2014). To be more specific, the interview transcripts showed that participants commonly used the following expressions which strongly support the above analysis:

"..You can almost find everything that you need about any destination in social media."

"..Social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have billions (of) monthly active users as well as companies, and people can now easily upload and share photos, videos, and links."

"..I think soon or later, we will see more countries use social media for tourism marketing". ".. Social media platforms offer users free and valuable information about all aspects of tourism in any country. From my own experience, in social media you can find things you can not find in T.V or newspapers."

3.3.5 Social media and traditional media complement each other

There was some evidence that older participants in this study tend to describe the relationship between social media and traditional media as complementary rather than competition or conflict in terms of their role in shaping their behaviour in general, and their travel behaviour in particular. This result is consistent with Avidar (2009) who

found that 62 % of participants in his study thought that “social media and traditional media complement each other”.

“.. I depend on both of them (social media and traditional media) when I am looking for tour packages.”

“.. We cannot dispense with newspaper, television or radio as sources of information. Their role in our lives will change but will not disappear.”

“..We can not ignore traditional media as sources of tourism information, especially travel and tourism magazines.”

“..I think our travel decisions will be more credible and authoritative if we utilise all available sources of information.”

4 Conclusions and recommendations

This study contributes to the current literature on the use and influence of social media on destination choice. The obtained statistical information from participants regarding their use of social media for tourism purposes highlights some important findings. First, the results showed that all interview participants were using social media to obtain information about tourist destinations. This finding highlights the idea that social media has become a powerful and influential tool for the choice of tourism destinations (Pietro et al., 2012). Moreover, the results revealed that the majority of participants (88%) found useful information about tourist destinations in social media that helped them in choosing their tourist destinations. This result also supports the idea that social media was considered as a trustworthy source of tourism information (Dina and Sabou, 2012). Finally, the results found that more than half of participants (54%) thought that travel and destination marketers’ use of social media to promote their destinations was, to some extent, effective. This finding reflects the need for future studies to explore what the effective ways are to use social media to promote tourist destinations in order to effectively and efficiently attract the attention of social media users.

The analysis process led to the development of five themes regarding the influence of social media on Omani outbound travellers’ destination choices. These themes have been labelled as: the credibility of social media information; the influence of age on the use of social media; the advancement of technology has a huge impact on using social media; the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool, and social media and traditional media complement each other. The following conclusions can be drawn from the results of the qualitative analysis of the study data. The main findings identified that overall, participants’ perceptions on the credibility of social media information were positive. However, they raise an issue regarding the importance of using critical thinking skills when using social media as a source of tourism information about desired destinations. Moreover, the qualitative analysis revealed that age of participants has an effect on their use of social media, where older participants were less likely to use social media for tourism purposes than young participants. Furthermore, the majority of participants attributed the rapid spread of using social media for tourism purposes to the technological advancements in the field of smartphones and tablets. In addition, the qualitative results revealed a united consensus among participants that social media have the capability of attracting both marketers and customers (users). In this context, Wirtz et al. (2013)

argued that the attraction of social media websites has significantly and positively changed interaction on the internet. The increasing numbers of social media users (marketers and customers) support this conclusion. Therefore, this result confirms the earlier finding that social media has become a powerful and influential tool for the choice of tourism destinations. Finally, older participants in this study perceived the relationship between social media and traditional media as complementary rather than competition or conflict.

The above results also highlight the need for future studies to examine the effectiveness of using print media, such as newspapers, magazines, posters or brochures in tourism marketing. In addition, in order to obtain a broader and deeper understanding of the influence of social media on Omani tourists' destination choice, the current study suggests benefiting from the findings of the study's in-depth interviews to develop survey questionnaire in order to obtain statistical data and information that allow researchers to generalise their findings to Omani outbound tourists' destination choice.

In conclusion, based on the above thematic analysis and interpretation of the derived themes, it could be concluded that the majority of participants interviewed believe that social media had an effect on their destination choices. Therefore, it is hoped that the outcomes of the current study will assist researchers and practitioners in enhancing their understanding of the factors influencing Omani outbound tourists' destination choices. In this context, Weiermair (2000) argued that understanding what motivates a tourist to choose a specific destination is central in developing appropriate travel marketing strategies. Thus, based on the study findings regarding the influence of social media on destination choice of Omani outbound tourists, the current study suggests that travel companies that target the Omani travel market must develop social media marketing strategies to improve their marketing effectiveness and meet the expectations, needs and wants of Omani outbound travellers in general, and to promote their destinations in particular.

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