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Instagram Marketing and Destination Choice: A Study of International Tourists Visiting Kerala, Delhi and Pune In India

Dr. R. Pradeep Kumar Patnaik¹, Davuluri Varsha²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of BBA, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) Pkpradeep143@gmail.com

²Research Scholar, BBA, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) varshadavuluri3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the way tourists look up travel information, and their attitude towards destinations and making travel decisions. Instagram is a social media application that is focused on images and videos, so it offers tourists pictures, videos, travel-related content, “influencer” content, and experiences of the destination. This study analyses the importance of destination choice among international tourists with regards to destination selection of Kerala, Delhi and Pune of India by using social media platform - Instagram marketing. IGM is divided into four key factors of Instagram marketing – Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility, and Influencer Content. A quantitative research method was used and structured questionnaire was taken for 75 respondents. In order to understand the Instagram use, travel behaviors, perceptions of Instagram contents, and preferred destinations, descriptive analysis was employed. The results suggest that 37.3% agreed or strongly agreed that seeing photos and videos on Instagram makes an Indian destination more attractive to them; and 34.7% agreed or strongly agreed that viewing destination-related information on Instagram is helpful for them. Likewise, 36.0% strongly or agreed that ability to read reviews and comments on Instagram is useful for them in making decisions about visiting Indian destinations and 36.0% said that influencer content impacts their views of Indian destinations. Instagram content was found to be most influential with 77.3% and reels with 42.7% while Kerala was viewed by 77.3%. The study offers descriptive information regarding the association between the various characteristics of destination marketing on Instagram and tourists' destination perceptions and destination-related decisions.

Keywords: Instagram Marketing, Destination Choice, Destination Image, International Tourists, Tourism Destination Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Influencer Content, Visual Appeal

Introduction

In the age of rapid technological advances and the explosion of social media, the ways that tourists look for information, research travel destinations and make travel decisions have changed. Tourism information comes from a number of places now: travel agencies, brochures, guidebooks, personal recommendations on travel and advice from others are increasingly being supplemented by access to photographs, videos, reviews and recommendations and from personal focused experiences that can be obtained quickly and instantly through digital sources. Social media has thus emerged as a significant part of the tourism decision making process, where possible travelers get to know places and to appreciate the touristic options before taking any decisions about their planned travel. Social-media related issue like trust, social influence, perceived usefulness and effort expectancy, and perceived risk has been found to affect tourists' destination choice behaviour from the recent study in the context of tourism in India [1]. The above developments indicate the increased importance of social media to the tourism communication and information system. Instagram is one of social media giants that have a special significance to tourism due to its weightage in visual communication. Through highly visual and experience-oriented methods, destinations can be told using photographs, short-form videos, Reels, stories, captions, hashtags, location based or other types of amazing content. As with many other aspects of tourism, the experience is closely associated with the visual; people typically develop notions of a destination from their observation of the landscapes, sights, architecture, cultural events, food, overnight accommodation and other elements in their expectations before going there. The research in the recent period with the Instagram tourism content had revealed the significance of tourism visual presentation, with images that emphasize places of tourist interest, and images with the presentation of people, who have received more engagement in the research examined in this subject [2]. This indicates that the visual representation of the destination on Instagram accounts for users' reactions to the tourism's content and tourism product's visual appeal is a critical factor of the destination marketing on Instagram. Instagram can also play a role in the creation and evolution of destination images. The perceptions, beliefs, associations and impressions that tourists have of a given tourist destination are called destination image. These perceptions can be influenced by repeated exposure to the content created by various actors, in the digital context. A recent study of around 142,000 Instagram posts analyzed the content characteristics and engagement levels of topics from three groups (residents, tourists, and influencers) to explore divergent understandings of local identity and the role of Instagram in creating destination images, as well as their differences in content [3]. The results show that official destination actors are not solely responsible for destination representation in a particular photo-sharing context; residents, tourists and influencers, too, can play a part in how and with what images a destination is represented and perceived in online space. This is especially important for international visitors who

could draw on the content in social media when forming initial perceptions of places that they have little prior experience with. The informativeness of information shared in digital spaces is also crucial in the field of decision-making in the tourism sector. Instagram can give tourists visual motivation for travel, but on the other hand, it can also be considered as a means for gathering information regarding attraction/participation, place to stay, food, culture and transportation, which are the roles of tourists in their tour. Social media could assist tourists in comprehending information that they think is helpful and relevant, thereby reducing their uncertainty and gauging their possible destination. Research at the UGC has demonstrated that the social presence, perceived trustworthiness, and fun of a trip could have an impact on the inspiration and planning of a trip [4]. The study on social media and tourists' decision towards destination choice in India explored the association between tourists' intention to use social media to choose a tourist destination with trust, performance expectancy, social influence, effort expectancy, other technology aspects and various other outcome variables of social media adoption as tourist destination choice [2]. This findings support the measurement of informativeness as a dimension considering Instagram marketing, which can impact the tourists' destination related perceptions and intentions. This is particularly crucial as the information that can be found on Instagram includes several kinds of information from official tourism information organizations to business owners, influencers, people who live in the tourist information area or just some regular tourists. These sources can vary in the range of their authority, veracity, authority, and commercial interest. This means tourists have to assess the information presented in Instagram to prepare plans for their journeys for the accuracy of information provision. Authors randomly select hotel posts and analyze them, and tourists' destination perceptions determine the credibility of contents and the destination quality affect the destination perception and tourism visiting intention, while the source trustworthiness and tourists' attractiveness affect tourists' responses, [5]. This implies there is some relationship between credibility and not only the information itself, but also the person and/or organization conveying the information. However, the creation of content from the influencers on Instagram has expanded its influence in the tourism marketing sector as well. Photos, videos, stories, recommendations and experiences travel bloggers use to share places; might tell a story or give information with an entertaining part. Research in recent years has looked at the customer journey and information-processing mindset concerning the process of destination selection when choosing an influencer to communicate with, leading others to conclude that the idea of influencer communication is relevant to destination-related decision-making [6]. In India specifically, researchers have studied the role of influencers and social media on tourists' destination choice decision, and the tourists' travel experiences, engagement and quality of the content [7]. Influencer content is thus an important part of Instagram marketing, and tourist potential could use the information developed by the influencers in their perceptions and destination evaluation process. A diverse array of content is posted by tourists, locals, influencers, and others on Instagram to help promote local businesses and showcase area attractions, which is another noteworthy feature of Instagram as a place of tourist communication. More about more visitors posting images, videos, and experiences, to social media platforms of where they go, adding tips and impressions regarding the area. This type of content can offer real experience representations of places and almost even complement official tourism communication. Previous studies of Instagram content have indicated variations between the content of tourists, residents, and influencers regarding representation of destinations and the interactions of the users with the content [2],[3]. This research reveals the need regarding the type and origin of Instagram content for analyzing the role of Instagram in relation to tourism communication. There has been some prior research in the field of social media as well as destination images, surveying influencers and tourist decision making studies, however further research is needed in various fields. Previous studies often have looked at each of the Instagram characteristics, specific user segments, individual destinations and overall social media use. Some studies include destination engagement [2]–[3] or destination perception [7]–[8] and some of them include destination selection [5]–[6] or UGC (user-generated content) or influencer marketing separately [7]–[8]. Lesser research exists on a combination of concepts like Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility and Influencer Content in one framework and their relationship to Destination Image and Destination Choice Intention among International Tourists in India. The comparative focus on Kerala, Delhi and Pune also gives clues into this relationship at different tourism contented destinations. This study therefore deals with the essential two aspects of Instagram Marketing and Destination choice of the international tourists for Kerala, Delhi and Pune, India. The study addresses four dimensions of Instagram marketing (Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility and Influencer Content) and how that can affect Destination Image and Destination Choice Intention. The Instagram marketing characteristics mediated through Destination Image (DI) is regarded as a conceptual mediator between the Instagram marketing characteristics and Destination Choice Intention. This study aims to contribute to the knowledge surrounding the relation of the influence of tourism communication in Instagram and it changes the perceptions and intention of the global tourists in the field of tourism of the Indian market.

Review of Literature

Social media's explosive growth informs, brings together, disseminates and assesses tourism in ways that have never existed before. Social media is a major source of personal exploration of a place, travel information, comparisons and even expectations before traveling, used by tourists. Instagram has recently come into significance because of its multimedia and photo-driven nature, as well as its ability to combine images, videos, descriptions, stories and user experiences. From this perspective, recent studies in tourism have lacked an overall promotional media analysis, which have now moved to a much more specific focus on content analysis for Instagram and how these Instagram features affect tourists' perceptions of the tourist destination and their behavioural intentions towards its visit. As destinations are extensively judged by photos and videos before real tourist's experiences, visual appeal is crucial in tourism. These pictorial images can be used to draw visitors to areas of landscapes, attractions, culture, accommodation, food and activities. With support of AI, deep learning, and machine learning, Blanco-Moreno analyzed 27,088 posts on Instagram and found that more often than not, people were posting photos of places they were interested in, not related to hospitality services, and that these posts generated more likes and favorites. They also found that images that involved human figures resulted in more interactions and sender personality influenced increases or decreases in interactions [1]. The results indicate that the visual aspects of tourism communication using the Instagram application are important in the tourism communication process, so the concept of Visual Appeal (VA) is appropriate to be applied in the current study. Different groups can also help to create a destination image via their content on Instagram. The study, which analyzed approximately 142,000 posts currently published by residents, tourists and "influencers" on the platform, classified the content produced based on its key characteristics, as well as the various reach audiences it achieved [2]. This means that

destination image is created through the official tourism communication but also through users' experiences and representations on it – that is, through the "... content of the many media the users and the destination resort have..." (Malina, 1967, p.327). An international tourist may not be familiar with these portrayal in other places to travel to India, hence they can affect the image of a travel destination in India. Based on this, the construction of Destination Image (DI) is deemed an important construct in the present research. Media productions generated by users are sources of inspiration for travelling ideas and plans. Instagram offers a platform to people for posting photos, videos, recommendations and experiences to make a place look at a different light for tourists to admire. In the extended TAM (E-TAM), Zhou and Xue found that social presence, perceived trust worthiness and perception of enjoyment influence the processing of information generated by users on Instagram and how they plan trips using this platform [3]. Aboalganam et al. (2025) found the positive relationship between UGC, destination image and tourists' intentions to visit the destination, where destination image was found to be a mediator between the former two variables. The findings, along with others from the studies conducted in the field of tourist motivation, indicate the importance of UGC in past studies and form the basis of understanding the mediational role of Destination Image. Another factor that influences tourists' decision making on Instagram is their credence. Advertisements from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or any official or institutional organization, business or individual traveler may belong to any experience or have different levels of knowledge or reliability. Almost 482 Instagram users were analyzed by Eman and Refaie in the posts they made. Content credibility and quality are found to be having a significant influence on the destination perception and intent by source trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise [5]. The findings provide support for considering Credibility (CR) as an independent variable in the present study. Informativeness is basically similar in importance and is associated with the usefulness of tourism content. Visitors to a place can also find information about the attractions, accommodation, food, transportation, activities and experiences on the place from Instagram. Informational and relevant information can help tourists make judgements and further decrease the uncertainty in planning travel. Zhou and Xue [3] were emphasizing other factors, such as perceived trustworthiness, in travel planning in the context of Instagram. Similarly, Pourazad, Stocchi and Simmonds examined how travelers are influenced by travel content actually travel and how they process the content, but also how content created by influencers contributes to an individual's choice of their destination [6]. The findings of this study corroborate the use of Informativeness (INF) to be included in the current study. Instagram's reputation as a place for destination marketing have made influencer marketing one of the significant factors to enhance tourism marketing success. Travel influencers disseminate information about the place, share tales, take photographs and videos, make recommendations, and share experiences. Pourazad et al. [6] presented the need for using mixed methods to understand travel influencers and consumers' choice behaviour and important role of influencer communication in the consumers' information processing of travel destination. The relationship between the notion of "influencer marketing" and the concept of "social media" connected to the tourist destinations in research context is also explored in the context of India [7]. Consequently, Influencer Content (IC) is seen to be a distinct facet of Instagram marketing for the current study. The link between destination marketing through Instagram and choice of destination is emphasized through the use of destinations image. Attractiveness, culture, environment, activities and experiences can be experienced, through repeated exposure to visual and textual information, to tourists. Studies have revealed correlations between Instagram content and their destination perception and visit intentions [5] and also between the UGC and destination imagery with their intentions to go to [4]. The intention to visit a destination is thus an important behavioural outcome of the study and deserves examination when it comes to examining the influence of Instagram marketing. An appropriate setting for the study is the Indian tourism context as it consists of destinations having highly different characteristics of geographical, cultural, historical and experiential. Three different geographical sets (Kerala, Delhi and Pune) were selected for analysis to deal with the extent to which all the characteristics of Instagram marketing hold true for all these three sets of destinations. Despite the growing weight of the social media landscape, existing research has concentrated on either an individual factor in social media, specific content sources or specific destinations, where there is limited literature which brought the broad categories of social media together in one study and explored Destination Image and Destination Choice Intention of international tourists to India. The current research seeks to explore this consideration by looking at these connections in Kerala, Delhi and Pune.

Research Gap

Instagram as a Tourism Communication Tool

- In the field of tourism, Instagram is an increasingly significant communication channel and has an influence on decision making processes related to the destination.
- Previous studies discuss several sources of visitors' behaviour and decision-making such as visual content [1]–[3], other users content (UGC) [4]–[6] and destination image in stripes of credibility (cred) and influencer use [5]–[6] among tourists.

Influence of Content and Influencers

- The nature, authenticity and representation of the Instagram content can affect the engagement and destination representation [3].
- Influencer-generated material is able to affect destination choice and travel intention [2], [6].
- Indian studies also show that social media and influencer marketing play a role in people's decision-making process when choosing a destination [7] [8].

Fragmented Existing Research

- What is known is scattered in respects to factors and content of research.
- There are a handful of studies that focus on different aspects of Instagram marketing, including:

- Visual Appeal
- User-Generated Content
- Influencer Communication
- Other studies have been conducted that relate the aestheticism features of Instagram in destinations like Pune and Goa with destination choice [9] and destination choice intention as related to Instagram pictures [10].

Limited Integration of Instagram Marketing Dimensions

- Previous research has insights into the visual impact in Instagram, but until now less attention has been paid in other fields, such as:
 - Informativeness
 - Credibility
- Not much research exists that brings together the concepts of **Visual Appeal**, **Informativeness**, **Credibility** and **Influencer Content** into an all-encompassing concept.

Limited Study of Combined Relationships

- Previous research not only provides an idea of possible direct impacts these Instagram attributes might have on tourists' perceptions but also on their intentions to visit.
- There was, however, a scarcity of research related to these dimensions and tourists' **Destination Image and Destination Choice Intention**.

Role of Destination Image

- But Destination Image is crucial, as its images presented on Instagram may impact the perceptions of the tourists on the destination and their decision to go there [4], [5].

Contextual Gap in India

- Previous research in India has investigated the use of social media and choice of destination among foreign tourists and domestic tourists [7,8].
- Few studies are based on a specific platform Instagram marketing among international tourists with regard to various tourist destinations of India, however.

Comparative Destination Gap

- Tourism situations in the three selected destinations are different – Kerala, Delhi and Pune.
- A few studies have compared the correlation of tourism characteristics, image of the destination and the intention to choose with these three destinations in the case of Instagram.

Research Gap Addressed by the Present Study

- The current research will try to fill in these gaps by proposing an integrated framework that analyzes the following aspects:
 - Visual Appeal
 - Informativeness
 - Credibility
 - Influencer Content
 - Destination Image
 - Destination Choice Intention
- The study is based on the tourists from **international countries to three selected destinations: Kerala, Delhi and Pune**.
- The comparative approach looks at the Instagram marketing in various destination environments in India, converging with the current body of knowledge on digital destination marketing literature.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to explore the impact of Instagram marketing on destination choice by foreign tourists to selected destinations of India. The study specifically concentrates on how the characteristics of the Instagram content and the tourists' perceptions of the destination affect tourists' intentions to choose the destination. The identified research gap is used to formulate the following **objectives**:

1. To explore the role of Visual Appeal in Destination Image of international tourists visiting Kerala, Delhi and Pune.
2. To investigate the effects of Informativeness on Destination Image among international tourists to Kerala, Delhi and Pune.
3. Comparing the Credibility and Destination Image of international tourists in Kerala, Delhi and Pune.
4. To analyze the effect of Influencer Content on Destination Image among **international tourists** in Kerala, Delhi and Pune.

Hypotheses of the Study

In accordance with the study objective and the proposed concept the following hypotheses are formulated to test the contribution of the factors of Instagram marketing for tourists' perceptions and to their decisions related to the destination of Kerala, Delhi and Pune in India.

- **H1:** Through Instagram, Visual Appeal contributes positively to tourists' Destination Image.
- **H2:** The destination image of tourists through Instagram is positively influenced by informativeness.
- **H3:** The credibility of the Instagram content positively affects tourists' Destination Image and Destination-related Decision.
- **H4:** Influencer Content has a positive influence on tourists' Destination Image and destination choice through Instagram.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is quantitative in nature which looks into the relationship between Instagram marketing and destination choice among international tourists visiting Kerala, Delhi and Pune in India. The study employs quantitative research methodology to measure the tourists' perception of the characteristics of Instagram Marketing and to explore the relationship between tourists' perception towards Destination Image and tourists' perception towards Destination Choice Intention. The study is divided into four components of Instagram marketing: Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility and Influencer Content. Based on the above, Destination Image is considered as a conceptual mediating variable, while Destination Choice Intention is considered as a dependent variable.

Population of the Study

The study sample was the international tourists who were travelling to and/or visited Kerala, Delhi or Pune in India and got the tourist information from Instagram. International tourists are the target of the study as in a foreign country they might use digital and social-media sources to explore an environment that is geographically and culturally different from what he or she is familiar with.

Sampling Method

Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents, who met the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the study. Research subjects were international tourists who have recently visited or are currently visiting one of 3 of the destinations and have searched (viewed and interacted) with tourist content uploaded on Instagram. The tourism feedback from Kerala, Delhi and Pune, which are related to these places, helped to conduct comparative studies.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was handed out to eligible tourists from all over the world to collect the primary data. The survey questions included information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, their activity on Instagram, their attitudes towards the contents of Instagram that are relevant to tourism, their destination image and their intention to choose the destination. Questionnaire was floated through the appropriate online/offline mediums to reach the foreign tourists associated with the targeted destination. The study was voluntary and explained the academic purpose of the study.

Measurement Scale

Structured statements using a scale from 1–5 each with a degree of understanding were used to measure the study variables, and they had the following meanings; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The measurement items assessed the respondents' perceptions of Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility, Influencer Content, Destination Image and Destination Choice Intention. Items of the questionnaire were adapted from the related literature of tourism and social media and were adapted suitably to the selected Indian destinations and to Instagram.

Variables of the Study

Four independent variables and one conceptual mediator with one dependent variable are included within the study. The variables taken in the study as the independent variables are Visual Appeal (VA), Informativeness (INF), Credibility (CR), Influencer Content (IC). Conceptual mediating variable is Destination Image (DI), and the dependent variable is Destination Choice Intention (DCI). A conceptual framework has been drawn up for the study based on these relationships.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed descriptively in fulfillment of the study demands. Demographic data, Instagram usage behaviour, travel-related Instagram activity and responses to the Instagram marketing factors were summarized using frequencies and percentages. In addition to tables and graphical presentations to interpret the responses of the 75 respondents, the analysis was supplemented by the tabulation of questions and narrative data analysis. There were no statistical tests conducted as part of inferential statistics, reliability test, validity test, or mediation test in the study. Comparative observations were also taken with respect to the three destinations of Kerala, Delhi and Pune.

Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out ethically in the data collecting and analysis process. All participants were made aware of the purpose of the research the questions in the questionnaire are based upon, prior to obtaining their responses to the questionnaire. No redundant personally identifiable information was needed from any of the respondents. All the data gathered was done for academic research and the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents was protected.

Conceptual Background

Instagram has emerged as one of the key avenues for communicating about tourism and promoting destinations. Instagram makes it possible for tourists to explore places via pictures, video, reviews, suggestions, and content from influencers. The platform is visually and interactively presented, which can be used to present information about geographic locations and may affect the tourists' perception and their decision on travel.

Visual Appeal

Visual appeal is how beautiful Instagram photos and videos are. Visuals are available to promote landscapes, sightseeing, culture, activities, accommodation and other experiences to tourism destinations. Alluring visual representations can engender curiosity and initial perception of a place by tourists.

Informativeness

Informativeness is helpfulness and relevance of information on Instagram. Currently, tourists can use Instagram to look for some information in relation to the tour attractions, activities, residence, food, vehicle transfer and culture. Tourists' travel decisions can be supported by useful travel information, which can lead to an understanding of a tourist destination.

Credibility

Credibility is the level of trust and believability that consumers believe in the information on Instagram. Instagram has material with the tourism industry, companies, influencers, locals, and tourists. These can present a variety of information and tourists might wish to assess the reliability and trustworthiness of what they are reading when deciding on selecting a destination.

Influencer Content

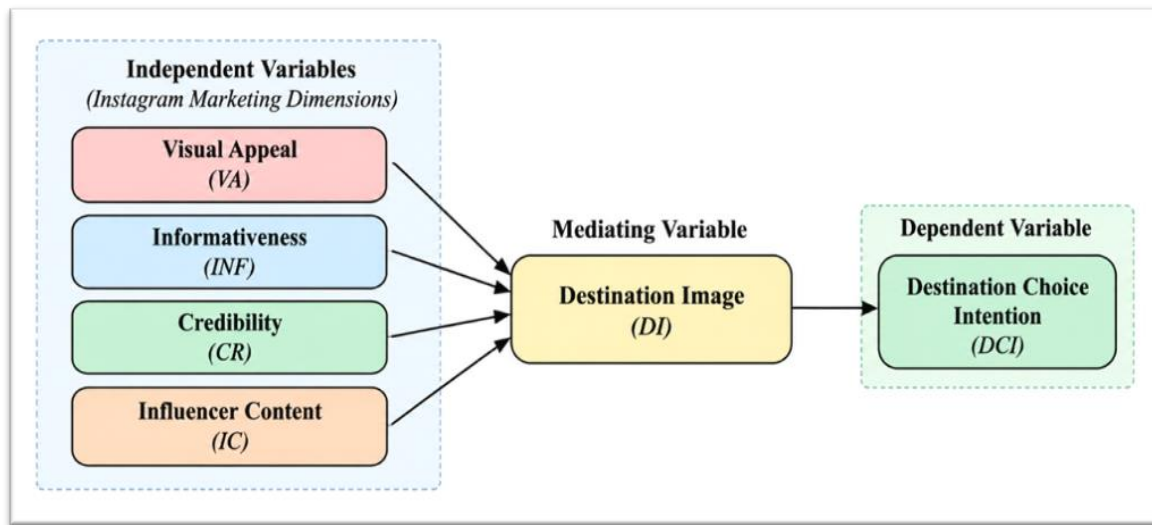
The content shared by the travel influencers can be in the form of photos, videos, Reels, stories, recommendations, and travel experiences, among others. Influencers can offer their first-hand experiences of destinations and make suggestions to their audience. This type of content can add to tourists' destination image and can affect their decisions about the place to visit.

Destination Choice

The destination choice process includes how tourists make choices regarding the destination to which they travel, depending on the information they have, their preferences, and their perception of the destination. Instagram can help facilitate this, letting visitors find out the locations, opportunities to think about, and what travelers find on the scene, whether on their personal feeds or via the feeds of influencers.

Relationship Among the Concepts:

Conceptual background of the study examined four Instagram marketing factors which are considered in the creation of a study object: Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility, and Influencer Content. These factors are discussed as per tourists perception and decision-making process on Kerala, Delhi and Pune.



Conceptual Model

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual relation adopted in the present study discussed the relationship between key dimensions of Instagram marketing and tourists destination percept and destination decision taking between Kerala, Delhi and Pune in India. Considering the subject matter of the study, four Instagram-marketing factors are deemed: Visual Appeal (VA), Informativeness (INF), Credibility (CR) and Influencer Content (IC). The above-mentioned characteristics constitute key elements of Instagram content that can have an impact on tourists' perception and evaluation of tourist destinations.

Destination Image (DI) is regarded as a conceptual mediating variable. Instagram posts have the potential to shape tourists' perceptions of a place via engaging imagery, valuable information, trusted recommendations, and experience sharing. The perception may then influence the tourists' decision-making process regarding the destinations. They found that previous literature shows a relationship between social media content and destination perceptions and tourists intentions, which supports conceptual understanding of Destination Image.

Destination Choice Intention (DCI) is the dependent variable of conceptual framework. It is tourists' intended decision or desire to select a tourist destination after processing information and perception learned through Instagram.

Independent Variables:

- Visual Appeal (VA)
- Informativeness (INF)
- Credibility (CR)
- Influencer Content (IC)

Mediating Variable:

- Destination Image (DI)

Dependent Variable:

- Destination Choice Intention (DCI)

The framework helps the conceptualization of the relationship between the four Instagram marketing factors and tourists' perceptions and destination choice intentions. It applies especially in the context of tourists' perception about Kerala, Delhi and Pune and the theory for interpreting the empirical data gathered through the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The dataset contains 75 responses, as required for the study. The following tables and figures present the descriptive analysis of the survey responses. The analysis focuses on respondent characteristics, Instagram usage behaviour, Instagram marketing factors, content preferences, and destination choice.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18 - 25	72	96.0
26 - 35	3	4.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

Most of the respondents (96.0%) fall in the age group of 18–25, while 4.0% fall in the age group of 26–35. Therefore, the sample is predominantly composed of young respondents.

Figure 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents (n = 75)

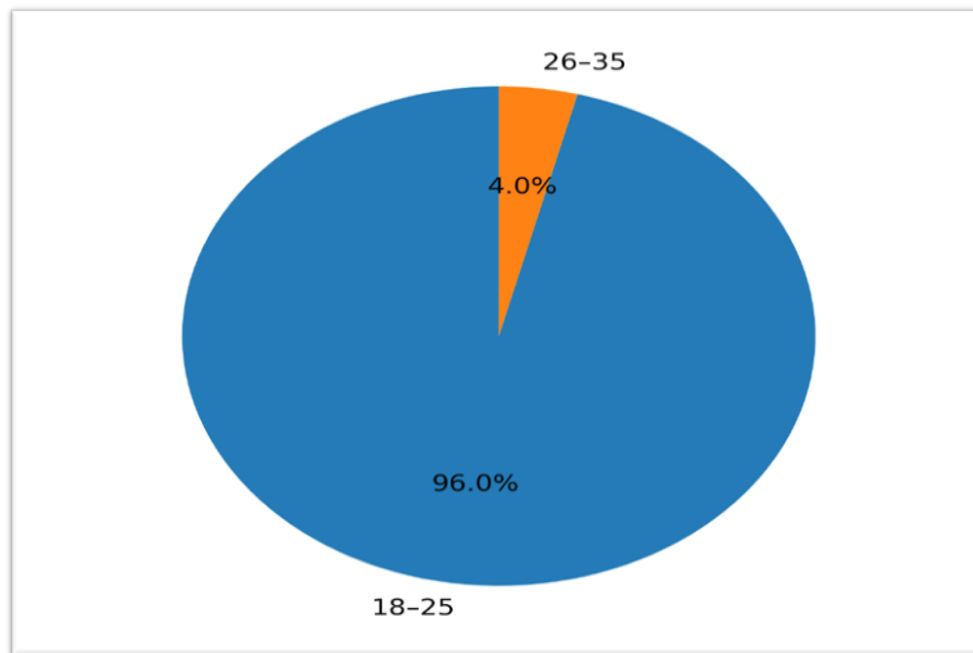
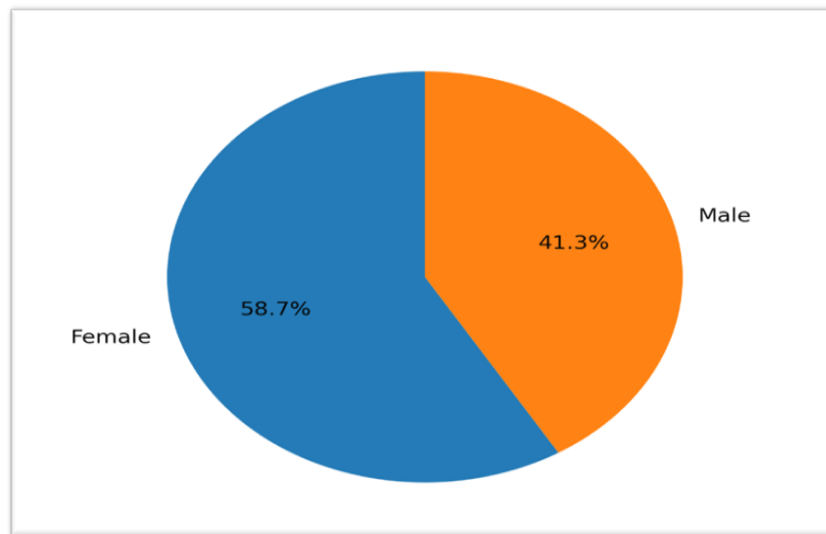


Table 2. Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	44	58.7
Male	31	41.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

The majority of the respondents are female (58.7%) and the minority are males (41.3%).

Figure 2: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents (n = 75)**Table 3. Occupation of Respondents**

Occupation	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Student	65	86.7
Business/Self-employed	4	5.3
Employed	4	5.3
Professional	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

The largest number of respondents are students (86.7%). Employees and those who are business/self-employed (5.3% and 5.3% respectively) and professionals (2.7%) are the other employment groups.

Instagram Usage and Travel Behaviour**Table 4. Previous Visit to India**

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	72	96.0
No	1	1.3
No response	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

Almost all the respondents (96.0%) had visited India earlier. However, only 1.3% reported that they had never visited India, while 2.7% did not respond to the question.

Table 5. Frequency of Instagram Usage

Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Several times a day	58	77.3
Once a day	9	12.0

Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Rarely	5	6.7
Never	1	1.3
No response	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

Most respondents (77.3%) use Instagram several times a day, indicating a high level of Instagram usage among the respondents.

Table 6: Daily Time Spent on Instagram

Time Spent	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 30 minutes	11	14.7
30 minutes – 1 hour	10	13.3
1 – 2 hours	20	26.7
2 – 4 hours	17	22.7
More than 4 hours	15	20.0
No response	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

26.7% of the respondents spend 1–2 hours a day on Instagram, 22.7% spend 2–4 hours, and 20.0% spend more than 4 hours a day. Overall, the responses indicate considerable daily exposure to Instagram among the respondents.

Table 7. Following Travel-related Instagram Accounts or Influencers

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	66.7
No	24	32.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

About two-thirds of the respondents (66.7%) indicated that they follow travel-related accounts or influencers on Instagram. This means that a significant portion of the respondents are directly exposed to travel-related content.

Table 8. Exposure to Instagram Content Promoting Indian Tourist Destinations

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	72.0
Not sure	11	14.7
No	9	12.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

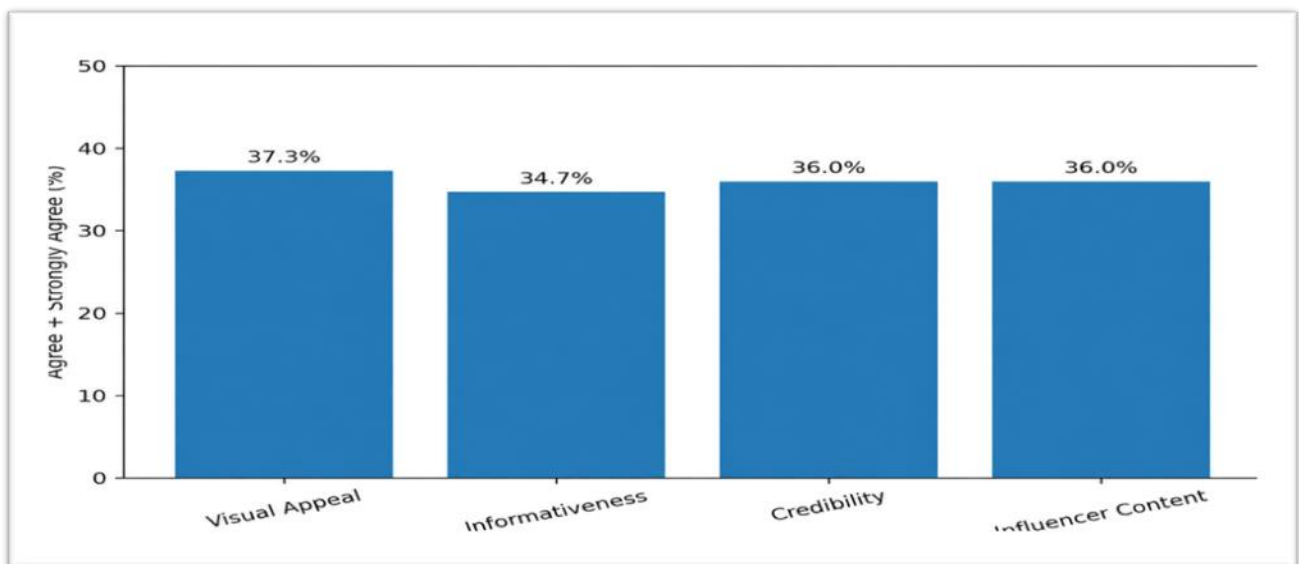
The majority of respondents (72.0%) reported that they had seen Instagram content promoting Indian tourist destinations. This indicates that most respondents had been exposed to tourism-related videos and posts about Indian destinations on Instagram.

Table 9. Use of Instagram to Search for Travel Information

Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very often	21	28.0
Often	14	18.7
Sometimes	22	29.3
Rarely	11	14.7
Never	6	8.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

The findings indicate that 29.3% of participants use Instagram to search for travel information sometimes, while 28.0% do so very often and 18.7% often. This shows that a considerable share of the respondents uses Instagram as a source of travel information.

**Analysis of Instagram Marketing Factors****Figure 3: Agreement with key Instagram marketing factors (n = 75)**

Instagram Marketing Factor	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)
Visual Appeal	37.3
Informativeness	34.7
Credibility	36.0
Influencer Content	36.0

Interpretation:

For the four main factors compared to the study goals, the figure for Visual Appeal was 37.3% agreement/strong agreement. The percentages of both Credibility Content (36.0%) and Influencer Content (36.0%) were the same. Informativeness was 34.7%.

Table 10. Instagram Provides Useful Information About Indian Tourist Destinations

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	8	10.7
Agree	18	24.0
Neutral	23	30.7
Disagree	8	10.7
Strongly Disagree	14	18.7
No response	4	5.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

34.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram provides useful information about tourist destinations in India, while 30.7% remained neutral. This indicates that respondents had mixed views about the usefulness of Instagram as a source of destination information.

Table 11. Visual Appeal of Instagram Photos and Videos

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	11	14.7
Agree	17	22.7
Neutral	17	22.7
Disagree	11	14.7
Strongly Disagree	13	17.3
No response	6	8.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

37.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram photos and videos make Indian destinations more attractive, while 22.7% remained neutral. This shows that visual content has a noticeable role in how respondents perceive Indian destinations.

Table 12. Influence of Travel Influencers on Destination Perception

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	9	12.0
Agree	18	24.0
Neutral	21	28.0
Disagree	9	12.0
Strongly Disagree	12	16.0
No response	6	8.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

36.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that travel influencers on Instagram influence their perception of Indian destinations. Meanwhile, 28.0% gave a neutral response. This indicates that influencer content has an influence on destination perception for a portion of the respondents.

Table 13. Credibility of Instagram Reviews and Comments

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	10	13.3
Agree	17	22.7
Neutral	29	38.7
Disagree	4	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	13.3
No response	5	6.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

36.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram reviews and comments help them decide whether to visit a destination. The largest group, 38.7%, remained neutral. This indicates that the role of reviews and comments in destination decisions varies among respondents.

Table 14. Influence of Instagram Advertisements

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	10	13.3
Agree	18	24.0
Neutral	24	32.0
Disagree	2	2.7
Strongly Disagree	15	20.0
No response	6	8.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

37.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram advertisements increase their interest in visiting Indian destinations, while 32.0% remained neutral. This indicates that Instagram advertisements generated interest among some respondents, although a considerable proportion remained neutral.

Table 15. Influence of Instagram Reels

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	11	14.7
Agree	20	26.7
Neutral	22	29.3
Disagree	4	5.3
Strongly Disagree	12	16.0
No response	6	8.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

41.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram Reels influence their interest in visiting Kerala, Delhi, or Pune. This indicates that short-form video content has a noticeable role in generating interest in the selected destinations.

Table 16. Instagram Helps Compare Kerala, Delhi and Pune

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	12	16.0
Agree	16	21.3
Neutral	24	32.0
Disagree	4	5.3
Strongly Disagree	14	18.7
No response	5	6.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

37.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram helps them compare Kerala, Delhi, and Pune as tourist destinations. Meanwhile, 32.0% remained neutral. This indicates that Instagram can provide comparative destination information for some respondents.

Table 17. Instagram Influence on Destination Choice

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	13	17.3
Agree	13	17.3
Neutral	27	36.0
Disagree	5	6.7
Strongly Disagree	12	16.0
No response	5	6.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

34.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram has influenced their decision to choose a particular destination in India. The largest group, 36.0%, remained neutral. This indicates that Instagram was an influencing factor for some respondents, while others were less certain about its role in their destination choice.

Table 18. Quality Rating of Instagram Visual Content

Rating	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	6	8.0
2	3	4.0
3	11	14.7
4	33	44.0
5	21	28.0
No response	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

72.0% of respondents rated the quality of visual content related to Indian destinations on Instagram at 4 or 5 out of 5. This indicates that most respondents viewed the quality of destination-related visual content positively.

Table 19. Booking a Trip Because of Instagram

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes, definitely	24	32.0
One of the factors	20	26.7
No, but interested	22	29.3
No, not at all	7	9.3
No response	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

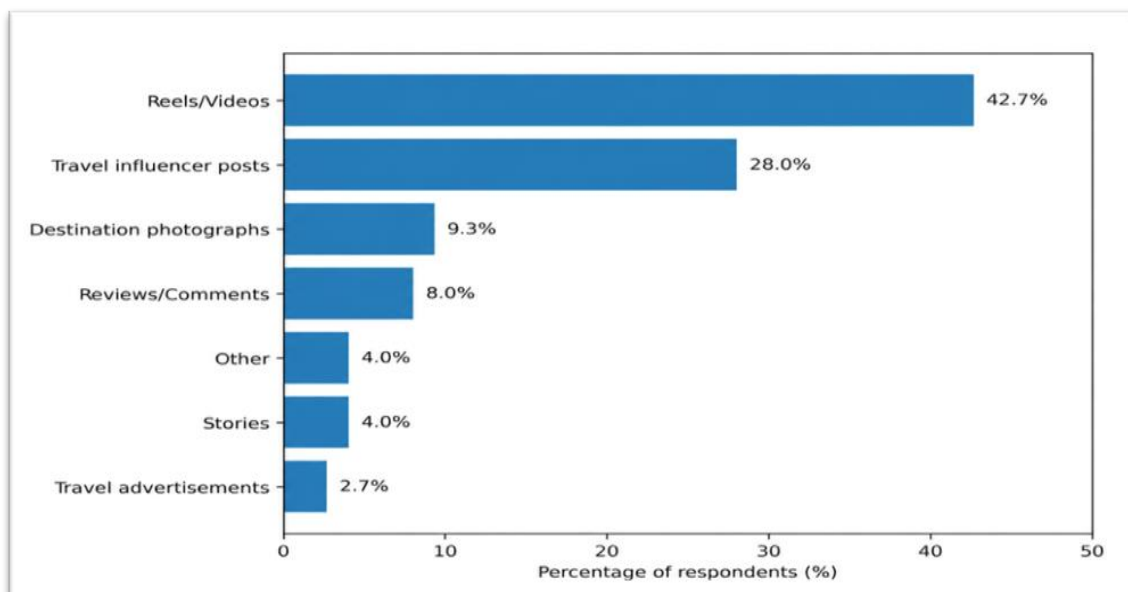
32.0% of respondents reported that they had definitely booked a trip to India because of an Instagram post or story, while 26.7% stated that Instagram was one of the factors. Therefore, 58.7% indicated some level of connection between Instagram and their booking decision. Another 29.3% had not booked a trip because of Instagram but expressed interest.

Table 20. Trust in Instagram Influencers Compared with Traditional Travel Websites

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Influencers much more	21	28.0
Influencers slightly more	5	6.7
Both equally	34	45.3
Traditional websites slightly more	3	4.0
Traditional websites much more	3	4.0
No response	9	12.0
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

45.3% of respondents reported that they trust Instagram influencers and traditional travel websites equally. Meanwhile, 34.7% reported trusting Instagram influencers more to some degree, while 8.0% trusted traditional travel websites more.

**Figure 4: Instagram Content Type Influencing Destination Choice (n = 75)**

Content Type	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Reels/Videos	32	42.7
Travel influencer posts	21	28.0
Destination photographs	7	9.3
Reviews/Comments	6	8.0
Stories	3	4.0
Travel advertisements	2	2.7
Other	3	4.0
No response	1	1.3

Interpretation:

42.7% of respondents said Reels/Videos was the most influential content type and 28.0% said that their travel influencer posts were. This suggests that short videos and posts created by influencers are major contributors to destination related content on Instagram and decision making.

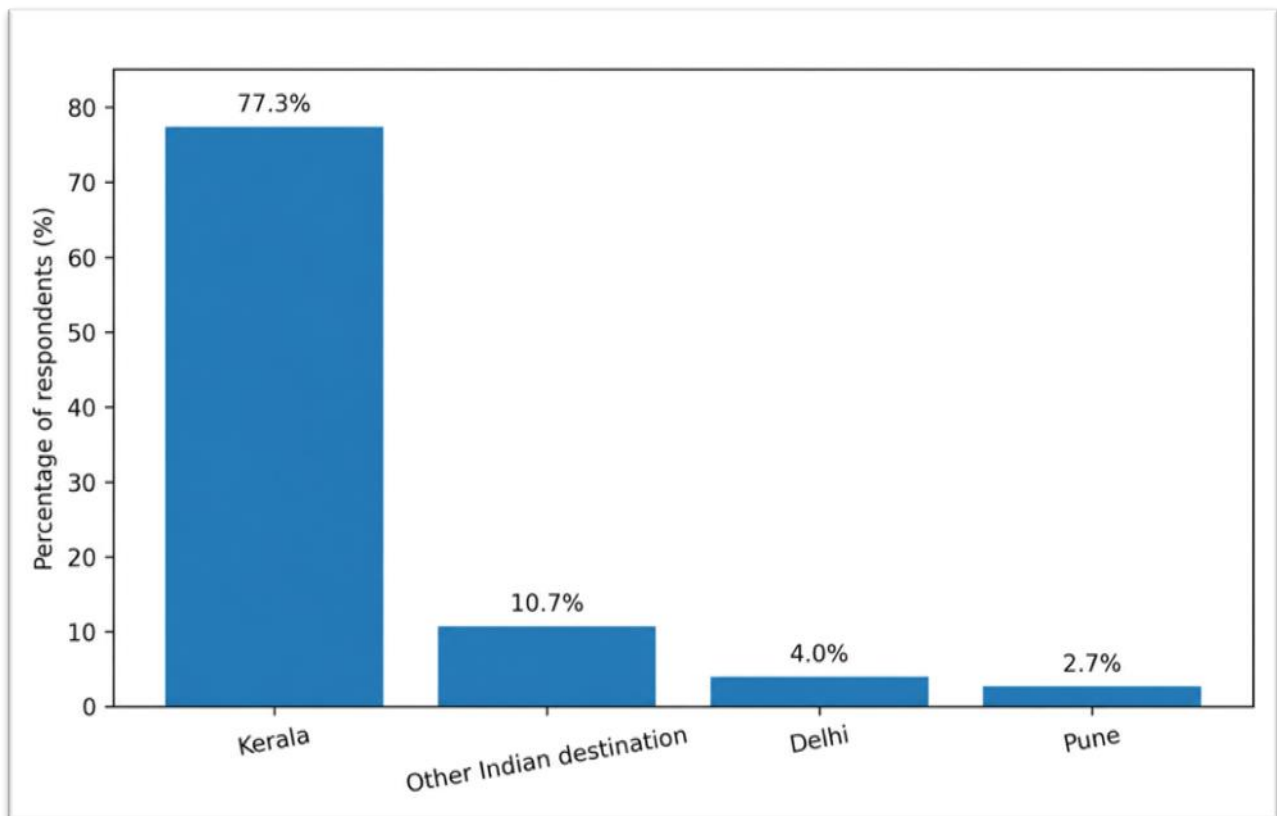


Figure 5: Destination Preference Based on Instagram Content (n = 75)

Destination	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Kerala	58	77.3
Other Indian destination	8	10.7
Delhi	3	4.0
Pune	2	2.7
No response	4	5.3
Total	75	100.0

Interpretation:

Based on what they had seen on Instagram, 77.3% of the respondents answered their preferred destination as Kerala. Delhi had a 4.0% share and Pune 2.7%, whereas the other Indian destinations had a share of 10.7%.

Interpretation in Relation to the Four Objectives**Objective 1: Visual Appeal**

The findings show that 37.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram photos and videos make Indian destinations more attractive. In addition, 72.0% of respondents rated the quality of visual content at 4 or 5 out of 5. These responses indicate that visual content is an important part of respondents' perception of Indian destinations.

Objective 2: Informativeness

The findings indicate that 29.3% of respondents sometimes use Instagram to search for travel information, while 28.0% do so very often and 18.7% often. Also, 34.7% agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram provides useful information about tourist destinations in India. This indicates that Instagram is used by a considerable share of respondents as a source of travel information.

Objective 3: Credibility

The findings show that 36.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram reviews and comments help them decide whether to visit a destination. At the same time, 45.3% reported that they trust Instagram influencers and traditional travel websites equally. This indicates that credibility remains an important consideration when respondents evaluate travel-related information on Instagram.

Objective 4: Influencer Content

The findings indicate that 36.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that travel influencers on Instagram influence their perception of Indian destinations. In addition, 28.0% identified travel influencer posts as the type of Instagram content that influences their destination choice the most. This indicates that influencer content has a noticeable role in destination-related perceptions and choices among the respondents.

Findings

The results of the site-wide survey of 75 responses were as follows:

1. A significant proportion of respondents (77.3%) use Instagram a few times a day, highlighting their heavy use of this app.
2. Significance of Visual Appeal (37.3% agreed): Respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram photos and videos make Indian destinations more appealing. Moreover, 72.0% of respondents gave the visual content related to the destination a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating.
3. Usefulness of informativeness: Instagram is used as a travel information source: 76.0% reported that they use Instagram sometimes, often, or very often for searching travel information. But only 34.7% of the people strongly agreed or agreed that Instagram gives valuable information about Indian tourist places.
4. Mixed Perception of Credibility: Approximately 36.0% said they agree or strongly agree that they use Instagram reviews and comments to help them decide whether or not they will visit a location. Meanwhile, 45.3% agreed that they trust Instagram influencers and classic travel site the same!
5. Influence of Influencer Content: Approximately 36.0% of respondents felt that travel influencers impact their attitude towards Indian travel destinations. The top of respondents (28.0%) said travel influencer posts were influential content types.
6. Strong presence of Reels and Videos: 42.7% of respondents said reels and videos have the greatest impact on their decision on where to go, making them the most influential among the different types of content on Instagram.
7. Destination Preference – Kerala saw the maximum reported preferences (77.3% saw it on Instagram), followed by Delhi (4.0%) and then Pune (2.7%).

Suggestions/Recommendations

According to the results of the study, the following proposals are made:

- To present destinations in an attractive and realistic manner, tourism marketers need to include good pictures and videos for visual content.
- Make Useful Information: Instagram content should provide practical travel information like attractions, activities, the accessibility and important details regarding travel.
- Reviews, comments and promotional information should offer trustworthy and accurate data to increase the trust among tourists.

- Relevant Influencers: Tourism organisations can use travel influencers who are suitable for providing an authentic and informative experience of the destination.
- Pay More Attention to Reels and Short Videos: Reels and videos were the most influential content type among respondents, so it's worthwhile to focus more on engaging short video content.
- Creating destination specific content: Tourism marketers must create different Instagram strategies for different destinations like Kerala, Pune and Delhi, which are different from one another in terms of their attractions and experiences.
- Instagram can be integrated with trustworthy sources of travel information for giving tourists a more comprehensive source of information to make decisions regarding tours.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

Practical Implications

The results from the research serve as valuable implications to tourism marketers, destinations marketing organizations, tourism businesses and Instagram digital influencers when promoting their destinations. The study shows that aspects of Instagram based tourism communication that are relevant are visual appeal, informativeness, credibility and influencer content. To really focus on making the destination engaging and realistic in their photos, videos, and short content experts should make sure they are nice and clear. Respondents saw content types that were identified as most influential – Reels and videos – so more attention could be paid to providing short, engaging formats regarding videos. Content shared on Instagram should also offer helpful and relevant travel details for guiding tourists and would also be beneficial in their travel decision making process. Attraction and activity information, accessibility information, local experiences and other information about the trip itself can enhance destination content. Another aspect to be considered is credibility. Tourism organizations and content makers, be aware, provide accurate information and promote authentic reviews and experiences. Use of information which is easily understandable and trustworthy can support tourists to make the right evaluations more easily and confidentially. Engaging in authentic experiences and sharing relevant recommendations can also serve to promote a destination, but it can also be done by travel influencers as well. Cooperation with appropriate travel influencers can be one of the strategies that can be used by tourism organizations to share experiences with one another about their destination. The results also highlight the need for Instagram strategies that cater to a destination. By creating unique content strategies and promoting unique offers to travelers traveling to Kerala, Delhi or Pune can develop the unique datasets, attractions, experiences, culture and tourism offerings of their respective destinations.

Theoretical Implications

Overall, the study is helpful in understanding the nature of Instagram based tourism marketing through the analysis of four factors – Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility and Influencer Content. These factors offer a theoretical framework of studying whether and how the content of Instagram can influence tourists' perception and related decision making. The conceptual framework also added a mediating concept between the factors of Instagram and the Destination Choice Intention, which is called Destination Image. Despite lacking statistical analysis of the mediation relationship, the framework gives insight into how subsequently the mediating role of **Destination Image** and its relationship with **Destination Choice Intention**. The study also fills the lacunae of the literature by analyzing Instagram marketing in travel companies considering Kerala, Delhi, Pune, and gives descriptive evidence based on the responses from 75 respondents. Results can guide future research, involving larger sample sizes and/or formal statistical methods, to investigate the relationships suggested in the conceptual structure proposed.

Future Research Directions

To study Instagram marketing and international tourists' destination choice, a framework was developed for the present study regarding Kerala, Delhi and Pune. Further variables, destinations, tourist groups and research methods could be added to the framework and make for better future research. The avenues for exploration in these areas are still ripe for further research: opportunities include influencer marketing, short-form video, and generative AI content.

- First, the research can be extended to other geographical regions including Goa, Rajasthan, Mumbai, Hyderabad and other emerging regions of India for tourism. Comparative analysis between destinations of different cultural and geographical tourism characteristics, as well as different degrees of attractiveness in marketing promoted by the use of Instagram, could offer a wider view of the impact of this type of marketing on different types of destinations.
- Second, future studies could investigate different types of Instagram content, such as Instagram Reels, videos, Stories, and interactive content. Further exploration is possible of this short-form video content, as Reels may have a connection to destination perceptions and travel-related decisions.
- Third, further studies about other psychological and behavioural characteristics may be conducted. There are several constructs that could be integrated into extended research models, including the constructs of trust, perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), travel inspiration, perceived value and satisfaction.

- Fourth, the disparities between tourist-generated content (TGC), resident-generated content (RGC), influencer-generated content (IGC) and official destination-marketing content (OMC) could be studied in the future. These comparisons may be useful for researchers to understand the role of various content sources in the formation of images of the destination and tourist involvement.
- Fifth, other research methods that go beyond collecting cross-sectional survey data may be used in future research. Longitudinal studies might analyze any identified distinctions between attitudes and behaviors both prior to and following delivery of the Instagram content to tourists, as well as how travel intentions relate to travel behaviors.
- Sixth, future studies will be based on mixed-method and big data. Interviewing, Instagram content analysis, sentiment analysis and image analysis all can be used to complement survey-based research. Data sets of Instagram images and metadata to a relatively large size can also be analyzed using AI methods that consider destination-related content.
- Last but not least, more research will look into the connection between sustainable tourism and Instagram marketing. The influence of communication and digital content can be used to communicate responsible tourism, as well as less known places and raise awareness around issues like overtourism.

Overall, there is an opportunity to conduct further studies on other destinations, tourists, Instagram contents, psychological processes, content sources and types of research. These extensions can be part of a wider picture of destination image and tourism decision making in today's social-media environment.

Conclusion

Instagram represents a significant communication landscape, a vehicle to showcase destinations and a decision-making tool in the tourism industry. The visual and interactive character of Instagram allows tourists to get information about the destination in the form of pictures, videos, tourist and influencer recommendations, tourists reviews and traveler experiences. Instagram content can affect the formation of destination image, information processing, engagement and travel intentions of tourists. The present study investigates the link between Instagram marketing and the tourist destination choice between Kerala, Delhi and Pune, India regarding international tourists. The four areas of Instagram marketing that the study concentrated on were named Visual Appeal, Informativeness, Credibility, and Influencer Content. Conceptual mediating variable was considered destination image, and dependent variable was as destination choice intention. This framework provides to the knowledge and understanding of the possible connection between the communication features of Instagram and tourists' perceptions and decision of the destination. This study used a quantitative research design with total number of 75 respondents who were answered through a structured questionnaire. The results show that Instagram is extensively utilized by the respondents and is relevant in searching information related to trips; and destination content was exposed on the platform. Visuals played an important role, too—72.0% of respondents rated the quality of Instagram photos and videos is 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. Further, 42.7% said they were most influenced by Reels and videos when choosing their destination on Instagram. The results indicate that the effect of Instagram marketing is mixed for the four selected factors. 37.3% stated that Instagram photos/ videos increase the attractiveness of the tourist destinations in India and 34.7% agreed or strongly agreed that getting information on Instagram makes the tourist destinations more interesting. Likewise, 36.0 % agreed or strongly agreed that travel influencers impact their view of Indian travel places, as well as 36.0 % agreed or strongly agreed that Instagram comments and evaluation influence them in determining whether to visit a travel destination or not. By offering a comparative lens and the contrasting experiences of destinations like Kerala, Delhi and Pune, it becomes possible to examine destination-related preferences in various geographical and tourism settings in India. Of the three listed destinations, the highest number of respondents reported being more compelled to visit Kerala due to what they experienced on Instagram but 77.3% reported that. The results revealed descriptive evidence for the experience and responses of tourists to Instagram-based destination content. The study contributes to the field of tourism marketing research by synthesizing four of the selected dimensions of Instagram marketing and conceptualizing it, based on the construct of destination image and destination choice intention. The findings also offer practical and concrete implications for the destination marketing organizations, tourism enterprises, hospitality enterprises and digital content producers in designing strategies for tourism communication on Instagram, grounded on a visual, educative, trustworthy and relevant content. The present study, however, relies on 75 responses and descriptive analysis. In this research, concept mediation of Destination Image is not found statistically. Likewise, conclusions drawn from the findings are not conclusive in proving any causal relationships between the variables. Larger samples, the appropriate measurement scales and an inferential or mediation analysis that includes the constructed variables of Instagram marketing, Destination Image, or Destination Choice Intention could be looked at in future studies to refine the relationships between them.

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