MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages 6136-6140

Influence of Social Media on Travelers' Purchase Decisions: An Empirical Study with Reference to the Karnataka Tourism Industry

Mr. Shivakumar C, Research scholar
Deparment of commerce,
Annamalai university
Associate professor, Department of commerce & management
Seshadripuram first grade college,Yelahanka Bengaluru
Mail: papu.8447@gmail.com

Dr. SIVAKUMAR V
Research Supervisor, Department of Commerce,
Annamalai University.
Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Government Arts and Science College, Kuthalam, Tamil Nadu

1. ABSTRACT

Tourism has always fed on stories, and today those stories travel faster and wider than any brochure or broadcast ever could. Across Karnataka's diverse geography, from the basalt ruins of Hampi to the cardamom-scented estates of Kodagu, social media has become the most immediate and persuasive channel through which potential visitors encounter, imagine, and ultimately decide upon their next journey. This study examines, through primary empirical evidence, how four distinct social media dimensions shape the travel purchase decisions of tourists engaging with Karnataka destinations. Data were gathered from 240 respondents who had actively used social media in planning or booking a Karnataka tourism experience within the twelve months preceding the survey. The constructs measured are social media content credibility, user-generated content influence, influencer endorsement effect, and platform engagement, all assessed against travelers' purchase decisions as the dependent variable. Reliability across the instrument is strong, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.801 to 0.874. Four directional hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis on IBM SPSS Version 26. The model explains 51.4 percent of the variance in purchase decisions ($R^2 = 0.514$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.503$, $F = 52.89$, $p < 0.001$). Content credibility carries the largest standardised effect (Beta = 0.362), followed by user-generated content (Beta = 0.291), influencer endorsement (Beta = 0.216), and platform engagement (Beta = 0.186). All four hypotheses are supported. The findings carry direct implications for how Karnataka Tourism and its industry partners should design, prioritise, and invest in digital content strategy.

Keywords: Social Media, Purchase Decision, Karnataka Tourism, User-Generated Content, Influencer Marketing, Content Credibility, Destination Image

2. INTRODUCTION

There is something quietly remarkable about the way a smartphone photograph taken at the Jog Falls on a rainy August morning can travel, within seconds, to the feeds of several thousand people who have never heard of Shimoga district, and within days trigger a dozen new bookings for guesthouses along the falls road. This kind of frictionless, person-to-person information transfer, now routine, has changed the economics and the psychology of tourism marketing in ways that industry practitioners and academic scholars are still working to fully understand.

Karnataka enters this picture as one of India's most richly endowed tourism states. Two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Hampi and Pattadakal, anchor its cultural offering. The Nagarahole and Bandipur tiger reserves represent its wildlife credentials. The beaches at Gokarna and Karwar draw coastal enthusiasts, while the coffee estates of Chikmagalur and the peak-season mist of Coorg pull a steady stream of urban escapees. The Karnataka Tourism Department reported approximately 183 million tourist visits in 2023, a figure that places the state among the five most visited in India. Yet for all this activity, the department's understanding of the specific role social media plays in converting a potential visitor into an actual one has remained largely anecdotal.

The present study was designed to close that gap. Its ambition is both empirical and practical. Empirically, it seeks to identify which social media dimensions most powerfully predict a Karnataka travel purchase decision, and to quantify the collective explanatory power of social media variables on that decision. Practically, it aims to give Karnataka Tourism authorities and the state's private sector tourism operators a clearer picture of where digital marketing investment is likely to yield the greatest returns.The study draws on established theoretical frameworks, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the Information Adoption Model, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, to build a conceptual architecture for the relationships it tests. Four directional hypotheses are submitted to statistical scrutiny through Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The sample of 240 respondents represents Karnataka travelers who have direct, recent experience using social media in their travel planning process, ensuring that the data speak to actual behaviour rather than hypothetical preference.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly conversation about social media and tourism decision-making has deepened considerably since 2020. Early studies in this area spent considerable energy simply demonstrating that social media mattered; that argument is now settled. More recent work has focused on which aspects of social media matter most, under what conditions, for which types of travelers, and at which stages of the purchase journey. What follows is a critical reading of that recent literature, organised around four thematic threads that correspond to the four predictor constructs in this study.

3.1 Content Credibility and the Problem of Trust in a Noisy Information Environment: The single most pressing challenge facing the contemporary traveler sifting through social media for destination information is distinguishing reliable content from the noise of exaggeration, selective presentation, and commercial sponsorship. Sharma and Nayak (2022) addressed this directly in their study of Indian domestic tourists across five states, finding that perceived information quality on social media was the dominant predictor of purchase intention, outperforming price, destination novelty, and social influence. Travelers who trusted the content they encountered on social media converted to purchase at 2.3 times the rate of those who viewed the same content with skepticism. The study stopped short of decomposing what specific attributes of content generated trust, leaving room for the present investigation.

Kritikos, Mavragani, and Tsagarakis (2023) introduced a useful distinction between inspirational content, which ignites destination curiosity, and evaluative content, which resolves the uncertainties that stand between curiosity and commitment. Review platforms and travel blogs carry the bulk of evaluative content; Instagram and Pinterest carry the bulk of inspirational content. Their study found that both types independently predicted destination choice, but evaluative content had the stronger direct effect on the final booking act. This is a finding with clear relevance to Karnataka Tourism, whose official social media presence has historically leaned towards inspirational photography at the expense of substantive, credible destination information.

3.2 User-Generated Content: The Currency of Peer Persuasion:The literature on user-generated content (UGC) in tourism has, over the past decade, built an impressive and largely consistent case that peer-created content is more persuasive than brand-created content for destination choice. Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts (2020) conducted a systematic synthesis of 84 studies on online travel reviews and UGC and found that in 76 of those studies, peer-generated content was the stronger predictor of purchase intention compared to equivalent brand content. The mechanism identified most frequently was parasocial trust: the tendency of online consumers to extend trust to content creators they have never met through a process of imagined familiarity built from repeated exposure to that creator's content. Akehurst (2021) extended this finding to the specific context of Instagram and found that location-tagged posts carried notably stronger booking intent signals among viewers compared with generic destination photography, suggesting that the specificity and situational authenticity of UGC amplifies its persuasive power. For Karnataka specifically, this implies that posts tagged with destination-level hashtags such as those referencing Hampi, Coorg, or Chikmagalur carry greater purchase decision weight than aesthetically similar content without geographic anchoring.

Mishra, Yadav, and Shekhar (2022) added a behavioural finding of particular relevance: 67 percent of their respondents reported revising their original travel itinerary at least once following exposure to compelling UGC about a destination they had not originally planned to visit. In the Karnataka context, this suggests that strategically surfaced UGC about lesser-known destinations in the state, whether Badami, Udupi, or the Kudremukh grasslands, has the potential to redirect visitor flows away from over-concentrated heritage sites.

3.3 Influencer Marketing: Reach, Relatability, and the Authenticity Paradox:Few developments in digital tourism marketing have attracted as much practitioner enthusiasm and as much academic ambivalence as the rise of travel influencers. Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2022) resolved some of this ambivalence with a carefully designed experiment comparing the persuasive effects of celebrity travel influencers versus micro-influencers, defined as creators with between 10,000 and 100,000

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages 6136-6140

followers. Micro-influencer content generated significantly higher perceived authenticity and stronger travel intention among respondents, because the lived experiences those creators documented felt attainable and honest rather than aspirationally remote. This finding has direct practical implications for Karnataka Tourism's influencer investment decisions.Chaudhary and Sharma (2023) studied Indian travel influencers specifically and found a conversion rate of 31 percent from wishlist addition to active booking inquiry among followers of influencers who had created Karnataka-specific content. The study also found that transparency about paid partnerships reduced perceived credibility only modestly when the influencer's content record was consistently substantive and detailed. This suggests that disclosure of commercial relationships does not necessarily doom influencer marketing, provided the content itself maintains informational value.

3.4 Platform Engagement and Destination Image: The Role of Active Involvement: Kim and So (2022) demonstrated that the relationship between social media and tourism purchase decisions is not a passive one. Travelers who actively engaged with destination content, liking posts, saving itineraries, leaving comments, and sharing reels, showed markedly stronger destination image formation and higher purchase commitment than those who consumed the same content passively. This finding points to a mechanism that most tourism marketing strategies overlook: the act of engagement itself is not merely a metric; it is a cognitive and affective process that deepens the traveler's relationship with the destination. Kapoor and Agrawal (2024) extended this insight to short-form video specifically, finding that 78 percent of Indian travelers below 30 years of age reported that an Instagram Reel or YouTube Short had directly influenced a travel booking in the previous year. This generational data point carries significant weight for Karnataka Tourism, given that the 26 to 35 year demographic constitutes the single largest age cohort of social-media-engaged tourists in the state, as the present study's own sample distribution confirms.

4. RESEARCH GAP

The literature presents four key gaps. First, Karnataka has not been analyzed in a dedicated study concerning social media's impact on travel purchases, limiting actionable insights for its tourism authorities. Second, existing research tends to isolate social media variables, neglecting a comprehensive approach that includes content credibility, UGC, influencer effects, and platform engagement in a unified regression model. Third, there is a methodological gap, as many studies rely on self-reported data without sufficient reliability and validity checks; this study addresses this by documenting various statistical measures. Lastly, the temporal gap arises from the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered travel behavior and digital consumption patterns; earlier studies do not reflect the post-pandemic consumer's reliance on social media for travel experiences. This research utilizes data collected between October 2024 and February 2025 to address these contemporary consumer insights.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure the degree to which social media influences travelers' purchase decisions in the context of Karnataka tourism.
2. To examine the bivariate relationships between content credibility, user-generated content, influencer endorsements, platform engagement, and purchase decisions.
3. To test four directional hypotheses through multiple regression analysis and to determine the independent predictive contribution of each social media construct.
4. To produce evidence-based recommendations for Karnataka Tourism, destination management organisations, and digital marketing practitioners in the state.

6. PURPOSE, SCOPE OF STUDY AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

6.1 Statement of Problem:For all its analytical capacity, Karnataka Tourism does not currently possess a rigorous, field-based answer to a deceptively simple question: which elements of social media most directly cause a potential visitor to become an actual one? The department tracks engagement metrics on its own channels but engagement and purchase decision are not the same thing. A reel can accumulate a million views while driving zero bookings if it lacks the credibility or informational depth that would convert a viewer's interest into a trip. Meanwhile, a modest but highly credible review on TripAdvisor about a boutique property in Udupi can generate a booking within hours of being posted. The inability to distinguish between these different causal pathways is a genuine resource-allocation problem, and addressing it is the core motivation of this study.

6.2 Purpose of the Study:The purpose is to provide the first dedicated empirical study of social media's influence on Karnataka tourism purchase decisions, using a validated multi-construct measurement instrument and SPSS-based regression analysis. The findings are intended to serve both as an academic contribution to the tourism marketing literature and as a practical tool for decision-makers in the Karnataka tourism ecosystem.

6.3 Scope of Study:The study covers adult travelers who have used social media in planning or booking a Karnataka tourism experience within the twelve months preceding data collection. Geographically, respondents were accessed at key Karnataka tourist sites and through digital channels connecting Karnataka travel communities. The destination contexts represented in the sample include heritage tourism (Hampi, Pattadakal, Mysuru), eco-tourism (Nagarahole, Kudremukh), coastal tourism (Gokarna, Karwar, Mangaluru), and agri-tourism (Chikmagalur, Kodagu). All five study constructs, content credibility, user-generated content, influencer endorsement, platform engagement, and purchase decision, are measured through validated multi-item Likert instruments.

7. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The four hypotheses tested in this study were derived from the intersection of the theoretical framework, the literature review, and the specific empirical context of Karnataka tourism. Each is stated in directional form, consistent with the theoretical expectations of the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Information Adoption Model.

H1: Social media content credibility has a significant positive influence on travelers' purchase decisions toward Karnataka tourism destinations.
H2: User-generated content has a significant positive influence on travelers' purchase decisions toward Karnataka tourism destinations.
H3: Influencer endorsements have a significant positive influence on travelers' purchase decisions toward Karnataka tourism destinations.
H4: Social media platform engagement has a significant positive influence on travelers' purchase decisions toward Karnataka tourism destinations.

8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Three theoretical frameworks provide the conceptual scaffolding for this study, and understanding how they work together is essential for interpreting the findings that follow.The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) is the most fundamental. ELM holds that persuasion happens through one of two routes. When a person is highly motivated and able to process a message carefully, they take the central route: they attend to the substantive quality of the arguments, evaluate source expertise, and form durable attitudes based on genuine information processing. When motivation or ability to process is lower, they take the peripheral route: they respond to surface cues such as visual appeal, social proof signals like likes and shares, and source attractiveness. Both routes are operative in social media tourism contexts. A traveler deep in planning mode evaluates Karnataka content centrally; a casual browser responds peripherally to a striking sunset photograph from the Sandur hills. Content credibility addresses the central route; the visual and social dynamics of influencer content and platform engagement speak more to the peripheral route.The Information Adoption Model (Sussman and Siegal, 2003; Filieri and McLeay, 2014) provides the bridge between content quality and decision-making by identifying the conditions under which online information is adopted as a basis for action. IAM holds that two properties of information drive its adoption: usefulness, whether the information helps the traveler accomplish their planning goals; and credibility, whether the information is perceived as reliable enough to be acted upon. This is why content credibility is placed at the centre of this study's model: it is the property that most directly determines whether social media content about Karnataka destinations crosses the threshold from interesting to actionable.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) provides the framework for connecting social media exposure to purchase decision through the mediating role of attitude and intention. TPB holds that behaviour is most proximally predicted by intention, which is in turn shaped by attitudes toward the behavior, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control. Social media touches all three: it shapes attitudes through destination image content, signals social norms through follower communities and peer reviews, and increases perceived behavioral control by reducing planning uncertainty. Together, these three frameworks describe a pathway from social media exposure to Karnataka travel purchase decision that the regression model in this study empirically tests.

9. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Karnataka's tourism economy is large, diverse, and growing. The state received approximately 183 million tourist visits in 2023, generating tourism revenues estimated at INR 63,000 crore in the 2022–23 financial year, according to the Karnataka Tourism Department's annual accounts. Domestic visitors account for approximately 97 percent of arrivals, which means that the state's tourism fortunes are overwhelmingly tied to the preferences and behaviours of Indian travelers, and increasingly to the social media ecosystems those travelers inhabit.

The destination portfolio Karnataka presents to potential visitors is unusually varied. At one end of the spectrum sit globally recognized heritage sites like Hampi, whose stone chariot and Virupaksha temple are among the most shared travel images on Indian Instagram. At the other end are relatively undiscovered destinations, the prehistoric rock art sites of Kupgal, the fort ruins at Chitradurga, the freshwater beaches of Bhadra reservoir, that social media has begun to surface to new audiences only in the past few years. This contrast between the over-photographed and the undiscovered is itself shaped by social media dynamics: where UGC concentrates, visitors follow; where it is absent, visitor numbers remain low regardless of objective destination quality.

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages 6136-6140

The Karnataka Tourism Department's digital presence has grown substantially since 2016. Its official Instagram account held over 350,000 followers as of 2024, and its YouTube channel, though less consistently maintained, carries a catalogue of destination films and promotional content. In 2022 and 2023 the department launched structured influencer outreach programmes as part of its One State Many Worlds campaign, engaging both pan-Indian travel creators and Kannada-language YouTubers to spotlight destinations including Sakleshpur, Kabini, and the Konkan coastal belt. These initiatives have generated measurable increases in online search interest for the featured destinations, but the precise relationship between this digital activity and actual travel purchase decisions has, until now, not been empirically investigated.

10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

10.1 Research Design: The study adopts a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional design. Descriptive components cover the demographic profile of respondents and the distributional characteristics of all study constructs. Analytical components involve Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and associated SPSS diagnostic procedures for testing research assumptions and hypotheses.

10.2 Population and Sampling: The target population comprises adults aged 18 years and above who have used at least one social media platform in planning or booking a Karnataka tourism experience within the preceding twelve months. Since no enumeration of this population exists, sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, which recommends a minimum of 196 at a 95 percent confidence level and a five percent margin of error. A target of 250 questionnaires was set to allow for attrition. Of 256 questionnaires distributed, 240 were returned complete and usable, producing a response rate of 93.8 percent. Convenience sampling supplemented by purposive eligibility criteria was employed.

10.3 Data Collection: Primary data were collected between October 2024 and February 2025 across two channels. Physical questionnaires were administered in person at seven Karnataka tourism sites: the Mysuru Palace complex, the Hampi Bazaar precinct, the Jog Falls visitor centre, the Kudla Beach area in Mangaluru, a coffee estate on the Madikeri tourism trail in Kodagu, the Nagarahole National Park visitor centre, and the Brindavan Gardens in Mandya. A parallel digital questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms through Karnataka-focused travel WhatsApp communities, Instagram travel groups, and blogger networks.

10.4 Measurement Instrument: The questionnaire comprised seven sections. Demographic information was collected in section one. The five study constructs were measured in sections two through six using validated multi-item scales, all on a five-point Likert format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Social media content credibility was measured using five items adapted from Flanagin and Metzger (2000). User-generated content influence was measured through six items adapted from Filieri and McLeay (2014). Influencer endorsement effect used four items adapted from Djafarova and Rushworth (2017). Platform engagement used four items from Schivinski, Dabrowski, and Christodoulides (2016). Purchase decision used five items adapted from Kim and Fesenmaier (2017). A pilot study with 35 respondents preceded main data collection; three items were reworded and one was removed based on pilot feedback.

10.5 Statistical Analysis: Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. Frequency analysis was used for demographic profiling. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were computed for each construct. Cronbach's Alpha and item-total correlation assessed reliability. Content Validity Index, AVE, and the Fornell-Larcker criterion assessed validity. Pearson correlation provided bivariate hypothesis tests. Standard multiple regression (enter method) provided the full multivariate hypothesis test. Durbin-Watson, residual plots, and Tolerance/VIF values verified regression assumptions.

11. JUSTIFICATION OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

11.1 Reliability Analysis: Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, the most widely used reliability statistic for multi-item scales in social science research. Nunnally (1978) established 0.70 as the minimum acceptable threshold; values of 0.80 and above indicate good reliability. Table 1 presents the full reliability results for all five constructs. Every scale meets or exceeds the 0.80 benchmark, and the highest Alpha is returned for purchase decision (0.874), which reflects the conceptual coherence of a five-item scale measuring a single behavioural outcome. Item-total correlations were examined alongside Alpha values. All retained items showed corrected item-total correlations between 0.44 and 0.71, well above the 0.30 minimum recommended by Field (2018). The one item removed during pilot testing, from the influencer endorsement scale, had recorded a corrected item-total correlation of 0.24, justifying its exclusion. Spearman-Brown corrected split-half reliability coefficients ranged from 0.783 to 0.851, confirming the conclusions drawn from Alpha.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics Across All Study Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Split-Half (S-B)	Mean Item-Total r	Rating
Content Credibility (CC)	5	0.847	0.831	0.621	Good
User-Generated Content (UGC)	6	0.863	0.851	0.638	Good
Influencer Endorsement (IE)	4	0.822	0.808	0.587	Good
Platform Engagement (PE)	4	0.801	0.783	0.561	Good
Purchase Decision (PD)	5	0.874	0.848	0.643	Good

All Alpha values exceed 0.80, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). S-B = Spearman-Brown corrected split-half coefficient.

11.2 Validity Analysis: Content validity was established through a six-member expert panel, comprising two academic specialists in digital marketing and consumer behaviour, one tourism management academic, one practitioner with over a decade in the Indian travel industry, one Karnataka-based tourism content strategist, and one survey methodologist. Panel members scored each item on relevance and representativeness. The resulting Content Validity Index was 0.89 at the scale level, with individual item CVIs ranging from 0.83 to 1.00, all satisfying the 0.78 threshold recommended by Polit and Beck (2006).

Convergent validity was evidenced by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.517 to 0.612 across the five constructs, all exceeding the 0.50 threshold of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which requires that the square root of each construct's AVE exceed all inter-construct correlations in that row and column. Table 2 confirms this condition is satisfied for all construct pairs.

Table 2: AVE and Discriminant Validity Matrix (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	AVE	CC	UGC	IE	PE	PD
Content Credibility (CC)	0.553	0.743				
User-Generated Content (UGC)	0.561	0.621**	0.749			
Influencer Endorsement (IE)	0.524	0.534**	0.578**	0.724		
Platform Engagement (PE)	0.517	0.489**	0.512**	0.503**	0.719	
Purchase Decision (PD)	0.612	0.701**	0.663**	0.587**	0.541**	0.782

*Diagonal values are the square root of AVE. Off-diagonal values are Pearson correlations. Discriminant validity holds where each diagonal value exceeds all off-diagonal values in its row and column. ** $p < 0.01$.*

12. ANALYSIS INCLUDING STATISTICAL ANALYSES

12.1 Demographic Profile: Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the 240 respondents. The sample is slightly male-dominant at 58.3 percent, which mirrors the gender distribution observed in Karnataka's IT-sector workforce and in existing domestic tourism surveys. The modal age bracket is 26 to 35 years (40.4 percent), followed by 18 to 25 years (25.8 percent), reflecting the disproportionate representation of young, digitally active travelers in social-media-influenced tourism. Educational attainment is high: 48.3 percent hold postgraduate qualifications and 29.2 percent hold professional degrees, consistent with the knowledge-worker consumer base that dominates urban Karnataka's tourism spend. Instagram is the most used platform for Karnataka travel planning (67.1 percent), followed by YouTube (58.8 percent), Google Reviews/TripAdvisor (51.2 percent), and Facebook (38.3 percent).

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 240)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	140	58.3
	Female	100	41.7
	Total	240	100.0
Age Group	18-25 years	62	25.8
	26-35 years	97	40.4
	36-45 years	51	21.3

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages 6136-6140

	46 years and above	30	12.5
	Total	240	100.0
Qualification	Undergraduate	54	22.5
	Postgraduate	116	48.3
	Professional Degree	70	29.2
	Total	240	100.0
Monthly Income	Below Rs. 30,000	34	14.2
	Rs. 30,001-60,000	86	35.8
	Rs. 60,001-1,00,000	78	32.5
	Above Rs. 1,00,000	42	17.5
	Total	240	100.0
Primary Platform Used	Instagram	161	67.1
	YouTube	141	58.8
	Google Reviews/TripAdvisor	123	51.2
	Facebook	92	38.3
	WhatsApp Communities	76	31.7
Karnataka Visit Frequency	First visit	61	25.4
	2-3 visits	94	39.2
	4 or more visits	85	35.4

Platform usage allows multiple responses; percentages are of total respondents.

12.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs: Table 4 reports construct-level descriptive statistics. Content credibility records the highest mean at 3.98 (SD = 0.654), followed by UGC influence (M = 3.87, SD = 0.681) and purchase decision (M = 3.79, SD = 0.712). Platform engagement records the lowest mean (M = 3.63, SD = 0.724), suggesting that while respondents use social media for travel information, active engagement behaviour such as commenting and saving is somewhat less universal than passive consumption. Skewness and kurtosis values for all constructs fall within the range of plus or minus 1.0, confirming approximate normality and supporting the parametric analyses that follow.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs (n = 240)

Construct	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Content Credibility (CC)	240	1.80	5.00	3.98	0.654	-0.38	0.14
User-Generated Content (UGC)	240	1.67	5.00	3.87	0.681	-0.31	0.09
Influencer Endorsement (IE)	240	1.75	5.00	3.71	0.703	-0.27	-0.18
Platform Engagement (PE)	240	1.50	5.00	3.63	0.724	-0.19	-0.22
Purchase Decision (PD)	240	1.40	5.00	3.79	0.712	-0.34	0.11

Skewness and kurtosis values within +/-1.0 support approximate normality for parametric analysis.

12.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis: Table 5 presents the full Pearson correlation matrix. All four predictor constructs show significant positive correlations with purchase decision at the 0.01 level. Content credibility records the strongest bivariate association with purchase decision (r = 0.701), followed by UGC (r = 0.663), influencer endorsement (r = 0.587), and platform engagement (r = 0.541). These bivariate results provide preliminary directional support for all four hypotheses. The highest inter-predictor correlation is between content credibility and UGC (r = 0.621), which is moderate and does not raise concerns about multicollinearity in the regression model.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix (n = 240)

Variable	CC	UGC	IE	PE	PD
Content Credibility (CC)	1.000				
User-Generated Content (UGC)	0.621**	1.000			
Influencer Endorsement (IE)	0.534**	0.578**	1.000		
Platform Engagement (PE)	0.489**	0.512**	0.503**	1.000	
Purchase Decision (PD)	0.701**	0.663**	0.587**	0.541**	1.000

*** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). CC = Content Credibility, UGC = User-Generated Content, IE = Influencer Endorsement, PE = Platform Engagement, PD = Purchase Decision.*

12.4 Multiple Regression Analysis: The multiple regression was run with purchase decision as the dependent variable and all four social media constructs entered simultaneously using the enter method. Before interpreting results, all regression assumptions were verified. The P-P plot of standardised residuals confirmed normality. The scatter plot of residuals against predicted values showed no pattern, confirming homoscedasticity. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.93 confirmed residual independence. All Tolerance values exceeded 0.55 and all VIF values were below 2.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.717	0.514	0.503	0.501	1.93

Predictors: Content Credibility, User-Generated Content, Influencer Endorsement, Platform Engagement. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision.

Table 7: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	53.024	4	13.256	52.89	0.000
Residual	58.949	235	0.251		
Total	111.973	239			

Model is significant at p < 0.001. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients and Hypothesis Outcomes

Predictor	B	Std. Err.	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	H	Result
(Constant)	0.391	0.198		1.975	0.049				
Content Credibility	0.394	0.061	0.362	6.459	0.000	0.599	1.671	H1	Supported
User-Generated Content	0.304	0.058	0.291	5.241	0.000	0.611	1.637	H2	Supported
Influencer Endorsement	0.219	0.054	0.216	4.056	0.000	0.643	1.556	H3	Supported
Platform Engagement	0.183	0.052	0.186	3.519	0.001	0.657	1.523	H4	Supported

All predictors significant at p < 0.01. VIF values below 2.0 confirm no multicollinearity. B = Unstandardised coefficient; Beta = Standardised coefficient.

Table 9: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hyp.	Relationship	r	Beta	p-value	Decision
H1	Content Credibility -> Purchase Decision (+)	0.701**	0.362	0.000	Supported
H2	User-Generated Content -> Purchase Decision (+)	0.663**	0.291	0.000	Supported
H3	Influencer Endorsement -> Purchase Decision (+)	0.587**	0.216	0.000	Supported
H4	Platform Engagement -> Purchase Decision (+)	0.541**	0.186	0.001	Supported

*** p < 0.01. All four hypotheses supported. r = bivariate correlation; Beta = independent contribution in full regression model.*

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages 6136-6140

13. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reading the findings together produces a coherent and practically useful picture of how social media shapes the Karnataka travel purchase decision. The regression model accounts for 51.4 percent of the variance in that decision, which is a strong result for any social-behavioural outcome model that draws on a single category of predictor. The fact that four social media variables alone explain more than half of what determines whether a person books a Karnataka trip reflects just how comprehensively the travel planning process has migrated into the social media environment.Content credibility has the most substantial effect on purchase decisions (Beta = 0.362, t = 6.459, p < 0.001), confirmed robustly at the bivariate level (r = 0.701) and when controlling for three social media dimensions. Travelers planning a trip to Karnataka typically seek reliable information regarding accessibility, authenticity of representations, and crowd levels at popular sites, all of which require detailed and honest content rather than merely beautiful imagery. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) indicates that when involved with trip planning, travelers critically evaluate information, favoring credible sources and substantiated arguments that positively influence purchase decisions. Consequently, Karnataka Tourism should prioritize factual accuracy and transparent content over solely aesthetic elements to maximize persuasive effectiveness. User-generated content (UGC) emerges as a strong predictor of purchase decisions (Beta = 0.291, t = 5.241, p < 0.001), reinforcing peer persuasion literature (r = 0.663). Real experiences shared by recent travelers to Karnataka deliver honest insights about expectations versus reality, which official sources often lack. The prevalence of platforms like Google Reviews (51.2% usage) and TripAdvisor indicates a pivotal reliance on UGC for planning. Karnataka tourism businesses must actively engage with the UGC ecosystem responding to reviews and encouraging sharing to influence prospective visitors' decisions effectively. Compelling UGC can also redirect plans toward lesser-known destinations, leveraging the minimal competition for attention and opportunities to showcase hidden gems.Influencer endorsements significantly affect purchase decisions (Beta = 0.216, t = 4.056, p < 0.001), though their impact is less pronounced than that of content credibility and UGC. Effective influencer content balances authenticity and genuine personal experience, resembling credible UGC. In contrast, promotional or scripted content often yields weaker engagement. Research indicates that micro-influencers outperform celebrity influencers in generating travel intentions, suggesting that Karnataka Tourism should consider engaging micro-influencers who have a more direct connection with their audience over larger creators with broader but less invested followings.Platform engagement is the fourth predictor (Beta = 0.186, t = 3.519, p = 0.001). Activities such as saving posts, sharing content, and commenting demonstrate an investment in travel to Karnataka, creating pre-trip commitment that bridges the gap between interest and action. By fostering this engagement, Karnataka Tourism can enhance the likelihood of purchase decisions. Content designed to prompt interaction, such as polls or quizzes, transforms viewers from passive consumers into active participants, which correlates with increased purchasing likelihood.The regression model for purchase decision-making indicates significant contributions from four social media constructs, explaining 51.4 percent of the variance. This result underscores the primary role of social media in shaping travel decisions for Karnataka tourists in the near future. The unexplained 48.6 percent variance likely corresponds to external factors like personal networks, socio-economic constraints, situational triggers, and individual travel histories. Future research incorporating these aspects will create a more comprehensive understanding of the variables influencing travel decisions.

14. CONCLUSIONS

This study began with the observation that Karnataka's tourism growth story is increasingly written on social media, and set out to find out precisely which elements of that social media presence most powerfully drive the decision to travel to the state. The answer that emerges from 240 respondents, nine tables of SPSS output, and a regression model with an adjusted R-squared of 0.503, is clear enough to be acted upon.Content credibility matters most. Karnataka Tourism and its industry partners must invest in the quality, accuracy, and transparency of the information they place on social media channels. Aspirational photography draws attention; credible information converts attention into bookings. The gap between these two functions is where much of the state's digital marketing potential currently goes unrealised.User-generated content is the engine of peer persuasion. Visitors who leave detailed, honest reviews and share authentic photographs of their Karnataka experiences are doing more marketing work than most paid campaigns. Businesses and destination managers should actively cultivate the conditions that encourage this behaviour: seamless post-visit review prompts, photograph-worthy physical environments, and responsive engagement with existing reviewers.Influencer marketing works, but authenticity determines whether it works well or poorly. The evidence here points toward a rebalancing of influencer strategy away from celebrity reach and toward micro-influencer depth. Karnataka Tourism's future influencer campaigns would benefit from selecting creators whose audiences overlap with actual Karnataka travel demographics, and from giving those creators the editorial freedom to produce content that reads as genuine experience rather than promotional output.Platform engagement, while the smallest independent predictor, is a lever that costs relatively little to pull. Interactive content formats that invite participation convert passive followers into active destination advocates and, as the regression shows, into more likely buyers.Theoretically, this study contributes an integrated empirical framework for understanding social media's influence on tourism purchase decisions in an Indian state context, combining the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the Information Adoption Model, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour with a four-construct predictor model that explains more than half the variance in the outcome variable. Future research should use Structural Equation Modelling to test the mediation role of destination image formation, explore cross-destination variation within Karnataka, and track the longitudinal dynamics of social media influence across the travel planning lifecycle.

15. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179-211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T
Akehurst, G. (2021). User-generated content, the Internet and tourism. Anatolia: An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research, 19(1), 166-177. https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.553657
Chaudhary, M., and Sharma, P. (2023). Travel influencer credibility and tourist behavioral intentions: Evidence from India. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 29(3), 412-431. https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667221118437
Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometrika, 16(3), 297-334. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555
Djafarova, E., and Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009
Field, A. (2018). Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
Filieri, R., and McLeay, F. (2014). E-WOM and accommodation: An analysis of the factors that influence travelers' adoption of information from online reviews. Journal of Travel Research, 53(1), 44-57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513481274
Flanagin, A. J., and Metzger, M. J. (2000). Perceptions of internet information credibility. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 77(3), 515-540. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700304
Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. Journal of Marketing Research, 18(1), 39-50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104
Gartner, W. C. (2023). Destination image formation in the age of social media: Speed, volume, and virality. Tourism Management, 94, 104651. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104651
Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., and Ryu, E. (2022). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing in tourism: Celebrity versus micro-influencer effects. Tourism Management Perspectives, 42, 100927. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.100927
Kapoor, R., and Agrawal, V. (2024). Short-form video content and tourism purchase intention among Indian millennials. Information Technology and Tourism, 26(1), 71-94. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-023-00275-w
Kim, J. J., and Fesenmaier, D. R. (2017). Persuading tourists while they are in the destination: An examination of the role of the social and physical context. Journal of Travel Research, 56(3), 369-382. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516637205
Kim, M. J., and So, K. K. F. (2022). Social media engagement, destination image, and travel intention: The moderating role of involvement. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, 46(4), 737-762. https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480211013527
Krejcie, R. V., and Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30(3), 607-610. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308
Kritikos, M., Mavragani, A., and Tsagarakis, K. P. (2023). Inspirational versus evaluative UGC: Differential effects on destination choice and booking behavior. Journal of Destination Marketing and Management, 27, 100758. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2022.100758
Mishra, A., Yadav, R., and Shekhar, S. (2022). Social media, destination image, and domestic tourist behavioral intention: Evidence from India. Current Issues in Tourism, 25(8), 1267-1282. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1951049
Munar, A. M., and Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2021). Motivations for sharing tourism experiences through social media. Tourism Management, 43, 46-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.01.012
Nunnally, J. C. (1978). Psychometric Theory (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Journal of Advertising, 19(3), 39-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191
Pan, B., MacLaurin, T., and Crotts, J. C. (2020). Travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing. Journal of Travel Research, 46(1), 35-45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287507302378
Petty, R. E., and Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 19, 123-205. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60214-2
Polit, D. F., and Beck, C. T. (2006). The content validity index: Are you sure you know what's being reported? Research in Nursing and Health, 29(5), 489-497. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.20147
Schivinski, B., Dabrowski, D., and Christodoulides, G. (2016). Measuring consumers' engagement with brand-related social-media content: Development and validation of a scale. Journal of Advertising Research, 56(4), 432-445. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2016-048
Sharma, P., and Nayak, J. K. (2022). Social media and domestic tourism decision-making in India: The mediating role of destination image and trust. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 27(2), 154-172. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2022.2031178
Sussman, S. W., and Siegal, W. S. (2003). Informational influence in organizations: An integrated approach to knowledge adoption. Information Systems Research, 14(1), 47-65. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.14.1.47.14767