

The Influence of Social Media on Tourism Promotion in India: A Case Study of Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research seeks to discuss the role of social media in marketing tourism in India with the case study of Karnataka.

Methodology: The research involves primary data analyses with the help of surveys and interviews with tourists and professionals that work in the industry, and secondary data analysis using the most popular social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Findings: The results indicate that although social media has enhanced tourism promotion greatly by enabling both travellers and content creators to have more power, the industry has not fully exploited its strategic potential. The research presents issues related to the inconsistency of the quality of the content and a low degree of conservation messaging, yet it also shows the efficiency of the social media in drawing domestic tourists and forming their perceptions.

Conclusion: This research paper concludes that a stronger and better-focused social media marketing campaign can further contribute to the growth of sustainable tourism, economic gains, and responsible travel projects in Karnataka and other parts of the world.

Keywords: Social Media, Word of Mouth, Tourism, Online Promotion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has revolutionized the communication system and created global bonds among people, which affect many industries, including the travel and tourism industry. The social media provides the opportunities to market sustainable tourism despite the challenges it brings to long-term sustainability. Organisations such as Rainforest Alliance and Global Sustainable Tourism Council are among international organizations that actively use social media to communicate with stakeholders. Travel agencies are actively involved with their audience on the social media, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, to educate people about sustainable travel. The UN-promoted idea of sustainable tourism, which is eminent in initiatives like the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, underscores the sustainability which exists between environmental, social, and economic. It encourages the emerging

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local cultures, environmental safety, and job development. The growth of social media in influencing and marketing the sustainable tourism activities is an encouraging trend of the future of the sector (Safdar and Bibi, 2025; Shabir et al., 2015).

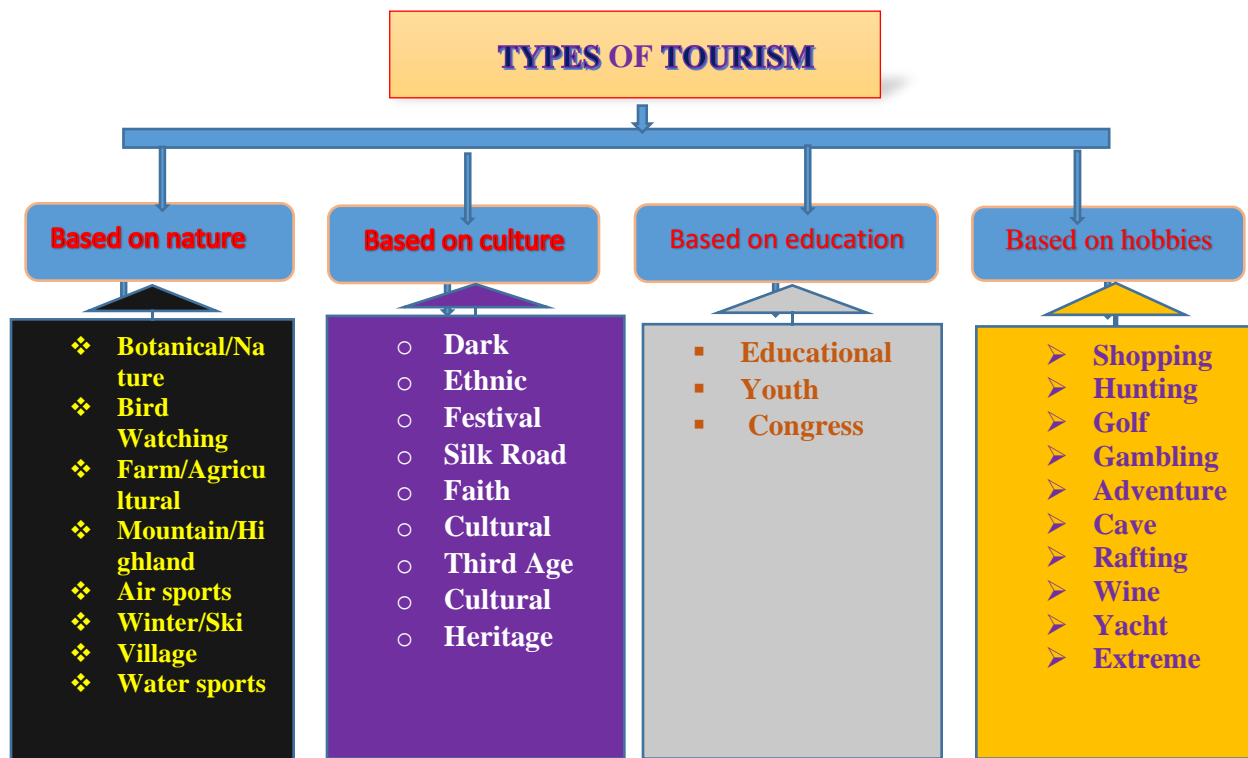
1.1 Extent or Range of Tourism in Karnataka

The Karnataka region of Southern India is rich in attractions which include popular national parks like bandipur, historic temples, UNESCO world heritage sites and hill stations like Coorg and Nandi Hills. Karnataka is also a destination that has a unique and diverse culinary experience. In general, Karnataka is a destination that should not be missed since it hosts different types of tourists.

1.2 Types of Tourism

There are many different types of tourism, each offering unique benefits. Here are just a few of the most popular types of tourism (see figure 1);

Figure 1: Types of Tourism



1.3 Sustainable Tourism Products of Various Districts of the Karnataka State

Bagalkot: Karadantu: Aminagad in Hungund taluk is famous for this sweet made from dry fruits, jaggery, and edible gum. Guledagudda Khana Textile: A 4000-year-old handloomed textile in Guledagudda. Ilkal Sari: Traditional women’s clothing woven with cotton warp for the body and art silk warp for the border and pallu.

Bangalore Rural: Bangalore Rose Onion: Grown in 16 taluks, it has a G.I. indicator and is exported to Southeast Asian nations. Devanahalli Chakota (Pomello): A unique citrus fruit grown only in Devanahalli taluk.

Bangalore Urban: Wholesale Textiles on Ramachandrapura Street: Buy towels, linen, curtains, and pillowcases by the kilogram. Mysore Sandal Soap: A well-known product from Bangalore.

Belgaum: Kunda and Gokak Kardant: Renowned confections.

Bellary: Hampi: Center for locally made clothes, musical instruments, stone artefacts, and Sandur tribal accessories.

Bidar: Bidriware: Metal handicraft dating back to the 14th century, influenced by Persian art.

Chamarajanagar: Sandalwood Mementoes: Local marketplaces offer souvenirs made from sandalwood carvings.

Chikkaballapur: Nandi Hills Vineyards: Known for wine tours and tastings.

Chikkamagalur: Coffee: Introduced 350 years ago in Baba Budan Giri highlands. Regional Handicrafts: Use berries, pepper, aromatic sandalwood, coffee wood, and scents.

Chitradurga: Molakalmuru Sarees: Woven in Molakalmuru village, akin to Kanchipuram sarees.

Dakshina Kannada: Gadbad Ice Cream: The Ideal Ice Cream serves a delightful layered dessert. Mangalore Bajji: Popular snack made from various ingredients.

Davanagere: Textile Industry: Known for Mirchi mandakki and crispy benne (butter) dosas.

Dharwad: Khadi Clothes: Dharwad district produces Khadi textiles. Dharwad Pedas: A local sweet. Savanur Village Kharas: Well-known namkeen snacks.

Gadag: Hebbal Wooden Handicrafts: Carved figures, doors, and doorframes.

Hassan: Stone Souvenirs: Sold near the Chennakeshava temple at Halebeedu.

Haveri: Byadagi Chillies: These are used in South Indian dishes and even for making lipstick and nail polish.

Kalaburgi: Toor Dal: A popular dish grown throughout the region. Shahabad Stone: Used in construction.

Kodagu: Diverse Food: A specialty of Kodagu

1.4 Social Media

The emergence of social media has changed the world of communication and has affected industries such as traveling. Travel companies and other international organisations are active in promoting sustainable tourism through websites such as Facebook and Instagram. Sustainable tourism has been promoted by the United Nations and it has placed a lot of emphasis on environmental, social as well as economic sustainability. The aspect of social media is increasingly being recognised as influencing to create sustainable tourism and this augers well with the future of the tourism industry (see table 1).

1.4.1 Different Types of Social Media Networks

Social media is a broad umbrella which has various purposes. The professional networking sites are LinkedIn and the microblogging and general social networking sites are Twitter and Facebook. Some of the media-sharing platforms include You Tube, Instagram, and Snapchat. Discussion-based platforms are Reddit, Quora and Digg, and the others are content curation and bookmarking networks such as Flipboard and Pinterest. TripAdvisor, Zomato, and Yelp are consumer review networks that enable sharing of customer reviews and experiences. Jackson and publishing sites consist of Medium, Tumblr, and WordPress. Also, there are social commerce networks, such as Polyvore, Etsy, and Fancy, which facilitate online shopping and interaction with consumers (see table 2).

Table 1: Statistics of Social Media Users

Indian internet users	Statistics
Interest-Based Networks: Last.fm, Houzz, and Goodreads. The entire population of India	1.43 billion
Indians who use social media regularly	0.468 billion
India's Internet user base	0.693 billion
India's mobile internet user count	0.628 billion

Sources: - <https://www.theglobalstatistics.com/india-social-media-statistics/>

Table 2: Top social media users

Top social network platforms in India	Percentage	Active users (in millions)
Instagram	74.70%	516.92
Facebook	71.20%	492.70
Snapchat	45.50%	314.86
Twitter	42.90%	296.87
LinkedIn	35.70%	247.04
Mojo	29.50%	204.14
Pinterest	29.00%	200.68
Mojo Lite +	26.20%	181.30
Skype	20.30%	140.48
Hello	19.40%	134.25
Popular messenger apps in India	Percentage	Active users (in millions)
WhatsApp	76.80%	531.46
Telegram	55.50%	384.06
FB Messenger	49.70%	343.92
Snapchat	45.50%	314.86
Share chat	28.10%	194.45
Twitch	15.90%	110.03

Sources: - <https://www.theglobalstatistics.com/india-social-media-statistics/>

1.5 Problem Statement

The central issue that the study will focus on is the lack of use of social media as a strategic instrument in tourism promotion in Karnataka, India even after its demonstration to have the potential of reaching large audiences, influencing traveller choice and ensuring that tourism activities are sustainable. Although social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have transformed the process of sharing tourism related information, a high number of players within the travel sector in Karnataka do not have efficient methods to utilise the technology to the fullest potential. This will be a limitation in the ability of the sector to generate tourists, conserve, as well as, derive optimum economic gains out of tourism.

1.6 Scope of the Research

Considering that in recent years, there has been an improvement in the focus on the role of social media in tourism promotion in India. The swift growth of the digital media has prompted people to communicate and publish their travel experiences and destinations via a number of social media. This paper explores the dimension and the possibilities of social media as a tourism promotion instrument in India. It assesses the merits and demerits of the use of social media in this regard and discusses how various forms of social networking sites could be used to attract potential tourists. The research also aims at establishing the obstacles encountered in using social media in promoting travel and tourism in India.

1.7 Research Gap

The impact of social media on international communication and other businesses, such as the tourism sector, has both opportunities and issues when it comes to the enhancement of sustainable practices. Travel organisations and travel agencies engage on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to engage with their stakeholders, as well as promote eco-friendly travel. The approval of sustainable tourism by the U.N. also emphasizes the promising future of the industry because it incorporates environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

1.8 Significance of Study

This study is critical because it shows that social media can be exploited to promote and develop tourism in Karnataka, India in a sustainable manner. The research sheds light on the potentials and limitations of using social media in the tourism industry, which gives practical suggestions to policymakers, industry players, and creators of tourist content intending to increase tourist inflow, economic development, and conservation education using the internet. The findings of the research can be used to establish optimistic, specific social media marketing strategies that can revolutionize the tourism experiences and results of both the destination and the traveller.

1.9 Research Objectives

- 1) To determine the critical socioeconomic elements Karnataka needs to promote sustainable tourism.
- 2) Recognising the cultural elements that are crucial to sustainable growth.
- 3) To appreciate how social media helps to promote and raise awareness of sustainable travel destinations.
- 4) Determining Karnataka's sustainable tourist offerings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wahyuni et al. (2021) presented a case study, which considers the contribution of social media to facilitating tourism development during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bandung, Indonesia. As seen in their results, social media sites are capable of being used to advantage to plan and advertise the activities of tourism whilst they are also adhered to health protocols. In his article, Talukder (2021) points out that the role of social media in the tourism sector of Bangladesh is becoming more and more important, and more empirical studies are required to improve the comprehension of its effect. Peng et al. (2021) explored the use of social media in international tourism and found that it has a significant impact on the accessibility of information by tourists, which necessitates its designation as an important channel of information. Pourfakhimi et al. (2020) noted that the academic literature on the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer behavior in the tourism and hospitality industry was incoherent and was mostly restricted to a small number of outcomes. The literature also indicates that the contribution of the social media to increase awareness of sustainable tourism is a fairly new research field. Al-Badi et al. (2017) reviewed the aspect of beneficial impact of social media on travel preparation and decision-making procedures, and furthermore advocated further research on its effect on tourism demand and supply. Buhalis and Law (2008) demonstrated that the digital space has taken the place of the brochures and TV advertisements in tourism marketing. According to them, the social media enables destinations to engage people in real-time, present experiences and create stronger destination brands. In the case of Karnataka, it will be an opportunity to bring international audiences closer to its diverse nature and scenery. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) discovered that travellers use social media more often as their initial point of call when they are planning on a trip. They lost their faith in travel agents and instead resorted to Facebook pages, Instagram photos, and online reviews. This action highlights the importance of Karnataka being visible on the

internet on the direct effect of it being added on the travel list of a given person. Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides (2012) stated that words and images used by other tourists have a higher probability of persuading tourists than the official advertisements, which are glossy and smooth. Whenever one writes about the ruins of Hampi or coffee plantations of Coorg, it has a touch of genuineness that is hard to achieve with paid campaigns. Liu, Schuckert, and Law (2018) argue that Instagram has become a platform of aspirational travelling. They emphasized the importance of scenic photography as a cause of wanderlust. With its combination of natural beauty and architectural marvel, Karnataka can be at gain when tourists are placing such visuals. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) observed that the social media feeds are highly personalized by the algorithms. This implies that the tourists will be more inclined to visit attractions that are in line with their interests that trekking enthusiasts may consider visiting the Western Ghats in Karnataka and culture lovers may visit the Mysore Palace. This specialized exposure contributes towards the development of niche tourism. It was demonstrated that social media plays a pivotal role in the creation of the tourism brand in India (Manhas and Dogra, 2019). In their research, they discovered that online content is what tourists use to shape their perception of India. In the case of Karnataka, this notes the essence of selecting digital images that underscore the distinctiveness of this country. According to the Ministry of Tourism (2017), social media is becoming a more prominent part of foreign visitors to India in terms of trip planning. Although the official websites also helped to some extent, tourists resorted to using websites like YouTube and Instagram more frequently. This implies that Karnataka tourism board needs to establish a more powerful social media. Manhas and Dogra (2019) have noted that influencers are contemporary travel agents to young people. Their suggestions are intimate and credible. Karnataka can do a lot by collaborating with localists who can give real-life stories about festivals, foods, and secret trails. Shivakumar and Sivakumar (2025) conducted research among travelers in Karnataka and established that social media does not only affect inspiration but also final purchase. Directly through platforms, people tend to reserve hotels or experiences when they have seen posts. This renders the social media a potent method of interest to action. Ganesha and Sinnor (2019) analyzed posts on Instagram in Karnataka. They found that the majority of posts had a positive emotional appeal and indicated that online images can create a positive impression. Their research proposes that social media is not all about being visible, but it actively forms positive associations. Dwivedi (2009) has pointed out that cultural tourism can be highlighted through the use of social media. In the case of India, this will be a demonstration of the traditions and heritage as well as festivals. With festivals such as Mysore Dasara, Karnataka has an opportunity of using this spotlight to draw the interest of international publicity to its richness of culture. Akehurst (2009) emphasized on the increasing relevance of travel blogs. Blogs are more relatable to the reader since they present detailed first-hand accounts unlike official sites. In the case of Karnataka, true-life stories that can be used as promotional content would be blogs about trekking in Kodagu or about visiting Hampi. Parra-Lopez et al. (2011) elucidated that in the process of posting their experiences online, the tourists are indirectly performing the role of promoters. One Instagram post about a waterfall in Karnataka can make tens of other people visit this place, and UGC can be regarded as a very strong marketing tool nowadays. Milano, Cheer and Novelli (2019) cautioned that in some cases, too much success can be brought about by social media. Viral posts tend to attract huge traffic to weak areas. Karnataka should take care, sustainable tourism in the areas as Gokarna or Coorg where the ecosystem is delicate. Stepchenkova and Morrison (2008) researched the effect of online visuals in destination image creation. Their research revealed that the tourists tend to use more photos than text to create impressions. This implies that the images that are posted online by the tourists can be used to develop a strong image of Karnataka across the globe. The article by Munar and Jacobsen (2014) investigated the impact of YouTube on travel planning. The emotional connection can be made with the help of videos that form the image of culture, food, and landscapes. In the case of Karnataka, telling video stories about temple prayers or wildlife tours may be very attractive to foreigners. Sharma et al. (2025) talked about the use of social media in crisis recovery of destinations. Tourism boards can regain trust through sharing timely information and positive news. Karnataka being sensitive to the monsoon disruptors would employ these tactics to convince prospective travelers. As demonstrated by Filieri and McLeay (2014), online reviews play a significant role in terms of making bookings. In the case of Karnataka homestays and boutique

hotels, the difference between being full or being left behind is the positive review on websites, such as Tripadvisor. Sigala (2012) maintained that the destinations that adopt social media have a competitive advantage. Through digital campaigns and customer interaction, Karnataka will be able to prove its position as a state that is modern and friendly to the travelers, which will make it stand out of the rest of the Indian destinations. Lo, McKercher, Lo, Cheung, and Law (2011) emphasized that online travel communities encourage loyalty and repeat visits. Karnataka could foster such communities around annual events like Mysore Dasara or Hampi Utsav, turning one-time visitors into repeat tourists.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper has taken a mixed methodological approach by examining how social media has impacted tourism promotion in Karnataka. The methodology developed the stages so far as to provide depth of understanding and breadth of data collection. It started with a pilot survey to perfect the instruments and then a massive survey was conducted in order to focus on the perceptions and experiences of tourists who had previously taken a trip to various parts of Karnataka.

3.1 Research Design

It was a descriptive and exploratory research design. The descriptive approach was selected to outline the trends in the influence of social media on tourism promotion whereas the exploratory aspect enabled the research to identify information that could not have been envisioned initially. Qualitative (pilot interviews) and quantitative (structured survey) were used in the study to have a more holistic picture.

3.2 Pilot Research

The first stage of the research was the pilot research, which was carried out on a small sample of the respondents. A convenience sample of 15 people was used and they were all people who had travelled recently in Karnataka. Semi-structured interviews were to be used, particularly attention was to be paid to how they used social media before and during their trips and afterwards. The aim of this step was twofold, in the first place, to check the clarity and relevance of the research questions to tourists, and, in the second place, to optimize the survey tool.

Pilot feedback indicated that the social media was especially helpful in the inspiration and planning phases of tourists. Another point that the participants mentioned was that peer-created photos and reviews had a greater influence on their decision to use tourism promotions than the official ones. It was on these insights that the survey questions have been modified to be more specific about the role of user-generated content, trust in peer reviews, and the impact of visuals.

3.3 Primary Survey

The second research phase involved quantitative mass survey. The 365 surveys were sent by use of Google Form and outreach was done by the use of social media, travel groups, and tourism networks. Among these 335 valid answers were obtained which made the response rate high. This made the data set credible to analyze.

The survey was aimed at those individuals who had visited other parts of Karnataka. Making of attempts were done to contact participants in Karavali (coastal Karnataka), North Karnataka and South Karnataka. The spreading of this region was deliberate with every part presenting a different tourist experience - beaches and temples in Karavali, historical places in North Karnataka and cultural centers in the South Karnataka. The issue of capturing perceptions in these diverse destinations allowed the study to have a more detailed comprehension of the role of social media in tourism promotion between settings.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling technique was the non-probability convenience sampling method because the respondents were recruited through networks that were conveniently accessed via the digital mediums. Although convenience sampling is limited in the aspect of generalizability, convenience sampling was considered

suitable in this study since the objective was to obtain perceptions of the active social media users that visited Karnataka in the recent past. In addition, the final dataset of 335 responses was not too small to conduct statistically significant analysis and interpretation.

3.5 Measurement Instrument

The survey contains structured questions that help in capturing the perception of the tourists about the role of social media in tourism promotion. The responses were measured within a 5-point Likert scale, with one end strongly disagree (1) and the other end strongly agree (5). The scale was chosen as it is a very popular scale in the social sciences in the context of gauging attitudes, perceptions, and the levels of consensuality; hence it can be used to gauge the opinions of respondents.

Questions were grouped into themes such as:

1. Use of social media for travel inspiration.
2. Trust in user-generated content versus official tourism promotions.
3. Influence of online reviews and recommendations.
4. Perceptions of Karnataka’s tourism brand shaped through digital platforms.
5. Impact of social media on actual travel choices and bookings.

The structured design of the survey ensured consistency in responses, while the Likert scale allowed the degree of influence to be measured in a nuanced manner.

3.6 Data Collection

The online data collection was done using Google Forms which offered efficiency, broader access and convenience. The web-based approach was suitable to the target group since the users of the social media were the subjects of this study. Secondly, it was cheaper, geographical barriers were removed, and quick response was recorded with the use of digital forms.

3.7 Data Validity and Reliability

The survey was thoroughly revised following the pilot phase to achieve validity with ambiguous or overlapping questions being revised or eliminated. The validity of content was also improved by based on the existing literature on social media and tourism to draw survey items. Among our 365 responses, 30 were dropped out of either incomplete or inconsistent response and 335 consistent responses were analyzed. This screening exercise enhanced data reliability.

The consistency in Likert scale and standard questions was also used to establish reliability. Statistical measures (including Cronbach alpha) were later used to determine level of internal consistency of the survey tool and acceptable reliability levels were established.

Table 3: Reliability of the Tool

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Using Standardised Items as the Basis	N of Unit
.912	.921	20

3.8 Visited Districts

In order to offer an even geographical distribution in sample size, respondents were requested to unlock the section of Karnataka that they had visited. The data was represented by Karavali, North Karnataka and South Karnataka and had covered the point of view of the coastal and historical as well as cultural tourism destinations. This failure enabled the paper to investigate how different regions are affected by the social media, providing deeper understandings of destination-specific promotion.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

There was observance of ethical norms during the research. They were also voluntary participants and they were made to understand the study purpose. Respondent anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed and the data were utilized only academically.

Table 4: *The demographic composition of the participants*

In particular	Variable	f	%
Age	18–28	176	52.5
	29–38	112	33.4
	39–48	17	5.1
	49–58	20	6.0
	Above 58	10	3.0
Gender	Male	173	51.6
	Female	162	48.4
Marital Status	Married	114	34.03
	Unmarried	221	65.97
Qualification	Graduate	195	58.2
	Intermediate	7	2.1
	Post Graduate	125	37.3
	Primary	3	0.9
	Secondary	5	1.5
Occupation	Agriculture	32	9.6
	Business/Self-employed	26	7.8
	Govt. job	105	31.3
	Private job	59	17.6
	Student	113	33.7
Monthly Income	INR 0-20000	113	33.7
	INR 21000-40000	32	9.6
	INR 41000-70000	26	7.8
	INR 71000-100000	105	31.3
	Above 100000	59	17.6
	Total	335	100

Sources: - Data derived from a survey

The demographic characteristics of the people interviewed show that it was a young sample population. A majority of the participants (52.5) were 18-28 years with 33.4 percent categorized in the 29-38 years. A minor fraction was 39-48 (5.1%), 49-58 (6%), and 58 (3%) and more. The gender representation in the sample was quite even with 51.6 percent of male and 48.4 percent female responders.

Marital status; nearly two-thirds (65.97) of the respondents were single and 34.03 percent married. The educational levels were usually high: 58.2 percent were graduates, 37.3 percent postgraduates, and few individuals have primary (0.9) and secondary (1.5) education. It means that the sample was mostly represented by well-educated people.

On occupations, students were the most represented (33.7%), then people who work in government jobs (31.3%). They were involved in smaller proportions in private jobs (17.6%), agriculture (9.6%), or business/self-employment (7.8%). The monthly income distributions were very different with one-third (33.7%) having lower than INR 20,000 and another 31.3 percent having between INR 71,000-100,000. The sample with higher levels of income (more than INR 100,000) was 17.6 percent.

Overall, the data show a youthful, educated, and digitally active group of respondents, well-suited for a study on social media and tourism promotion.

Table 5: Preferred source of information % of respondents

Particular	Variable	f	%
Preferred source	Blogs	3	0.9
	Google search	163	48.7
	Newspaper	26	7.8
	Others	13	3.9
	Social media (Facebook et al.)	127	37.9
	Travel Magazine	3	0.9
	Total	335	100

Sources: - Data derived from a survey

When asked about their preferred source of travel information, nearly half of the respondents (48.7%) relied on Google searches, making it the most common choice. Social media platforms such as Facebook were the second most popular source (37.9%). Newspapers accounted for 7.8 percent, while only a few turned to blogs (0.9%) or travel magazines (0.9%). A small proportion (3.9%) used other sources.

4. RESULTS

Table 6: Data Analysis

ITEMS	SD	D	UD	AG	SA	N	Mean	Std. D	Kurtosis
I can arrange my travels more effectively using social media sites.	28	23	39	177	68	335	3.699	1.1221	.591
Social media sites facilitate my journey planning.	29	22	50	161	73	335	3.678	1.1441	.354
Social media tools help me make more accessible judgments about my travels.	19	23	68	138	87	335	3.749	1.0902	.287
Social networking networks facilitate more accessible access to travel planning.	23	18	31	145	118	335	3.946	1.1307	1.004
As I have said on social media, reviews are critical to me.	95	35	32	107	66	335	3.042	1.5335	-1.510
6. I avoid social media sites when looking for travel-related information.	103	42	34	61	95	335	3.009	1.6369	-1.638
The expansion of the economy is facilitated by tourism.	27	18	41	117	132	335	3.922	1.2062	.461
Religious sites impact your experience.	29	32	65	159	50	335	3.504	1.1237	-.028

Handcrafted goods from the area are vital for sustainable tourism.	22	33	44	162	74	335	3.696	1.1173	.220
Local businesses and self-sufficiency are promoted by tourism.	23	13	31	171	97	335	3.913	1.0729	1.546
The marketing of tourism on social media increases government revenue.	32	19	26	146	112	335	3.857	1.2175	.527
The government should provide enough details about tourist attractions and related services.	23	15	24	132	141	335	4.054	1.1360	1.383
Social media boosts sales of regional cuisines.	22	22	32	130	129	335	3.961	1.1562	.716
Promoting travel on social media increases foot traffic to tourist destinations.	22	19	42	164	88	335	3.827	1.0861	.923
Arrivals of tourists are a more robust indicator of economic growth and sales.	28	17	44	166	80	335	3.755	1.1266	.723
Social media promotes regional festivals and fairs.	27	37	48	148	75	335	3.618	1.1800	-.189
Growth in tourism results in higher sales of ethnic handicrafts.	26	19	34	151	105	335	3.866	1.1516	.745
Social media may provide vital information to travellers.	17	19	23	131	145	334	4.096	1.0863	1.491
Adventure travel increases awareness and encourages travel.	38	46	49	120	82	335	3.484	1.3037	-.797
Social media provides precise information about a location.	25	33	18	130	129	335	3.910	1.2251	.258

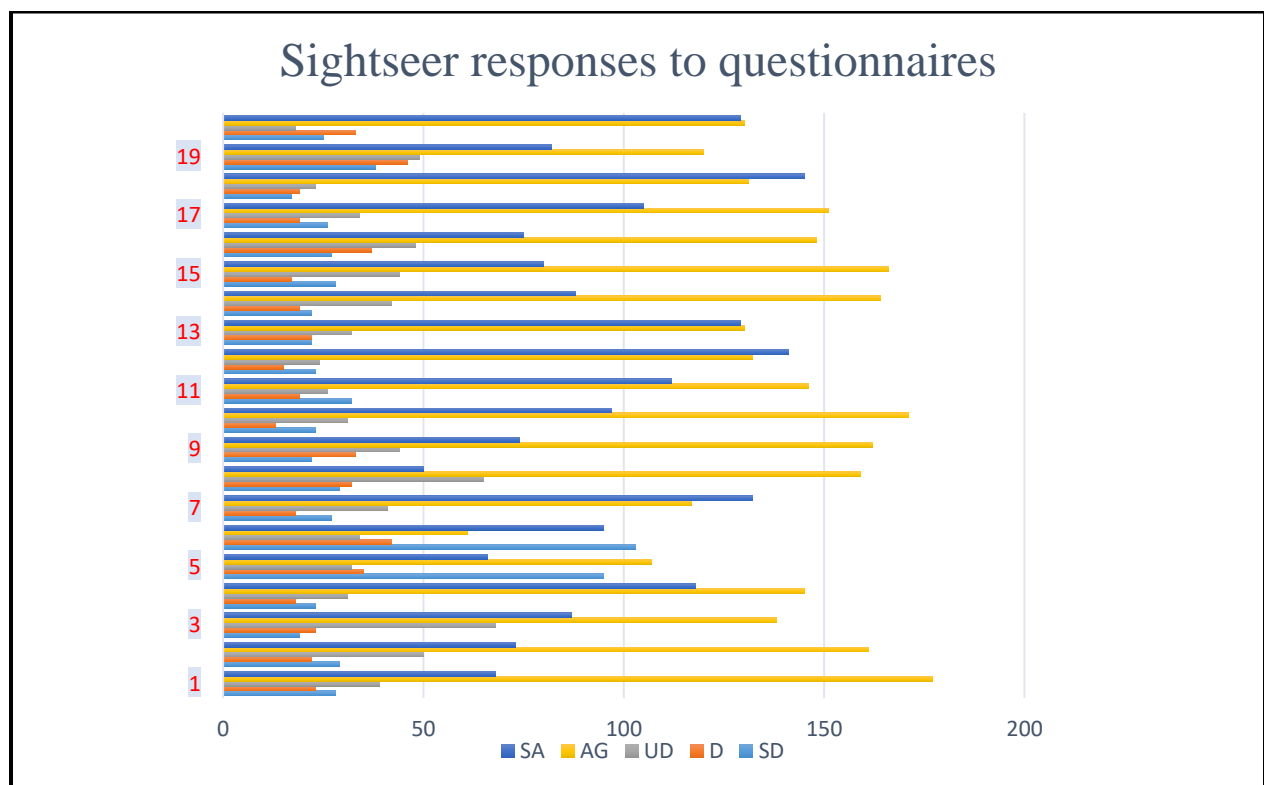
The outcomes of the surveys indicate the tremendous role played by the social media in the experience of tourism in Karnataka. Most of the respondents also said that social media like Facebook, Instagram, and travel forums enable them to organize their movements in a better way (mean = 3.70) and make journey plans (mean = 3.68). The social media tools were also found to be of value in making a decision regarding the travel (mean = 3.75) and easy access to planning resources (mean = 3.95).

Interestingly, although a significant number of the respondents admitted that they rely on online reviews (mean = 3.04), a sizeable proportion said they avoided social media to get information on their travels (mean = 3.01) indicating mixed feelings regarding their reliability.

The overall effects of tourism were also identified. The respondents had mostly agreed that it is easy to grow an economy (mean = 3.92), helps businesses at the local level (mean = 3.91), and helps the government gain revenue through proper social media marketing (mean = 3.86). Cultural factors were also appreciated with religious sites (mean = 3.50), handicrafts (mean = 3.70), local cuisines (mean = 3.96), and regional festivals (mean = 3.62) regarded as being critical to sustainable tourism.

Lastly, the social media had an easy time in sharing information with the highest level of consensus that it offered critical (mean = 4.09) and accurate (mean = 3.91) travel information. All the facts combined emphasize the dual position of social media as a planning and a promotional tool in the tourism market of Karnataka.

Figure 2: Overall results



Sources: - Data derived from a survey

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this research are useful in understanding the role of social media in the promotion of tourism and sustainable tourism development in Karnataka. These findings agree and provide theoretical and practical contributions to the previous studies in this field.

The original purpose of the research was to determine the key socioeconomic factors that are required in sustainable tourism. The findings have shown that respondents were highly in agreement that tourism helps in growth of the economy (M = 3.92) and sustainability of local business and self-sufficiency (M = 3.91). This resonates with the findings of Bhat and Mishra (2018), who pointed out that tourism boosts

the economy of the localities by providing employment opportunities and entrepreneurship. On the same note, the identification that tourism marketing has positive returns on the revenue collection to the government ($M = 3.86$) confirms the claim of Kumar and Raut (2019) who emphasized the fiscal gains of tourism promotion to state development.

The second goal was to identify the cultural factors that were critical in sustainable growth. Karnataka religious attractions ($M = 3.50$), handicrafts ($M = 3.70$), festivals ($M = 3.62$), and regional cuisines ($M = 3.96$) were also the important elements of sustainable tourism, as the respondents perceived. These conclusions support the research of Sharma (2020), who stated that cultural heritage and traditional practices are also major attractions that help regional tourism products to be distinguished. Tourism allows preservation of traditions through marketing of local cultural products, and it guarantees the involvement of the community in the development (Singh and Pandey, 2017).

The third goal aimed to know how social media can be applied in marketing and creating awareness on sustainable travel destinations. The results showed that there was a lot of consensus regarding social media as the source of essential information ($M = 4.09$), accurate travel information ($M = 3.91$), and easier planning of travels ($M = 3.95$). These findings can be explained by the fact that social media platforms are potent instruments of the travel planning and destination image development as it was stated by Gupta and Goel (2019). The respondents also concurred that social media promotes sales of local cuisines ($M = 3.96$) and footfalls by tourists ($M = 3.82$), and these findings are in line with the previous results demonstrated that social media online contents have direct influence on travel behavior and consumer expenditure in tourism industry (Chatterjee, 2021). Nevertheless, the intermediate reaction to the questions about the dependence on online reviews ($M = 3.04$) and the lack of social media use when seeking travel information ($M = 3.01$) indicate that the social media are powerful, but the problem of credibility and trust is also presented by Verma (2020).

The last goal was to identify sustainable tourism services of Karnataka. The handicrafts, local cuisines, festivals, and religious sites were given by the respondents as major attractions. These are in line with the Karnataka tourism goals that focus on cultural and environmentally-friendly products (Karnataka Tourism Board, 2021). The identification of these factors shows that there is a high correspondence between policy priorities and the perceptions of tourists.

Combined, these results indicate that social media is an informational and promotional source of tourism as well as it strengthens cultural and socioeconomic aspects of sustainability. It is similar to the earlier research, which emphasizes the dual nature of digital platforms to influence tourist behavior and develop their local areas (Dwivedi and Jain, 2019; Patel, 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

The emerging impact of social media in tourism includes customer interaction, exchange of information, and more eco-friendly travel. Social media will be vital in marketing local culture and environmental conservation and creating awareness of sustainable tourism. Considering the globalisation, the state of Karnataka is one of the best cases of why the practice of sustainable tourism is required to sustain the natural and cultural heritage of the state. These projects could be popularized, discussed and promoted by social media. The social media posts highlighting the history and importance of festivals are essential in terms of the necessity to maintain regional practices and cultures and preserve their originality in favor of the future generations.

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Conflict of Interest

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