

A study on what individuals want from a Travel Blog

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Abstract: This research studies “what an individual wants when they read or watch a travel blog”. Audience plays a very important role in the blogging industry as they will be the ones following the blog content and bring in engagement. The content published in all kinds of blogs are for the audience to like and watch. Understanding the audience for a travel blog is important because it determines the content that will appear in the blog

Today’s audience wants blogs that have a unique spin on travel.

Introduction: Blogging activity is one of the latest trends in web technology that has captured the interest of the public worldwide. There are over 152 million blogs on the internet. Having only really started in the mid-90s, blogging has now grown to become one of the dominant forms of web content.

A new blog post is published every 0.5 seconds because of the rising number of tools on the internet that makes blogging easier. 77% of internet users read blogs regularly. The stats speak for themselves though, and this one clearly shows that blogs are now a massive part of popular culture. Over 3/4 of internet users regularly read blogs nowadays, covering an untold number of niches and interests. The average person spends 37 seconds reading a blog post. That’s it. Bloggers might regularly spend 3.5 hours on carefully crafting their posts but, on average, a visitor to their site will barely spend half a minute on that page. This is a mean average, of course, meaning that people who only spend a couple of seconds on the post are also included. People who are genuinely interested in a topic will stick around, if bloggers are able to get their message across in around 7 minutes of their time. To put that in a more practical light, 7 minutes of reading equates to approximately 1,600 words. Given both options, 72% of readers would rather watch video than read text. There has been a big shift from text to video in recent years. That goes not just for blogging, but also for social media, with posts containing videos achieving consistently superior engagement rates. Many people blogging in 2019 look to have the best of both worlds, by either embedding videos into their posts, creating video content as well as writing articles, or even making video versions of their written content.

Growth of blogs has been rapid and is prominent in business, journalism, education and politics, to name a few. Similar growth has also been observed in travel and tourism. Among the top 18 topics monitored by Technorati.com, travel is ranked 9th, which is equivalent to 28% of the total number blogs monitored by the website.

Millions of individuals have joined travel blog websites that enable them to post stories, pictures and videos of their travel experiences. Travel blogs can be considered expressions of tourism consumption. Indeed, many travel blogs are rich narratives that contain details of experiences and have a great deal of potential to inform research into tourism.

Blogs in India:

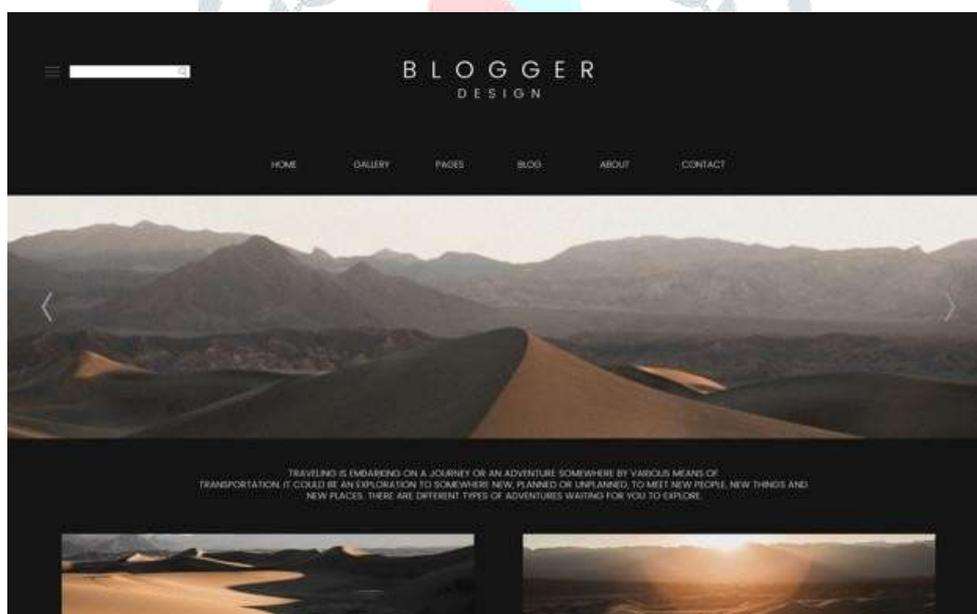
Blogging in India is growing at a rapid pace. Although blogging has been there since the advent of the internet in the early 90's, in India, it really became popular only after 2005. In 2003, Google AdSense program was launched, and within two years every publisher (or blogger) started incorporating AdSense ads into their blogs. Bloggers get paid for every click. Bloggers were quick to realize the full potential of this program. Hence, in the coming years, the blogosphere expanded so rapidly that every new blogger wanted to integrate an AdSense program into his/her blog.

Earlier most of the bloggers used to write about either "making money online" or technology. These bloggers were usually young men between the age of 21 years and 25 years.

By the end of 2010, across India, the number of bloggers ran in thousands. today, it is going to be ten times more. So, blogging in India has always followed an upward trajectory. Talking about 2019, everyone has their own blog. Even older people have their own websites nowadays.

According to a report, every single day, more than 2.5 million blog posts are being published. Thus the "Growth of Blogging" is happening day by day in India. But the truth is, It's insanely competitive.

What are Travel Blogs:



Source: travelblog.org

Travel blogs are becoming more popular each day. Due to cheap air travel, people are traveling more than ever, and they are always looking for travel tips, advice, and destination guides. Travel blogs are updated on a regular basis in a systematic chronological order like blogs as the nature of the travel blogs which are posted have an interactive base. This space is well utilised to share experiences in form of content and photographs and engages in commenting and giving feedback (Roig, 2013). Blogs related to travel are a way to get valuable data on a specific travel place and also to inspire a tourist to visit a particular place. Travel bloggers in the present have gained power over travel agencies, handbooks and other multiple sources to refer to. The young

people of this generation do not emphasize on reading and researching as a standard. Instead, they consider looking for various known blogs which are viewed interesting by them or by blogs which are drafted by famous bloggers and the result is based on the information which is found online on the Internet.

Travel Vlog in mainstream is done to express personal thoughts or feedback of vloggers regarding the destination he or she visits. It is also done with the objective of advertising a place in order to attract visitors and to make the place popular by sharing vlogs on social networking sites, travel shows, tourism, advertisement, etc.

Tourists look forward to looking at videos which comprise of experiences that happen in real life and those vlogs which are shared only after gaining information as it has a better impact. Travel vlogs contain the largest amount of travel subscription and the focus remains on those blogs which contain experience of travel. The impact of the travel blogs depends on the characteristics generated by the video and the impact it has on the viewers.

A study shows that 45% people made their bookings immediately after watching the Vlogs and 62% of the people who travel for leisure make travel choices and decisions only after watching travel vlogs. Surely the number of people watching travel vlogs has been increasing every year.

This platform and trust that these bloggers have established for themselves over recent times with their travel experiences and articles which is surprisingly reaching more people than Online Ads and Physical Brochures would and most importantly impacting thought.

Today's audience wants blogs that have a unique spin on travel. They want to see the tourist places, but also want to see a side of them that they haven't seen or aren't aware of. Many times, they are interested in places that are off the beaten path but still interesting. The audience wants the blogs to talk about the culture, the food, the art, the music, the theatre, the people, the religions, the currency, the humour. They want to know everything about a certain area, a very real experience is what the audience is looking for. Or pick one topic and go so in depth, it may seem that it wouldn't interest the audience but, it would.

But above all, the audience wants real content which makes the blog's voice unique as the blogger would write or film it about. Audience is okay with copying formatting and style points from other bloggers, but the writing must be creative, real and fresh.

Objectives, Scope and Limitations:

Objectives of the Study

- a) The focus of my research is studying travel blogs.
- b) To study the survey conducted on a sample size of 200 respondents to understand their preferences and information expected from a travel blog.

Scope of the Study

- a) It is a detailed study which includes blogs, travel blogs and an understanding of what individuals expect to read or see in a travel blog.
- b) This study gives us an opportunity to understand the factors that attract an individual to read or see a travel blog along with their preferences to various elements of a travel blog.
- c) Geographical Scope: Research was conducted amongst Puneties only with a sample of 200 respondents.

Limitations

This Research study has the following limitations:

- a) The major limitation with respect to this research is that since blogs are a very vast platform; I primarily focused on a type of blog: Travel Blogs.
- b) Due to research and time limitations this research focuses only on the preferences of 200 respondents towards their expectation of information from Travel Blogs.
- c) The biggest limitation is that the respondents are only from Pune City.
- d) The research seeks to gain generalised knowledge on the perception of individuals about information expected from a Travel Blog.

Research Methodology

Purpose:

It is broadly focused on understanding what kind of information individuals expect from a travel blog. Blogs, Travel Blogs are also studied in a detailed manner.

Research Design:

Quantitative Research has been considered as a suitable methodology for present study. A survey of a sample of people was conducted describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population.

Methodology adopted:

Sources of data collection: -

Data has been collected through primary and secondary sources

Primary Source of data: -

Data has been collected using the Questionnaire Method.

Secondary Source of data: -

The data has been collected using internet websites, journals, research papers and blogs.

Sample Size: -

Sample size of research is 200 samples.

Sample method: -

The sample has been collected through Questionnaire.

Literature Review

Blogs are commonly described as frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Bortree 2005; Herring, Scheidt et al. 2005; Buckingham and Willett 2006; Kelleher and Miller 2006; Schmidt 2007). Moreover, blogs are an amalgam between a diary, a website, and an online community (Embrey 2002). Typically, they are personal journals which are published online, and are frequently updated with links to similar and related topics, often from other bloggers. This interconnection of blogs is known as 'the blogosphere'.

Blogs enable, in their writers, a freedom of expression which may not be as readily available in other media (Hull 2007). They cover a wide range of subject areas, both serious and fun, and attract an eclectic array of readers (Hull 2007). One of the values of blogs lies in its versatility. Schmidt (2007) lists various types of blogs, including: political blogs, corporate blogs, expert blogs, and personal knowledge blogs. There are also educational blogs, creative writing blogs, journalism blogs, medical blogs, drug blogs, abortion blogs, car blogs, travel blogs, and the list continues. In fact, any subject which generates interest among a reasonably sized group of people has the potential to become a blog. In addition, a blog is not necessarily an individual enterprise (Williams and Jacobs 2004), as shown by the existence of group blogs such as: "family blogs, community blogs, and corporate blogs.

Virtual tourist communities, where tourists can exchange opinions and experiences on topics of common interest, have been around at least since the late 1990s and several researchers have investigated the role and the impact of such tourist communities as tourist information providers. More recently, new online applications have emerged that add substantially to the increasing importance of the internet in tourism.

Travel blogs have become powerful vehicles that destinations can tell their stories and build good relationships with potential visitors. Digital word-of-mouth communications is the most preferred as travel information sources (Crotts,1999). Travel blogs are like virtual stories, full of experiences that provide the public a taste of what experiences could be like when visiting the destination (Leu et al.2005). The interpretation of these experiences are becoming more and more popular with the help of social platforms. (Woodside, Cruickshank, & Dehuang,2007).

People can share blog posts with family, friends, which allows interaction and build an engagement with potential visitors that can turn into new visitors to the destination. Research also shows that people tend to

trust in online word of mouth more than traditional media (Johnson and Kayne 2013).

Travel Blogs have shown to have an important role in the online space, which can help to market the destinations among people. As reported by Statista (2011) there are around 173 million blogs in the Internet where posts are coming up daily and with years it increases more (Baker & Green, 2005). TravelBlog.org has more than 150,000 members, hosting over 450,000 travel blog entries (Travelblog.org, 2010). Blogs are a new important form of digitized word-of-mouth communication, “becoming a more important mechanism for exchanging information among tourists, and for destinations and businesses to learn about the attitudes of their markets” (Wenger, 2008, p. 169). Because travel blogs express the tourists’ experience at a specific destination, tourism marketers “need to understand blogs as a new technological phenomenon with implications for marketing and promotion of a destination” (Pan et al, 2007, p. 38).

There is an increase on people watching travel vlogs through smartphones and it was also found out that travel videos are watched throughout the day if the individual sticks to their desktop but it is comparatively less on smartphones and tablets as people only view it during the evening (Hailey Crowel, Haley Gribben, Jaclyn Loo, 2014). With the evolution of internet, tourists now look upon social media to pick out their perfect destinations.

When the travel Industry association of America conducted a survey, it was found that 67% of the people referred to the Internet to find out tourist destinations, to check ratings, to find the cost followed by 41% people who engaged in booking through the internet (AI, 2012). Travel blogger now have taken over various tourism agencies, handbooks and guides.

The millennials of this generation do not find reading through and researching as a criterion. Instead, they prefer looking upon various known blogs which are favoured by them or by blogs which are drafted by well-known bloggers and the result is based on the information which is found online on the internet (Govender, Ishay, 2015). The Gen-Z which comprises those who were born in the late 90’s has had a huge impact on the travel sector and by the year 2020, the Gen-Z will be the highest consumer of tourism.

Audience for Travel Blogs differ according an individual’s age group, occupation, standard of living and personal preferences and choices. A recent survey found that consumers trusted more websites with reviews than professional guides and travel agencies and far from being irrelevant, blogs are often perceived to be more credible and trustworthy than traditional marketing communications. In today’s time it is very important to create content that your target audience likes because only such content works. This research will help a travel blog writer to understand what their audience is looking for and which age group they attract so they can create content accordingly.

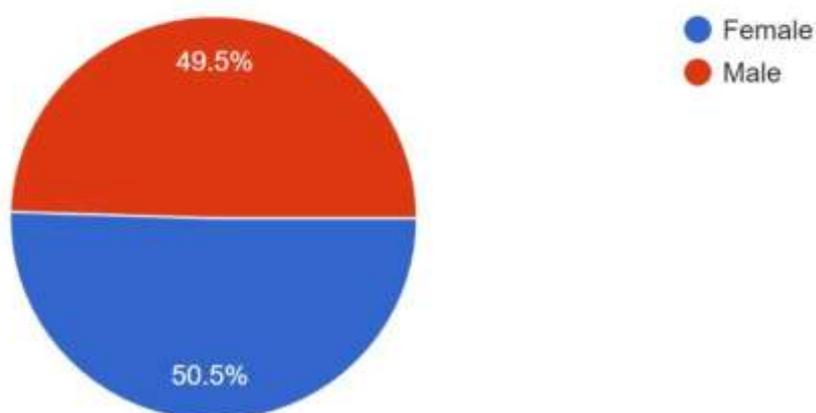
Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table no 1: **Gender response.**

	Male	Female	Total
Responses	99	101	200
Percentage in (%)	49.5	50.5	100

Gender

200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

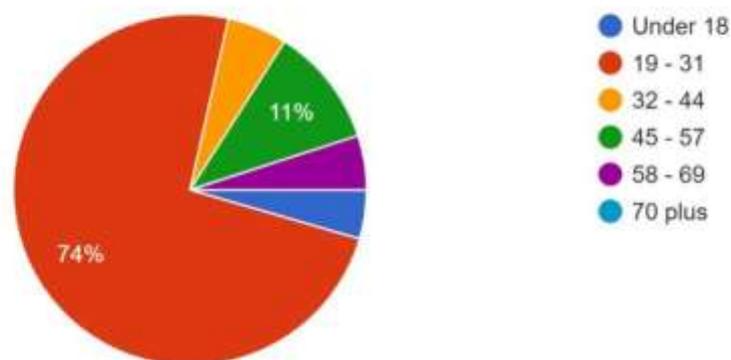
Maximum respondents are Female in this survey. The demographic profile shows **50.5 %** (101) **Females** and **49.5%** (99) **Males** respondents are part of my target population. Total respondents are 200.

Table no 2: Age Response.

	Under 18	19-31	32-44	45-57	58-69	70+	Total
No of Respondents	9	148	11	22	10	0	200
Percentage (%)	4.5	74	5.5	11	5	0	100

Age

200 responses

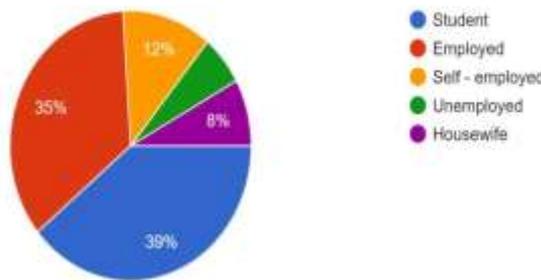
**INTERPRETATION:**

The above figure shows that **highest number of respondents** are from **19-31** years of age group. **Under 18** age group has **4.5 %** of respondents, the age group of **32-44** years has **5.5%** of respondents, the age group of **45-57** has **11%** respondents, and with the least number of respondents **5%** are of age group between **58-69** years old. None of the respondents from the age group **70 or plus** participated in this survey.

Table no 3: Occupation Status of the respondents

	Student	Employed	Self-Employed
No of Respondents	78	70	24
Percentage (%)	39	35	12

What is your current employment status?
200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

In this survey, **39%** of the respondents are **Students**, and they have the highest frequency, **35%** of respondents are **Employed**, **Self Employed** are **12%** of respondents, **8%** are **housewives** and the least percent of respondents are the **Unemployed** people with only **6%**, that were a part of the survey.

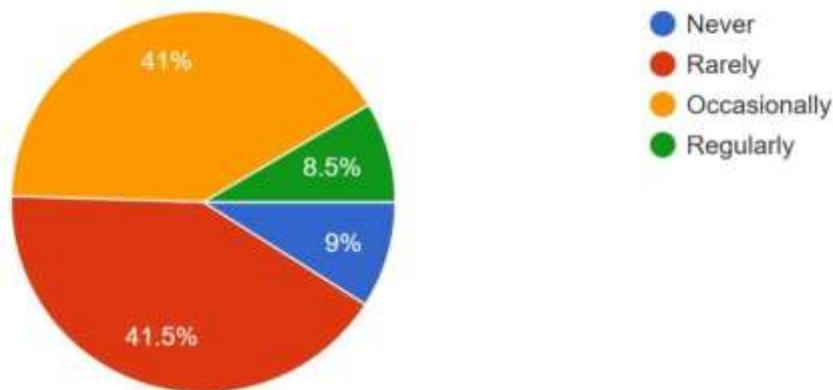
Table no 4: **How often do you come across a travel blog?**

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regular	Total
No of Respondents	18	83	82	17	200
Percentage (%)	9	41.5	41	8.5	100

INTERPRETATION:

How often do you come across a travel blog?

200 responses



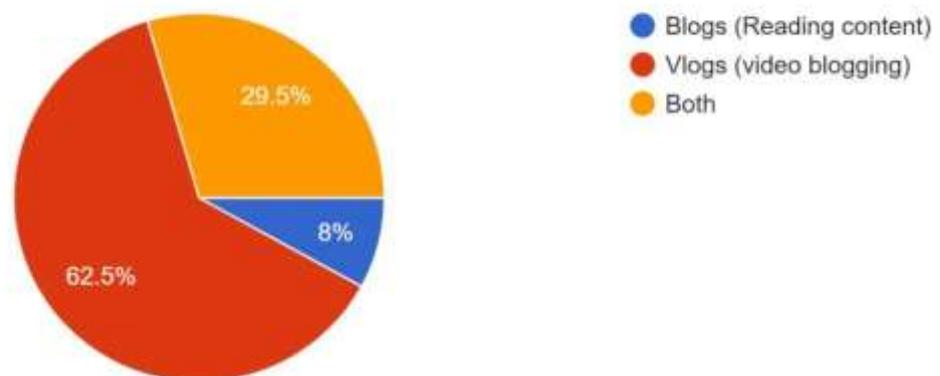
Highest number of respondents (**41.5%**) **Rarely** come across a travel blog and, whereas, **41%** people **Occasionally** come across a travel blog, **9%** of people **Never** came across to a travel blog while **8.5%** people **Regularly** come across a travel blog.

Table no 5: Which type of travel blog interests you the most?

	Blogs (Reading Content)	Vlogs (Video Blogging)	Both	Total
No of Respondents	16	125	59	200
Percentage (%)	8	62.5	29.5	100

Which type of travel blog interests you the most?

200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

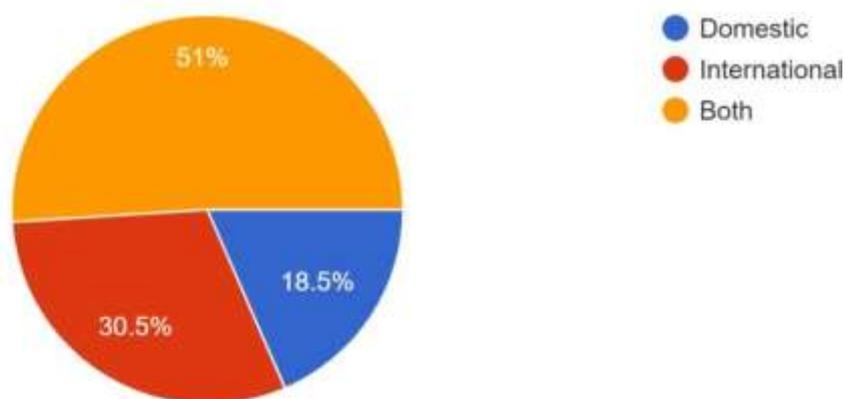
The survey data shows that **62.5%** respondents prefer **Vlogs over Blogs** and **29.5%** people like **both** written and video types of blogs.

Table no 6: **What are your location preferences for a travel blog?**

	Domestic	International	Both	Total
No of Respondents	37	61	102	200
Percentage (%)	18.5	30.5	51	100

What are your location preferences for a travel blog?

200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

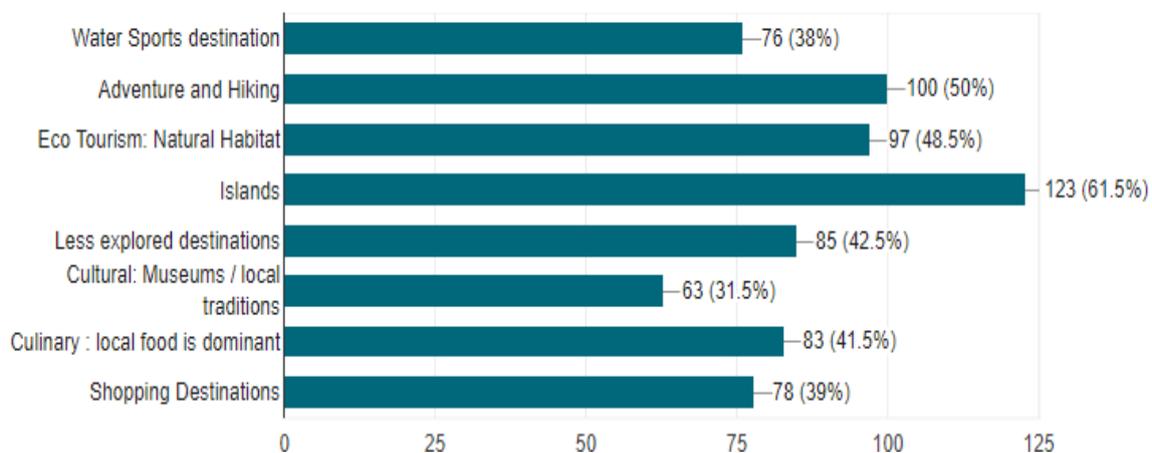
According to the survey, **51%** respondents prefer **both** Domestic and International Locations in a travel blog. 30.5% prefer International locations while 18.5% prefer Domestic locations in a travel blog.

Table no 7: Which type of travel destination would you like to know about in a travel blog?

	Water Sports destination	Adventure and Hiking	Eco Tourism: Natural Habitat	Islands	Less explored destinations	Cultural: Museums / local traditions	Culinary : local food is dominant	Shopping Destinations	Total
No of Respondents	76	100	97	123	85	63	83	78	200
Percent age (%)	38	50	48.5	61.5	42.5	31.5	41.5	39	100

Which type of travel destination would you like to know about in a travel blog?

200 responses

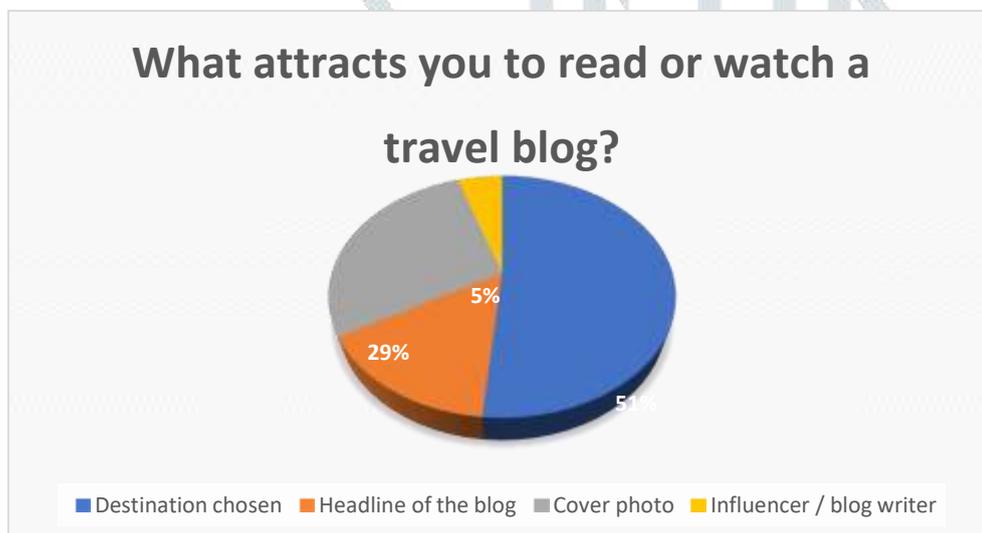


INTERPRETATION:

The above graph shows that amongst 200 people, highest number of respondents (123) prefer to know about **Islands**, 100 respondents prefer knowing about **Adventure and Hiking destinations** while 97 respondents like to know about **Eco tourism**, 85 respondents are more interested in less explored travelled destinations also 83 respondents prefer **Culinary** food places. 78 respondents would like to know about Shopping Destinations while 76 respondents prefer knowing about **water sports destinations** and 63 respondents prefer **cultural museums** type of destinations to know about in a travel blog.

Table no 8: **What attracts you to read or watch a travel blog?**

	Destination chosen	Headline of the blog	Cover photo	Influencer or blog write	Total
No of Respondents	102	30	56	10	
Percentage (%)	51	15	29	5	

INTERPRETATI**INTERPRETATION:**

The survey data shows us that **51 %** respondents are attracted by the **destination** chosen, **29%** respondents get attract towards the **Cover photo**, **15%** get influenced by the **Heading** of the blog, and only **5 %** of people get attracted towards the blog due to the **blogger**.

Table no 9: **What elements do you look forward to seeing or reading in a travel blog**

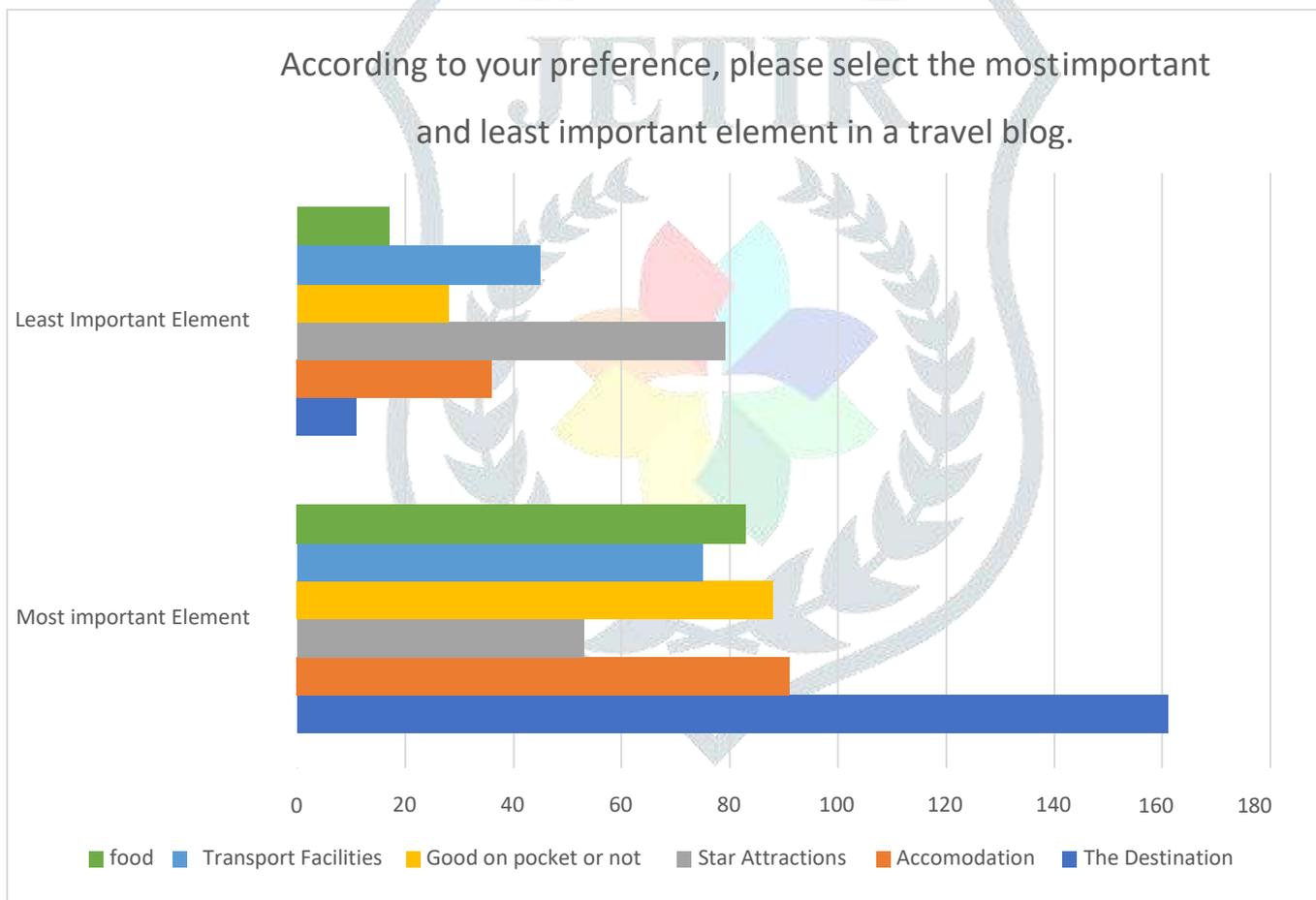
	Exciting informative experience	Accommodations	Local food or shopping	Budget	Scenic Photos and Videos	Total
No of Respondents	123	73	76	84	93	200
Percentage (%)	61.5	36.5	38	42	46.5	100

**INTERPRETATION:**

As per the data we collected, **61.5%** respondents **want exciting informative experience**, **46.5%** respondents look forward to see **photos and videos** while **42%** respondents want to know about **budget**, **38%** respondents look forward to know about **Local Food or Shopping** and **36.5 %** respondents want details about **Accommodation** , in the blogs.

Table no 10: According to your preference, please select the most important and least important element in a travel blog.

	Destination	Accommodation	Star Attraction	Good on pocket or not	Transportation facilities	Food
No of Respondents (most important element)	161	91	53	88	75	83
No of Respondents (least Important element)	11	36	79	28	45	17



INTERPRETATION:

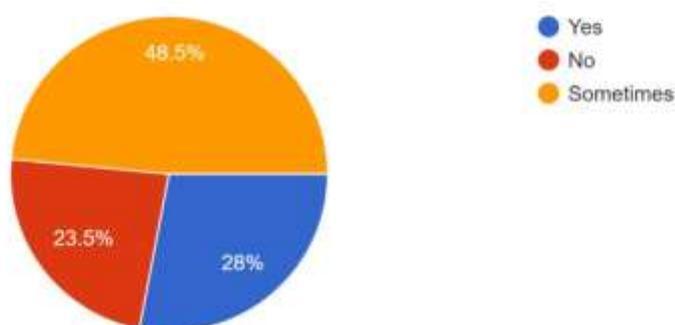
According to the survey, out of 200 respondents, **161** respondents agree that the most **important element** of a travel blog is the **Destination**. The second most important element is accommodation. **79** respondents agree that the **least important** element of a blog are **star attractions** and the second least important element are transport facilities.

Table no 11: **Do you check out the links given in the travel blogs? (links related to the accommodation or bookings or discounts)**

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
No of Respondents	56	47	97	200
Percentage (%)	28	23.5	48.5	100

Do you check out the links given in the travel blogs? (links related to the accommodation or bookings or discounts)

200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

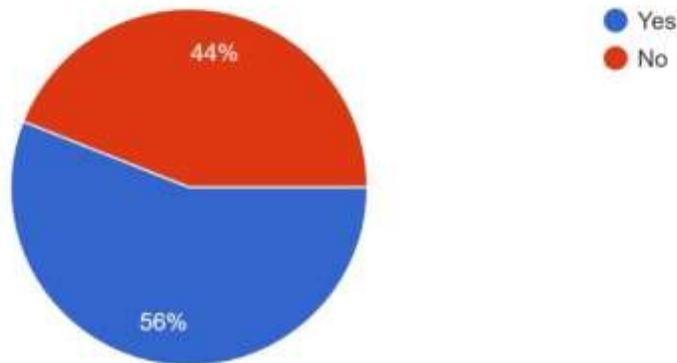
According to the analysis, **48.5%** respondents **sometimes check the links** given in a blog. **28%** respondents **check out the links** for discounts while **23.5%** respondents **don't check out for links** for discounts, and accommodations.

Table no 12: Do you follow any travel blogger on Instagram or YouTube or any blog writer?

	Yes	No	Total
No of Respondents	88	112	200
Percentage (%)	44	56	100

Do you follow any travel blogger on Instagram or YouTube or any blog writer?

200 responses



INTERPRETATION:

56% people responded that **Yes**, they do follow travel bloggers on various social media platforms **while 44%** people responded **No**, they don't follow any travel blogger.

Suggestions:

- Travel bloggers should make more content that involves real personal experience and honest review about the destinations.
- Travel bloggers should keep a balance between written as well as visual content as the audience enjoys both of them.
- Aesthetic photos and videos attract the audience towards a travel blog.
- Audience expects in depth information regarding the destinations and accommodations.
- Islands, Adventure & Hiking destinations and Eco- Tourism destinations are the kind of destinations the target audience is looking for in the travel blogs.

Certain Key Points that the audience expects out of a travel Blog: Research on specific destinations -

While planning a trip an individual would like to find out where to stay, how to get to specific places, etc. Some bloggers go all out on describing the details of how to get from A to B, and the audience finds this piece super helpful!

How travellers travel -

What kind of things they bring in their backpack, useful tips, etc

Travel hacks -

Some of them can only be discovered by going through an actual experience. but the audience always likes to hear what hacks others have discovered. While going through blogs, audience often look for inspiration and information of what to see, where to sleep, how to spend your days, what to be careful for etc. Real pieces of advice are very important in travel blogs

The blogger's opinion / statement about a topic -

An overall opinion of the blogger whether it was a good travel experience or not is very valuable of the audience.

Audiences don't like content that is superficial or that markets a destination, they simply want blogs to understand and know, something perhaps Google or another travel website doesn't tell them. Above are some basic examples of what individuals expect from a travel blog. My research has carried out a detail study of what individuals want from a travel blog.

Conclusion:

The research study on "What Individuals want from a Travel Blog?" helped us understand what audience expects from a travel blog. Audience is equally interested in written as well as visual content of a travel blog. The audience wants real experience about travel trip. The most important elements in a travel blogs for the audience is the destination chosen and the accommodation details. With travelling becoming so prominent, people today are following travel bloggers because they rely on them for authentic information.