

Chapter 14

The Role of Social Media as an Element of Tourist Motivation in Bangladesh



Samshad Nowreen and Kazi Faruk Hossain

Abstract Social Media (SM) through the World Wide Web (www) is a very effective incorporation of innovative technology throughout the world. The application of SM is not only confined within a single aspect of human life rather its influences every sphere of the daily life. Like many other industries, application of SM in tourism industry is remarkably significant. SM fulfills the objectives of tourist and the travel agencies by contributing to flourish tourism industries by its user-friendly attributes. Recently, the influence of SM has been observed in the potential tourism industry of Bangladesh. This chapter depicts the role of SM in tourist motivation, which has been further analyzed from an inherited primary data. Total 200 university students aged between 18 to 24 years from three public universities had gone under questionnaire survey. The findings reveal that, SM has positive impact on tourist motivation on traveling, as SM helps the tourist to get necessary information for traveling, such as; destination selection, financial planning, accommodation, food, culture of the place etc. Therefore, along with the positive aspects of SM in tourism, the challenges regarding using SM in tourism industry have been identified as the young tourist faced. Recommendations have been formulated to ensure SM as a more reliable source for the tourist to make their decision of traveling through browsing in the SM.

Keywords Social media · Tourist · Information motivation · Bangladesh

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Introduction

Information Technology (IT) and Social Media (SM) have become appeared as useful platforms of mass communication (Karim, 2018). Even a decade ago, people were less connected to the world. However, at present, people can get information on their fingertips that range from news, reviews to promotional videos. Due to the advancement of science and technology, people throughout the world are easily connected to each other through SM with the ease of access to Internet. Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) data show that up to February 2020 the total internet users had been 60.7% of the total population of the country, and 20.5% have active Facebook account (Internet World Statistics, 2020). People aged between 18 to 24 years had the highest percentage of using SM where the Facebook users are in the highest position throughout the world (Statistics Brain Research Institute, 2020; Gururaja, n.d.). Facebook and other SM have made the world so smaller beyond landscape variation brining quick contact to people living far beyond. Among the travelers, people aged between 15 to 25 years are the mostly travelled aged people and they like to browse in SM such as Tripadvisor, Facebook, YouTube, Trivago, Couchsurfing and so on (Karim, 2018).

SM indicates the mode of communications among users in which they exchange, share, or generate information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Tafveez, 2017). There are different kinds of social networking site such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google plus, Tripadvisor, Pinterest etc. Each has its own attributes to enhance the communication among users. Among different SMs, Facebook, and WhatsApp have the highest record of rate of users (Ly and Ly, 2020). People are gleeful to participate in the social network since it keeps them engaged with up to date information around the world. SM encourages the users to share their opinion, feedback of services, search information, share thoughts, experience, feelings, as well as it helps them to justify any information they got from any social communities by checking with others by conquering the world boundaries. This also help them to make their decision about traveling in any particular destination getting information from the various websites. SM offers access to everybody as well as encourage others to pace their opinion in the comment option (Mayfield, 2008). SM platforms have become significant both from personal and business perspective throughout the world. In today's times SM plays a very important role in almost every segment. It has made an enormous impact on the tourism industry.

According to Zeng (2013), tourists who use social networking system get huge information in very short time making their travel decision smooth and comfortable. They get reviews about individual tourist destination. They also know about some particular concerns as traveling information and travel experience (i.e. hotel's cost, accessibility, transportation, food and beverage etc.) from other fellow tourists. Tourists, irrespective of their age, like to post their experiences on their own SM sites or blogs about their traveling, upload photos of entertainment, foods, vehicles, hotel rooms, beauty of natural sites of the tourist destinations. Most importantly

from SM, a person can communicate with huge audience from various geographical locations.

On the other hand, in tourism promotion, the role of SM is very significant as the industries involved in tourism business such as travel agency, tour operators, hotel, restaurant, aviation and vehicle etc. are concerned with the quality of the products and services they provide along with feedback or review from the tourists every time. Good quality service from the agencies and their representatives motivates the tourists for traveling as well as rivet their trust on specific product or service. Therefore, it is seen that after the popularization of SM, travel frequencies and rate of both national and international traveling has increased. This is now considered as one of the top most way of virtual marketing of tourism products and services (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014; Ráthonyi, 2013).

Furthermore, SM has expanded the scope of online based marketing in many businesses including tourism. Like the world tourism in Bangladesh is also a growing industry, with burgeoning international tourists, emerging domestic tourists directly contributes 2.2% of the total GDP, generating only 0.4% of GDP from visitor's export, and creating 1.8% tourism related jobs, is considered as an underdeveloped industry (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). SM ironically, is becoming a reliable tool in the expansion of tourism industry in Bangladesh for both domestic and international tourists because active or potential tourists easily get their required information browsing SM. Therefore, spontaneous review and feedback from the SMs increase their interest and grows tourism market. Bangladesh is ahead towards a developed country and the country is committed to transform the country every sector in digital by 2021. Moreover, user of internet is increasing over time and most users are of SM that gives a good platform in both promotion of tourism industry and motivation of the tourist.

Tourism: Aspects and Impacts

Tourism is vibrant as because it has different aspects from recreation to business, pilgrim to adventure seeking or knowledge exploration. Some tourists are sun lust, and some are backpackers. This wide range of tourists makes it a complex and diversified industry. Both the tourists and industries involved in it offers multiple opportunities for different groups of people to generate livelihood. Tourism enhances the development industries such as, hotels, resorts, restaurants, casinos, cruises, markets, aviation and transportation, photography, banking etc. Tourism refers to the activities of people who travel to and stay in places outside their normal environment for no more than one year for recreation, company, or other reasons that are not linked to the exercise of a remunerated task within the destination (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). Tourism industry of a country contribute largely of its economic growth through employment generation and foreign currency earning. Besides, tourism offers a great opportunity for the travelers to exchange culture from the host to foreign destination (Roy & Roy, 2015).

According to Sultana (2016), like many other industries, tourism industry contributes in the national economy throughout the world. Most specifically around 83% countries of the world where tourism industry is being considered the most significant industry of economic growth. Both in developed and developing countries, tourism industry is flourishing rapidly. The industries are very influential directly in the developed countries such as USA, UK, Italy, and France. In the last few decades, many Asian countries as, Maldives, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, India, Nepal, and Bhutan are becoming appealing to the tourists due to their diversified products and services such as climate, natural beauty, and warm hospitality with enriched culture and food. However, tourism industry has both positive and negative impact on social, cultural and environmental aspects of the host countries (Roy & Roy, 2015). In a nutshell, tourism industry evolves various forms and the expansions of the tourism industry while playing a role in changing the destiny of the people including the national economies of different countries of the world.

The Tourism Industry in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most beautiful countries in South-East Asia full of greenery, surrounded by India, Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal (Roy & Roy, 2015). It is called the land of natural beauty. Tourism industry is gradually developing in the country as its lush green nature, many rivers, canals, lakes, haors, the world longest continuous sea beach, mangrove forest the Sundarbans, hills, antiquities and beautiful villages are the source of beauty. Young Bangladeshi tourists are found very captivated in traveling different naturally beautiful and heritage sites. The presence of both domestic and international tourists are well informed about the destination. Researchers (Karim, 2018; Roy & Roy, 2015) in their studies mentioned, different attractive tourist destinations of Bangladesh in different divisions.

Thus at present, the tourism industry in Bangladesh is considered as a very promising industry, because this industry is not only meeting the needs of tourists, but also it is influencing through positive impact on the national economy, culture, livelihood, infrastructure, investment and overall growth. Moreover, Bangladesh is well imaged in front of the whole world (Redwan, 2014). The role of tourism industry in Bangladesh economy has been positively contributing over the last few years. At the same time, support from govt. in tourism industry is increasing. World Trade and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2020) presented the contribution of travel and tourism industry in the national economy of Bangladesh in 2019 is 3% in GDP. This industry has also contribution on national investment with positive feedback (Roy & Roy, 2015).

Having a strong foundation of tourism in Bangladesh, sustainable use with proper management of both naturally and historically attractive tourist destinations can contribute huge to the economy of Bangladesh.

To enhance the tourism industry, in 2010, the Bangladesh Government incremented the national tourism policy of the country. It opened a new window of

opportunities by fostering employment, economic as well as infrastructural development and sustainable tourism development (Hassan et al., 2020; Hassan & Kokkranikal, 2018; Hassan & Burns, 2014). In Bangladesh, the Government has imposed Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) under the ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism for tourism development and promotion from 1972. Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (NHTTI) is all together working to establish tourism industry of Bangladesh (Roy & Roy, 2015). According to Karim (2018), Bangladesh has adequate scope for tourism development; rather govt. should come up with required actions to develop this industry not only for the tourist, but also for the national development through poverty alleviation, economic growth, infrastructural development, environmental sustainability and foreign earning.

Social Media, Tourist's Motivation and Promotion of the Tourism Industry

SM has positive influence on both the tourist and the stakeholders of tourism industry. According to Shahin and Sengun (2015), SM offers a good opportunity of tourism marketing, which influence both tourist and the tourism. Bagaturia and Johnson (2014) also stated that, the introduction of SM in tourism marketing is a significant and modern addition to tourism industry. Hajli (2014) stated that, SM helps tourists by connecting them with communities where they get the scope to sharing their views, opinion, experience of traveling; that helps others to make their decision about their own travel plan. At present tourists are mostly technology user, therefore, travel agencies and tour operators should have proper arrangement to draw attention of these tourists (Rahman, 2016). SM offers multidimensional ways of communication with instant feedback opportunity, therefore, exchange and sharing option is very easy of tourists (Dina & Sabou, 2012). According to Poell (2014), tourists have larger dependency on SM to make their decision about their destination, most of them search for review what are the experience of other travelers about a tourist destination. Kazak (2016), in his study mentioned about the significance of SM in tourism industry, tourist decision making and tourism marketing. Therefore, SM by nature is becoming inclusive to the travelers.

Methodology

A primary survey had been conducted on public university students of Bangladesh where 200 students from three public universities, located at the capital Dhaka were selected purposively through convenient random sampling. The average age of the sampled respondents was between 18 to 24 years. When Bangladesh is marching

towards a digital Bangladesh, the youth are becoming used to with information technology. The selected universities have residential facilities and students from different socio-economic status stay together. They have the facilities of sharing ICT related gazettes and universities mostly offers free Wi-Fi facilities within the campus ground. In contrast, the use of smartphone is increasing due to its cheaper price of the students from different socio-economic status. Therefore, the use of SM has become a very common trend among the youth learners.

Findings and Analysis

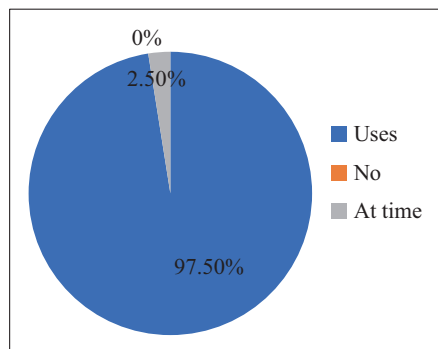
The use of SM for multiple purposes by tourists is common throughout the world. Analysis of the data collected from the sampled respondents reveal that around 100% of the respondent use smartphones, where 48.5% use both smartphones and computer or laptops. No was found without smart device that was interesting of the survey. Also, about 98% of the responded they are motivated through SM for traveling, whereas rest 2% are often being motivating through SM for traveling (Fig. 14.1). The respondents are more motivated from browsing through SM through getting information or seeing photos posted by other tourists or promotion from travel agencies in the SM.

Findings reveal in the below Fig. 14.1 that 97.5% students' uses SM as a regular basis whereas 2.5% uses SM occasionally, but not regularly. However, no students were found who do not use SM.

The result shown in Fig. 14.2 affirms that among the respondents, 64.9% of the respondents feel better by browsing information from travel sites or SM and photos of destinations of their interest uploaded by other travelers.

The below Fig. 14.3 shows that before any travel plan, users are keen to browse SM for making their travel decision, to get necessary information, and to read reviews of particular destination or product or services. Also, during daily Facebook or other SM browsing, they search for new tourist page or recent uploads. If any such page or upload are spotted, they browse for more details for both the

Fig. 14.1 Frequency of SM use. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)



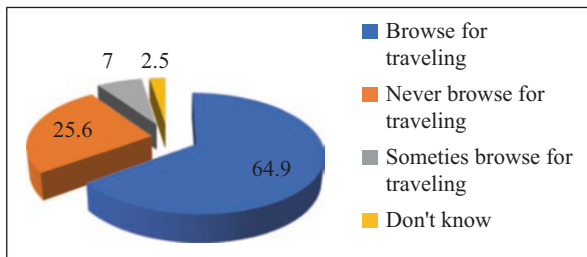
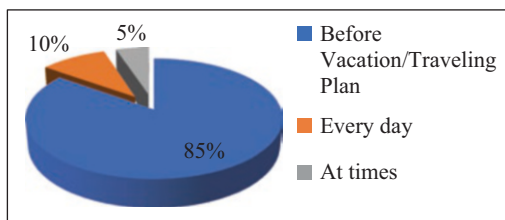


Fig. 14.2 SM browsing for travel information. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)

Fig. 14.3 SM browsing trend for tour and travel information. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)



attractions and surroundings. However, mostly they browse before their travel to make a suitable decision.

Different forms of SM are used by the respondents as shown in Fig. 14.4. This shows that among the SM Facebook, Google, YouTube and Instagram are mostly used by all.

Internet users spend a lot of time every day for surfing on various purposes and use of SM is one of the influencing factor for internet surfing. Among the students 55% students spend almost 2–4 h on SM, while very few 2% use more than 6 h on SM (Fig. 14.5). On the other hand, around 30% students use SM 0 to 2 h on SM every day. The purpose of using SM was investigated, and along with entertainment some other reasons were found as:

SM becoming the most important means of tourism in this twenty-first century ICT based world of globalization (Fig. 14.6). Role of SM at various aspects of human life as mentioned above is inevitable. Therefore, the influence of SM in promotion of tourism industry by motivating the tourist is a concern. ICT friendly materials, like smartphone, computer, laptop etc. are prerequisites of using SM.

From the survey, factors that are identified as the benefits of browsing in SM for tourism are highlighted in Fig. 14.7.

SM are supportive to the tourist in various ways as found from the survey of students (Fig. 14.7). The young students like to enjoy their academic vacation through traveling. They arrange tour with their friends and at the same time with their family members. In both ways, they used to travel by a team considering different aspects of travel considering cost, security, accessibility, permission from the guardian etc. At present, SM is providing positive role in influencing the tourist to mold their choice and interest towards traveling.

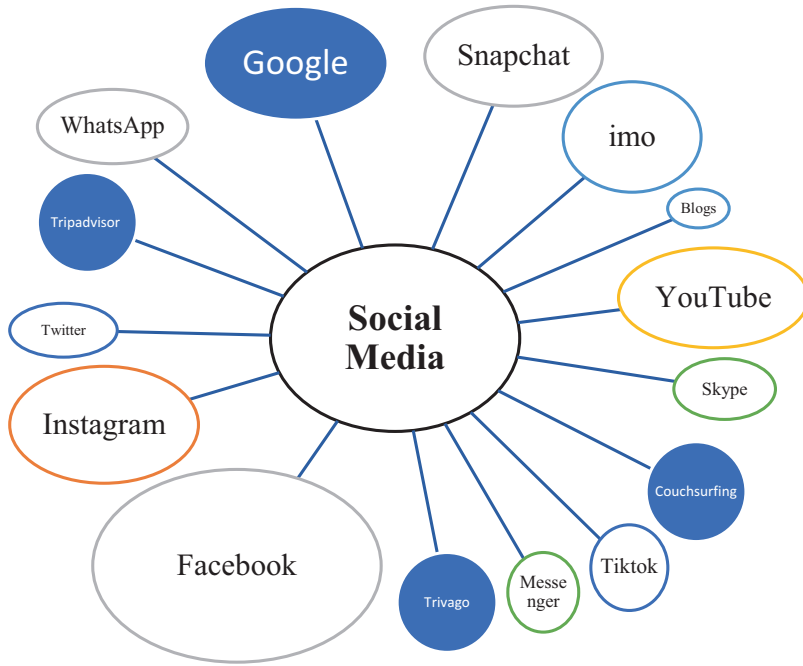


Fig. 14.4 Mostly used SM types by the youths. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)

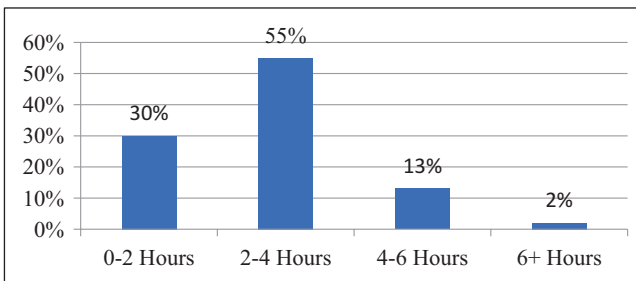


Fig. 14.5 Time spent every day on SM. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)

The advantages of using SM in tourism for the tourist are mentioned above as stated by the respondents. The advantages mentioned above are the fundamental motivational force among the tourist for their traveling. SM plays an increasingly important role in many aspects of tourism, especially for information searching and decision-making process. Tourism promotion focus on the best practices for interacting with consumers via SM channels (social sharing of holiday experiences).

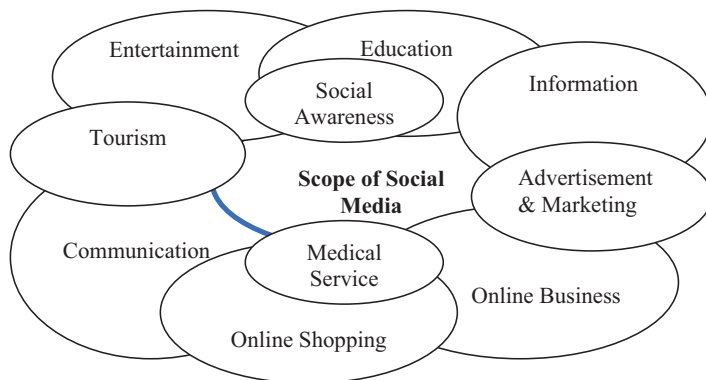


Fig. 14.6 Scope of using SM. (Source: Survey by the authors, 2020)

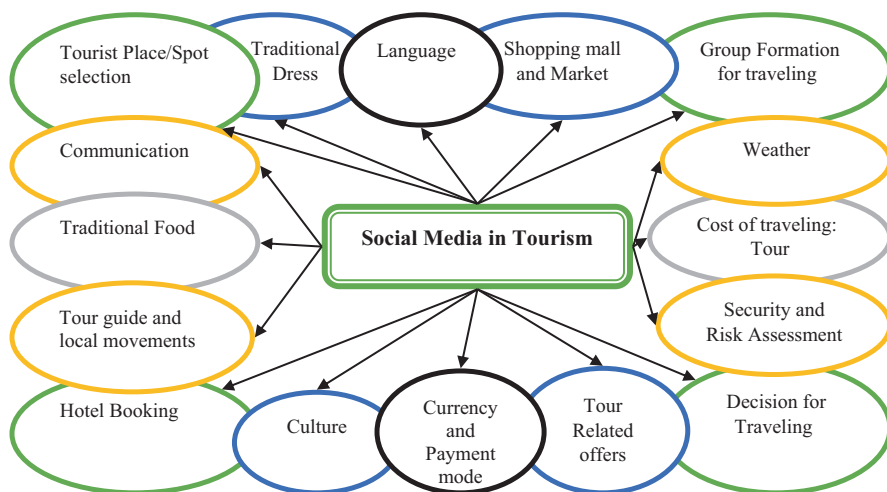


Fig. 14.7 Advantage of SM in tourism. (Source: Survey data analysis by the authors, 2020)

What are the Challenges that Tourists Face After Taking Decision for Traveling After Using Social Media in Bangladesh?

SM is becoming the most interesting and reliable source of information for choosing tourist destination and other related issues such as climate, security, restaurant and recreation facility etc. However, sometimes tourists have to face some difficulties relying on SM and creating travel plan. The common challenges identified from the students using SM as a tool for making their travel plan are as the following:

- Sometimes SM do not provide accurate information of a tourist destination, accommodation, and transportation facilities. Tourist generally uploaded photos and videos but sometimes it is the outcome of editing. Interested tourists reveal the false imaged they had about the destination. Therefore, they feel disheartened after visiting the destination.
- False review and advertisement is another challenge tourist might face. Tour operators or travel agents sometimes do not have the real arrangement as they advertise about the tour.
- In some cases, the pages of SM do not provide details information of traveling or there are incorrect or lack of information. Tourist in many cases becomes bothered having double game from the tour operators or guides. They sometimes claim extra or hidden charge after accommodating others attractive destination. Systematically, they perform dishonesty which discouraged the travelers.
- Lack of management of SM, most particularly, the lack of very up-to-date information. The tourists lose their trust and thus the become discouraged to follow SM.
- Fake promotional video are about destination sometimes showed.
- Lack of trained guide is another challenge that tourists face. A skilled guide is inevitable part of tourism for the new tourist. New and untrained guide is a trouble for the tourists, however, in SM sometimes it is informed that tour guides are well trained.
- Tourism related pages usually advertise for the most attractive and renowned tourist destination. However, the tourists are being discouraged about the new tourist destination.

SM is becoming a good source for the tourist for making decision about travel. Ironically, an unexpected circumstance creates by the SM users at times discouraged the tourist to follow SM. In many cases, study tour of many educational institutions mostly depends on the information uploaded in the SM.

What to do to Increase the Reliability of SM for Tourism Promotion?

Considering the existing challenges of SM in tourism, the following issues are expected to be developed:

- More organized and accurate information should be portrayed.
- Every tourist destination should be highlighted properly
- Pages of SM should have a good management to provide up-to-date information about specific destination.
- Actual scenario through photo or video sharing of the tourist destination should be uploaded in different pages without editing or falsification.
- Newly developed tourist destination should be highlighted properly.

- Traveler groups, and other related pages should be more responsible in publishing information regarding tourist destination and other supportive information of tourism.
- In the pages or groups, more relevant information should be uploaded.
- Reliability of the SM users should be ensured.
- Review of the pages should be authentic.
- Tourism agencies and their services are often costly, although competitions found among the agencies to attract tourist. Therefore, different opportunities should be uploaded to motivate the tourist from different economic classes. This should be supportive for those who have financial problem.
- Tourist although getting motivation from SM but at times they cannot go out for travel due to their security concern. Therefore, the Government and agencies should ensure safe and tourist friendly environment irrespective of gender.
- During advertisement about a tourist destination, the users should be loyal to publish all the difficulties along with the opportunities of traveling of any particular destination.
- Government should develop a guideline for those who involves in tourism business and use SM for their business purposes.
- Tourism policy should have proper guideline about the use of SM in tourism industry.

Tourism industry is a flourishing industry for the economic development of Bangladesh. People are becoming more dependent on ICT based gazettes in this twenty-first century. Everywhere, the use of ICT, therefore the SM is remarkably increasing. Most particularly, use of SM in tourism industry is rising gradually. Travelers prefer to browse for a new destination or emerging tourism products and services are boosted in SM to attract travelers. For an example, if somebody wants to travel to Sajek, they need the information of local transportation, accommodation, food etc. The information are available in the SM such as Tripadvisor, Facebook travel group or Google will help them for their tour. Even, if somebody wants to travel in cruise on rivers, sea, lakes, ponds or pools etc., then SM should be considered as a good platform or source of tourism information. Therefore, SM users should be more responsible in this regard and should ensure their accountability of services.

Conclusion

SM is one of the important things that science has invented to make people's lives easier and more enjoyable. SM has opened up immense potential for the tourism industry. Travel agencies are easily able to attract tourist using SM. Tourists, tourism agencies and the state are all benefiting from this. In order to attract domestic and foreign tourists, the role of SM is of course significant. The role of SM is unique in the socio-economic development of the country and being globalized. The role of

SM over the tourist to increase their interest of traveling is observed and analyzed. Therefore, once the existing challenges are overcome through the quality of collaboration among the Govt. and other related stakeholders, the tourism industry and tourist will be beneficial more through the proper use of SM.

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