Review Paper

The Role of Social Media in Tourism Development: A Multimodal Mediation Analysis of an Emerging Economy

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Abstract: Social media (SM) is a popular and powerful tool used in the tourism industry to connect tourists with specific experiences. In this study, we explore the relationship between SM and revisit intention (RI), the formation of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) networks, tourist satisfaction (TS), and ultimately, the development of the tourism sector (e.g., tourism development (TD)) based on the social learning theory. We used a structural equation model to identify direct and mediating relationships between variables. The model was based on perspectives provided by 395 individuals who had visited tourist destinations in Bangladesh. We confirmed that SM exerts a substantial direct and positive effect on TS, e-WOM, and TD, although we did not find an association between SM and RI. Likewise, e-WOM networks directly and positively impact RI, TS, and TD. RI, in turn, positively impacts TD, as TS also exerts a significant direct effect on RI and TD. TS and RI mediate the relationship between SM and TD, SM and RI, e-WOM and TD, as well as that of e-WOM and TD, TS and TD respectively. We were unable to identify a mediating role for TS in the relationship between e-WOM to RI, or for e-WOM in the SM and TS relationship. The relationships identified in this study are not merely of theoretical interest as relevant industry practitioners could use these insights to develop plans and guidelines for the use of SM networks to develop the sector.

Keywords: Social media, tourist satisfaction, electronic word-of-mouth, revisit intention, tourism development.

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Introduction

Travelling is today considered an indispensable personal experience (Yan, Zhou, & Wu, 2018). Most travellers, prior to undertaking a trip gather information about their proposed destination (Mohammad, 2020). In this respect, social media (SM) and social networking sites are increasingly facilitating this process (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). As current travellers use SM platforms to share their stories, pictures, and videos, and talk about their trip with the virtually connected community, a new crop of potential tourists is generated (Javed, Tuˇcková, & Jibril, 2020). As a result, tourism and hospitality companies increasingly rely on SM to meet the needs of current and potential customers.

There is some empirical evidence that SM influences tourist behaviour and decision-making (Phan & Ting-Yueh, 2022; Berhanu & Raj, 2020; Javed et al., 2020;). Moreover, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has suggested prioritising social media for promoting tourism. Based on this recommendation, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) launched social media pages on Facebook and Instagram, which allows it to communicate directly with international travellers from Bangladesh, in the relevant languages (Bengali and English). These dedicated SM spaces also allow TAT to keep pace with the needs, tastes, enquiries and travel requirements of its Bangladeshi customers.

While world tourism has, on the whole, experienced a dramatic increase thanks in part to SM, in Bangladesh, the industry has lagged, in part because the country ignored the promotional potential of SM. This is regrettable, especially as Bangladesh is one of the most attractive countries in the world, with her wide range of natural beauty such as coastal areas, hill tracks, the world's largest sandy sea beach, the mangrove forest of Sundarban, rivers, and her pleasant weather.

The Cox's Bazar is the longest (150 km) unbroken sandy sea beach in the world, with a coral island and clear blue water. The city of Cox's Bazar, one of the country's most popular tourist spots, hosts 85,000 visitors daily, generating about USD 1 million in revenue per day (Rakib et al., 2022). Moreover, St. Martin's Island is one of the smallest islands in the world. It covers an area of about 9 km². The island is 7.315 km long, and 975 – 1,890 m wide. Apart from domestic tourists, a significant number of foreign tourists from adjacent countries like Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal visit the country and generate a large portion of the country's revenue (Kamruzzaman & Uchinlayen, 2018).

Despite the enormous growth of the tourism industry in Bangladesh, the use of SM for tourism development (TD) has not captured much scholarly attention. Yet, the numbers of foreign tourists are very few in comparison to neighbouring countries. In fact, only a small number of foreign tourists visit Bangladesh each year. Furthermore, Moudud (2010) argued that in addition to inadequate infrastructural

expansion at tourist destinations, the absence of appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities for travellers, shortage of capable and competent tourist guides and service providers, as well as insufficient promotional programmes are mainly responsible for the low numbers of foreign tourists. In contributing to the identified literature gaps, we intend to explore the use of SM for promoting the tourism industry in Bangladesh. In this respect, in a previous study, Karim (2019) revealed that 95% of young people think SM is vital for TD in Bangladesh. Among them, 45% use SM to find travel information. Additionally, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) also recognises the critical role of social networking in tourism (Islam, 2021).

Moreover, while there is vast literature that has explored how SM can be used to develop a tourism industry, very few discussions have centred around Bangladesh's tourism industry (Karim, 2019). This study investigates how SM contributes to forming electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communication networks that inspire repeat tourism. In particular, as attracting and retaining repeat visitors is more cost-effective than gaining new ones, thus e-WOM is acknowledged as a crucial contributor to the profitability of a business (Kamruzzaman & Uchinlayen, 2018). We also examine social media's role in tourist satisfaction (TS) and any mediating effects of TS, e-WOM, and revisit intention (RI). This study may contribute to a growing body of knowledge about the crucial role SM and e-WOMs play in encouraging tourism in Bangladesh, and the insights it offers can be used by tourism promotion entities to develop effective pro-tourism policies.

Literature Review and Hypothesis development

Social Learning Theory (SLT)

The social learning theory, proposed by Bandura (1967), is a widely used model in the communication and marketing promotion fields. This theory posits that respondents in a communication network act as the social agents that create e-WOM, which is capable of inspiring visits or revisits to tourism destinations or otherwise, altering tourist behaviour. Current social learning theories are based on Wenger's (1998) concept of "community of practice," which stresses learning as the participation of groups of people inside an online system that engage in collective learning, activities, and interactions that typically do not occur in formal settings (Rogge, Theesfeld, & Strassner, 2020). This theory suggests that users in a social media network establish a virtual community in which people can alter their preferences after gathering knowledge about their neighbours' preferences, and network members can operate as agents who can influence their ideas (Lee & Son, 2019). Therefore, in the corpus of social learning theory, social media networks can form the e-WOM learning drive to be advocators of tourists to recommend certain destinations or revisit decisions.

Social Media (SM)

SM has been given various definitions by researchers. According to Lake (2020), SM refers to websites and applications that allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real time. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined SM as web applications closely associated with internet applications. Tajvidi and Karami (2021) described social media as Web 2.0 applications that facilitate computer-mediated social networking opportunities for individuals to interact online. Manago (2013) also described social media as online platforms where people share feelings, opinions, and comments about various products and services, regardless of time and location constraints, in a manner that has mutual benefits and that ultimately influences consumption behaviour (Li, Teng, & Chen, 2020).

Revisit Intention

According to Wibowo, Sazali, and Kresnamurti, (2016), interest in revisiting a particular tourism destination is a form of behaviour that originates from previous visit experiences. Revisit intention (RI) is the consequences of positive travel experiences and helps the traveller develop a long-term perspective. SM creates value and benefits (Tavitiyaman, Qu, Tsang, & Lam, 2021) by allowing information about tourist hotspots to be shared, thereby attracting new visitors to the location. SM also allows previous visitors to receive updated information about locations that had been visited in the past.

RI is a post-consumption behaviour that involves visitors returning to previously visited destinations (Viet, Dang, & Nguyen, 2020). TS and RI are interrelated, as a tourist's positive feelings toward a specific destination increases the likelihood that he or she will revisit that destination (Hasan, Abdullah, Lew, & Islam, 2019). Since satisfied tourists are not only more likely to return, but their positive WOM can inspire a new crop of tourists, therefore, improving RI rates, and ultimately positively impacting TD (Puspitasari, Pramono, & Rahmadhika, 2018).

Tourist Satisfaction

Carlos Martin, Saayman, and Du Plessis (2019) described satisfaction as the difference between anticipated performance and post-consumption perceived performance. In the tourism context, satisfaction is a metric used to describe the discrepancy between pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences (Jiang, Zhang, Zhang, & Yan, 2017). Tourists are satisfied when they obtain tourism experiences according to their level of expectations and are inspired to share the experiences with others (Nasir, Mohamad, & Ghani, 2021; Bayih & Singh, 2020; Krishen, Berezan, Agarwal, & Kachroo, 2019).

Electronic Word-of-mouth (e-WOM)

E-WOM is consumer-generated consumption-related digital communications directed primarily to other potential consumers (Kristine & Rosario, 2020). E-WOM plays a significant role in the formation of travel intention and TD (Tapanainen, Thi Thanh, & Trung, 2021), as a tourist's positive experiences, shared via e-WOM communications, encourage potential visitors to travel to the said destination (Marques, Silva, & Antova, 2021). Some studies have shown that WOM messages increase the probability of a visit by reducing uncertainties among potential visitors (Mohammad, 2020). Tourists in general spend time collecting information about a potential destination prior to planning a trip. Thus, e-WOM allows consumers to collect information about goods and services from both people they personally know as well as a geographically dispersed group of people who have already had those experiences (Pei Pei & Noor, 2020; Jalilvand, Esfahani, & Samiei, 2011).

Tourism Development (TD)

In this study, TD refers to the advancement of entire sectors connected to the tourism due to the repeat visits of tourists as a result of their satisfaction and induced by SM. It is argued that when a certain destination becomes popular due to high tourist arrivals, certain sectors related to tourism, such as accommodation, restaurant, transportation, food and beverage, etc will also benefit and grow. Consequently, tourism-related spending can make a significant contribution to the economy of a country. However, tourism is an increasingly dynamic industry in Bangladesh. As of 2020, it contributed 4.4% of the country's GDP, although the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) predicts that this sector is capable of growing by 7.1% per year and contributing up to USD 21.396 billion by 2027 (Knoema, 2021).

Overall, social media tourism platforms (e.g. Trivago, Booking and Tripadvisor) open a pathway to connect with tourists, build a sustainable long-term relationship with them without even one service encounter, motivate their intent to purchase tourism products, resulting in TS and further, the tendency to share information (Li et al., 2020; Tavitiyaman et al., 2021). TS inspires recommendation behaviour (Krishen et al., 2019; Pestan, Parreira, & Moutinho, 2020); in other words, positive comments on a SM platform generates positive perceptions and, ultimately, visit intentions (Berhanu & Raj, 2020). Moreover, Verma and Yadav (2021) considered the website of a particular business (part of social media) as the "coffee house" that acts as a digital platform in which users with similar interests can "find and then electronically 'talk' to each other through one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many modes of communication", creating a significantly positive e-WOM. Thus, in the light of aforementioned explanations, we can propose the following set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:   Tourism experiences discussed through social media have a significant direct influence on revisit intention (H1a), tourist satisfaction (H1b), e-WOM (H1c), and tourism development (H1d).

Hypothesis 2:   Tourism experiences discussed through e-WOM have a significant direct influence on revisit intention (H2a), tourist satisfaction (H2b), and tourism development (H2c).

Hypothesis 3:   Revisit intention has a significant direct influence on tourism development.

Hypothesis 4:   Tourist satisfaction has a significant influence on revisit intention (H4a) and tourism development (H4b).

Mediating Effects

TS is the crucial power to mediate the relationship between SM to TD, SM to RI, and e-WOM to RI, which means that if tourists are satisfied due to the support of SM, the influencing power of SM becomes more substantial on the effects of RI, e-WOM, and eventually, TD (Vaio, López-Ojeda, Manrique-de-Lara-Peñate, & Trujillo, 2021). Scholars (e.g. Zaman & Aktan, 2021; Li, 2021) identified TS as a mediating role in the formation of RI, the likelihood of engaging in e-WOM, and tourism industry development. Moreover, in cases where tourists visit a specific destination several times, their satisfaction level may continuously increase (through better appreciation of the facilities provided) inspiring positive e-WOM communication and motivating other tourists to visit that destination (Liu & Chou, 2016). In this scenario, RI may be a significant mediator of the relationship between e-WOM and TD, and TS and TD. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses related to mediation:

Hypothesis 5:   Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between social media and tourism development, social media and revisits intention, as well as e-WOM and revisit intention.

Hypothesis 6:   Revisit intention mediates the relationship between e-WOM and tourism development, as well as tourist satisfaction and tourism development.

Hypothesis 7:   E-WOM mediates the relationship between social media and tourist satisfaction.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Our proposed conceptual model (see Figure 1) is based on our extensive review of prior literature. This conceptual model incorporates assumptions from the social

learning theory (Bandura, 1967); namely, that SM is a behavioural phenomenon within a community network in which each user acts as a social agent in the network by generating and consuming e-WOM, thereby encouraging RI and development of the tourism sector.
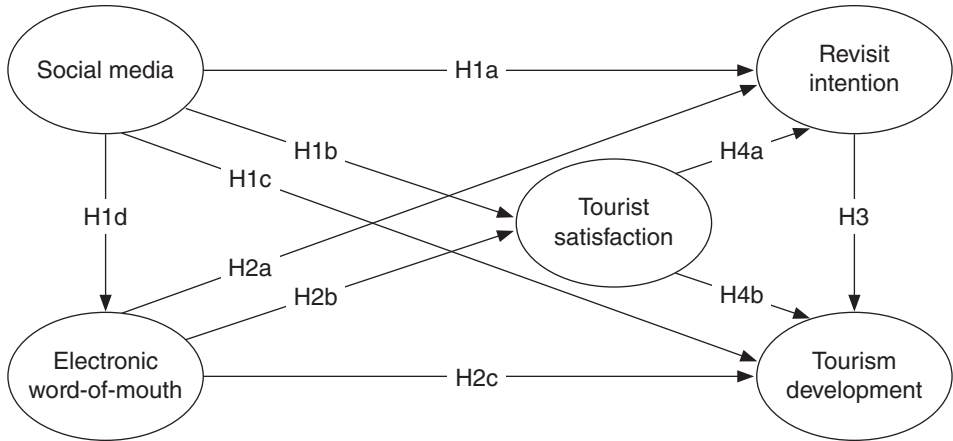

Figure 1: Conceptual research model

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study is quantitative in nature, and relied on collected questionnaire survey data. The targeted respondents were domestic tourists in Bangladesh. To be eligible for this study, they must have had at least one tourist experience in the study context (e.g., Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin). The survey was conducted between February and March 2021. We chose this period for data collection as COVID restrictions have been lifted and many local tourists were visiting tourist attractions. We considered Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin as data collection areas because these are the most attractive and convenient places in Bangladesh, among others. Based on target response, we used the purposive sampling technique. Moreover, we believe that purposive sampling is best suited to collect data swiftly.

The data was analysed using Amos-24 software, which includes a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and structural equation modeling (SEM). In general, SEM encompasses a variety of statistical models, and since covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) is the more likely used approach in SEM, many researchers simply refer to CB-SEM as SEM (Astrachan, Patel, & Wanzenried, 2014). SEM is used to confirm the reliability and validity of study data and illustrate theoretical relationships between variables (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In addition, this method extensively

explores important model fit indices. Therefore, we used CB-SEM in our study to obtain better reliability, model fit, and the theoretical relationships between variables. Furthermore, using Amos-24, a bootstrap analysis was conducted to assess the mediating effects in the model.

Measurement Development

The measurement questions were all generated from previous literature. The measurement scales were drawn from Cao, Meadows, Wong, and Xia (2020) for SM; Yi et al. (2020) for e-WOM; Esubalew and Raghurama (2020) for TS; Rahman, Bag, Hassan, Hossain and Singh (2021) for RI; and Obradović et al. (2021) as well as Zaman and Aktan (2020) for TD. Initially, we conducted our survey using 30 items, but finally, we used 21 of the most reliable items (Table 2). It was a self-administered questionnaire survey. Our first question asked respondents to identify whether they had any tourist experience. If the answer was yes, they were then asked to answer the remaining questions using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Data Collection

The survey questions were asked in English because respondents were comfortable in English rather local language. The appropriateness and wording of our initial draft questions was reviewed by scholars, and we made necessary modifications and changes accordingly. We then conducted a pilot survey with 25 respondents, asking them about their feelings as they filled in the questionnaires. The pilot survey results and respondents' opinions resulted in some minor changes in wordings. Once the drafting of the survey was completed, we collected 412 samples after distribution. Of this, 395 were considered valid and worthy of further analysis after cleaning the data, removing data with missing values and removing outliers.

Common Method Bias Test

Common method bias may arise when data is collected from one source at a time, and is inevitable in survey-based studies. Respondents may be reluctant to answer structured questions, or their intentions may not be appropriately quantifiable through the questions asked. However, Harman's single-factor test can be conducted to assess the presence of any common method bias. Test results confirmed that the first factor explained 25.24% of the variance and that several factors had eigenvalues of more than one, indicating common method bias is not an issue in the study data (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Empirical Results

Demographic of Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide certain demographic and primary information relevant to their tourism experiences. Approximately 69% of the respondents were men, and 77% of them were in the 18–29 age group (see Table 1). Most of the respondents comprised students (67%). Thirty-four percent of the respondents visited a tourist attraction with friends, and 25% visited with family. Sixty-three percent of the respondents visited the destinations for tourism at least once, while 69% of them stayed at least three nights. Their accommodation type was 3–5 stars (53%) and 1–3 stars (32%).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents (n = 395)

Variable	Items	Freq.	%	Variable	Items	Freq.	%
Gender				Visit companionship			
	Male	276	69.9		Alone	6	1.5
	Female	119	30.1		Friends	135	34.3
Age					Family/relatives	99	25.1
	18-29 years	307	77.7		Organized group tours	25	6.3
	30-40	52	13.2		Study tour	130	32.9
	41-50	23	5.8	Experience			
	51-60	11	2.8		1 time visit	250	63.3
	< 50	2	0.5		2 times	86	21.8
Occupation					3–5 times	38	9.6
	Govt. job	38	9.6		6 times	18	4.5
	Private job	41	10.4	Length of stay			
	Self-employed	22	5.6		3 nights or less	275	69.6
	Retired	3	0.8		4–6 nights	100	25.3
	Student	265	67.1		7–10 nights	15	3.8
	Others	26	6.6		More	5	1.3
Education				Accommodation type			
	> SSC	9	2.3		1–3 star hotel	127	32.2
	SSC	20	5.1		3–5 star hotel	212	53.7
	Bachelor	236	59.7		Hostel/guesthouse	42	10.6
	Higher study	130	32.9		Apartment/homestay	14	3.5

Measurement Model Analysis

We assessed the adequacy of the measurement model by observing its reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and multicollinearity. Table 2 shows that all the Chronbach's alpha values and composite reliability (CR) values were above

0.70, reflecting a high reliability within our scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The standardised factor loads for each item and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct were assessed to determine convergent validity, and ideally, these values will exceed 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Our test results show that the standardised factor loads (> 0.70) and AVE (> 0.50) were within their cut-off values, suggesting adequate convergent validity (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Table 2. Reliability and validity statistics

Constructs and Items	Std. Loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted	Cronbach's alpha
Tourist Satisfaction (TS)		0.892	0.674	0.891
TS1	0.759			
TS3	0.862			
TS4	0.845			
TS6	0.815			
Revisit Intention (RI)		0.884	0.656	0.889
RI1	0.859			
RI3	0.824			
RI4	0.785			
RI5	0.768			
Social Media (SM)		0.912	0.722	0.878
SM3	0.793			
SM5	0.890			
SM6	0.859			
SM7	0.853			
Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)		0.862	0.617	0.851
E-WOM2	0.834			
E-WOM3	0.872			
E-WOM5	0.839			
E-WOM6	0.555			
Tourism Development (TD)		0.933	0.736	0.933
TD2	0.875			
TD3	0.857			
TD4	0.847			
TD5	0.850			
TD6	0.859			

Note: Instrument components were taken from existing literature while values are calculated results.

Table 3 highlights that discriminant validity was also confirmed, as (1) the square roots of the AVEs were higher than their corresponding correlation values with other constructs, (2) the item loads on their own constructs were significantly higher than the cross-loadings of any other constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were within their threshold value (10), and tolerance values fell within their critical limits, reflecting a lack of multicollinearity problems in the model. Overall, the measurement model demonstrates higher model fit indices, particularly, chi-square/degrees of freedom (x^2/df), average goodness of fit index and comparative fit index, all within their critical limits (1.953, 0.898, and 0.975 respectively), representing good model fit (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Constructs	TS	RI	SM	E-WOM	TD	Tolerance	VIF
TS	**0.82**					0.304	3.287
RI	0.69	**0.81**				0.265	3.780
SM	0.75	0.77	**0.85**			0.348	2.875
E-WOM	0.67	0.73	0.75	**0.79**		0.452	2.210
TD	0.60	0.75	0.69	0.75	**0.86**		

Note: model fit indies; $x^2/d.f.$ = 1.953, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI = 0.975, RMR = 0.076, GFI = 0.917, AGFI = 0.898, IFI = 0.975, TLI= 0.971. Bold diagonals are the square root of AVEs.

Structural Model

Figure 2 and Table 4 show the results of the structural model analysis. The results show that the model is highly predictive, as variance explained by RI, TS, e-WOM, and TD were 0.88, 0.58, 0.66, and 0.80, respectively. In our model, all paths were significant with the exception of two. Our model illustrated that SM has a significant positive impact on TS (β = 0.61), TD (β = 0.14), and e-WOM (β= 0.81), confirming H1b, H1c, and H1d. The e-WOM was also found to positively impact RI (β = 0.15), TS (β = 0.17), and TD β = 0.30), confirming H2a, H2b and H2c. Finally, RI significantly affected TD (β = 0.43), while TS significantly affected RI (β = 0.77), confirming H3 and H4a. The paths between SM and RI, as well as that between TS and TD, were insignificant, disconfirming H1a and H4b.

Table 4. Hypothesis results

Hypothetical paths		β-value	t-value	p-value
H1a	Social media → Revisit intention	0.067	0.956	0.339
H1b	Social media → Tourist satisfaction	0.616	7.181	***
H1c	Social media → Electronic word-of-mouth	0.814	14.859	***
H1d	Social media → Tourism development	0.143	2.071	**
H2a	Electronic word-of -mouth → Revisit intention	0.157	2.574	**
H2b	Electronic word-of-mouth → Tourist satisfaction	0.171	2.087	**
H2c	Electronic word-of-mouth → Tourism development	0.307	4.685	***
H3	Revisit intention → Tourism development	0.437	3.131	***
H4a	Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intention	0.773	12.609	***
H4b	Tourist satisfaction → Tourism development	0.085	0.674	0.500
Variance explained : R^2				
Revisit intention : 0.88				
Tourist satisfaction : 0.58				
Electronic word-of-mouth : 0.66				
Tourism development : 0.80				

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$. Model fit indies; $x^2/df = 2.361$, RMSEA = 0.055, CFI = 0.968, RMR = 0.076, GFI = 0.917, AGFI = 0.894, IFI = 0.968, TLI= 0.962.
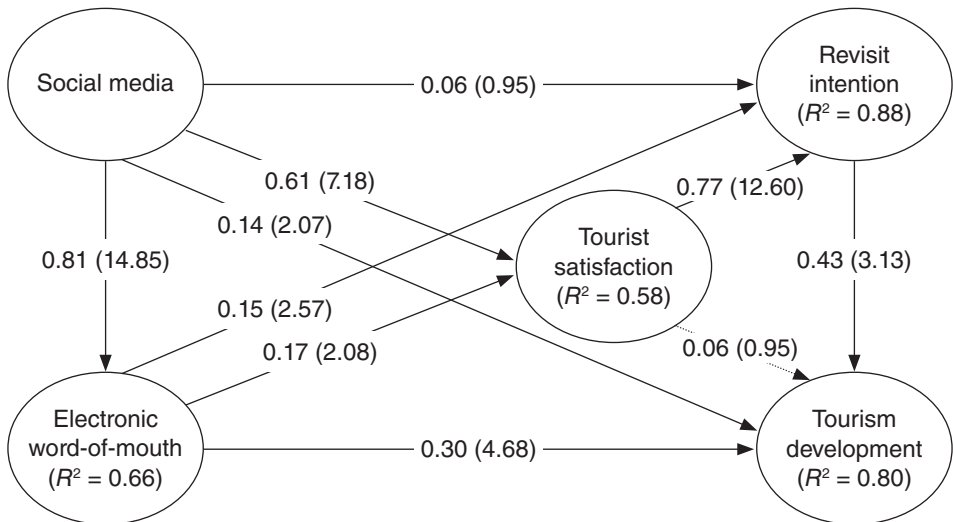

Figure 2. Structural model

Mediating Model

We performed bootstrapping checks, following Hayes' (2009) principles, to assess mediating effects in the model. The bootstrapping was performed using 395 samples, and repeated 5,000 times. The results (indirect effect) confirm that TS had a significant mediating effect between SM and TD (β = 0.08) as well as SM and RI (β= 0.07). Additionally, RI exerted a significant mediating effect between e-WOM and TD (β =0.06), as well as TS and TD (β = 0.16). Table 5 also shows that the indirect effect in the bias-corrected model did not include zero, suggesting that a mediated relationship between x and y exists (Baron & Kenny, 1986). However, the e-WOM path to RI was not mediated by TS, and the SM to TS pathway was not mediated by e-WOM.

Table 5. Results of mediation analysis

Hypothetical paths		Indirect effect	Bootstrapping	
			Bias-corrected	
			95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
H5a	Social media → Tourist satisfaction → Tourism development	0.080***	0.514	0.827
H5b	Social media → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intention	0.078***	0.573	0.887
H5c	Electronic word-of-mouth → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intention	0.080	-0.012	0.307
H6a	Electronic word-of-mouth → Revisit intention → Tourism development	0.063***	0.036	0.289
H6b	Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intention → Tourism development	0.16***	0.086	0.742
H7	Social media → Electronic word-of-mouth → Tourist satisfaction	0.086	–0.012	0.331

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

Discussion

In this study, four of our initial hypotheses (H1a, b, c, d) proposed that SM has extensive power to influence the RI of experienced tourists, to improve TS, to form the basis of positive e-WOM, and eventually encourgae TD. Consequently, H1b, H1c, H1d were supported, while evidence for H1a exceptionally was lacking. The results also demonstrate that positive comments made through SM also contribute to the

creation of a positive perception and brand image, improving TS and incentivising the sharing of photos and exciting moments. Such e-WOM amount to an ideal source of exciting information about a tourism destination geared toward potential travellers. The supported results are consistent with the results of Bayih and Singh (2020), Berhanu and Raj (2020), Li et al. (2020), as well as Pei Pei and Noor (2020). The non-supported result indicates a negative association between SM use and RI which suggests that SM inspires novelty-seeking travellers to visit new locations. This result corroborates with Lee, Chung, and Nam (2018), who discovered that the online information hunter from SM is more likely to visit new locations rather than revisit the same destination.

The second set of hypotheses (H2 a, b, c) supported that e-WOM influences tourist RI, TS, and the national tourism industry in the aggregate. For example, a particular destination listed as a "winner" in a competition between destinations creates a positive e-WOM that encourages RI, TS, and TD. This e-WOM, in turn, further encourages past visitors to revisit the destination. Over time, the decisions made by separate tourists to travel to the winning destination contribute to the TD of the country. This finding is consistent with that of Marques et al. (2021), Tapanainen et al. (2021), as well as Verma and Yadav (2021).

The results that support Hypotheses H3 and H4a reveal that tourist RI has a direct significant influence on TD and TS also directly influences RI. Even though hypothesis H4b is not supported, this does not mean that TS does not encourage TD. Instead, these results may imply that a particular group of tourists may be satisfied with the services received, but their contributions to TD will be small unless they either frequently return to the same destination or they share their positive feelings through e-WOM. These results are also relevant with Pestan et al. (2020) and Vaio et al. (2021).

Furthermore, the results of the set of hypotheses 5(a, b, c) illustrate that TS can mediate in the relationship between SM to TD and SM to RI but not in the relationship between e-WOM and RI. Hypotheses 6(a, b) suggested that RI mediates the relationship between e-WOM and TD, as well as that between TS and TD. Hypothesis 7 proposed that e-WOM mediates the relationship between SM to TS. Our results also reveal that TS does play a significant mediation role between SM and TD, as well as SM and RI. The RI also substantially mediates the relationship between e-WOM and TD, as well as that between TS and TD. However, our results did not find significant relationships between TS and e-WOM, e-WOM and RI, as well as SM and TS.

Any revisit actions ultimately contribute to the TD of a country. Moreover, revisits offer travellers an opportunity to correct any problems encountered during their first trip, as they may have left unsatisfied due to lack of information or shortage of amenities. It is logical, therefore, that revisit decisions strengthen the relationship

between e-WOM and TD, as well as that between TS and TD. These results are relevant with the work of Li (2021), Pestan et al. (2020), and Tapanainen et al. (2021). Finally, we determined that E-WOM is not a mediator in the relationship between SM and TS, as SM directly influences TS. Updated full information in the social media network of the tourism marketer, customised advertisements based on individual customers, one-to-one interaction between customer and tourism practitioners as well as instant solutions for any problems in the SM are the crucial determinants of SM, which contribute to TS.

Conclusion and Implications

This study analysed the relationships between SM, e-WOM, TS, RI, and TD in the context of Bangladesh. We determined that SM directly influences TS, e-WOM, and TD. Moreover, e-WOM also directly and positively influences RI, TS, and TD. TS also affects tourist RI, while RI, in turn, influences TD. Among the mediation effects, we determined that satisfaction mediates the relationship between SM and TD, as well as that of SM and RI. We also determined that RI mediates the relationship between e-WOM and TD, as well as that between TS and TD. We were unable to establish, however, a direct relationship between SM and RI, or TS and TD. Nor were we able to identify the mediating factors in the relationship between TS and e-WOM, e-WOM and RI, and SM and TS.

Theoretical Implications

Our most interesting findings are the relationships between the paths as referred above. Furthermore, this study may contribute to further support for the social learning theory. The findings of this study show that comments or any other materials related to a specific destination in SM can be a wealthy source of information that are illuminated by the experiences and viewpoints of the previous tourists. The sharing of destination information in SM networks on positive concerns could translate into affirmative WOM in the virtual world. Moreover, valuable information regarding certain destinations, provided by virtual communication networks from diverse locations and experiences, can foster tourist satisfaction and revisit decisions even though, it depends on the uses and communication of tourists with peers in the SM networks. Eventually, that process will significantly contribute to the TD of a country.

Practical Implications

In particular, the contributions of this study to tourism practitioners is twofold: insights from the results of direct effects and from the results of mediating effects. Understanding of direct effects affords a number of implications. The first and

highly significant implication is the effectiveness of using SM networks to influence tourist behaviour. For instance, tourism practitioners in Bangladesh may arrange a tourist review booth with high bandwidth internet connection to help tourists review their experiences instantly. In addition to the review booth, they can provide a mini studio with a highly regulated camera where visitors can snap their pictures and memories and share them on social networks without much hassle. With the help of the review booth and highly regulated camera, tourism marketers may receive plenty of affirmative reviews on their businesses, which may attract other tourists to visit the same destinations.

Moreover, during the direct review of destination hotspots using social media networks and snapping photos, a mutual relationship among tourists may develop. Eventually, exchange of information can be amplified, resulting in TS and RI. Further, when there are negative feedback or reviews, practitioners can evaluate their amenities and ultimately, improve their services, through which both marketers and the customers will benefit.

Insights on mediating effects also offer several implications. Firstly, TS can mediate significantly the relationship between uses of SM and TD, and uses of SM and tourist RI. In addition, tourist RI can strengthen the relationship by mediating between e-WOM and TD, and TS and TD. In this regard, practitioners should try to encourage positive reviews and posts in their social media pages. In fact, practitioners should provide tourists with high bandwidth network connection so that they can share their exciting moments online to potentially attract other tourists. Eventually, in the long run, practitioners can create user-generated promotion in the social media networks.

Limitations and Future Research

Our model was based on the social learning theory; thus, future research on the relationship between social media and tourism may wish to examine these connections from the perspective of source credibility and source attractiveness theories. We also limited ourselves to an examination of tourists who had visited limited tourism spots at least once. Subsequent research may look into larger groups of tourists that have visited more sites. A cross-sectional analysis may also prove to be useful in exploring tourist revisit intent.

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