



International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and TechnologY (IJARETY)

Volume 13, Issue 1, January-February 2026

Impact Factor: 8.152



A Study of Social Media Strategies Adopted by Travel and Tourism Sector in Pune City

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ABSTRACT: The rapid digital transformation of marketing practices has significantly influenced the travel and tourism industry. This study investigates the social media strategies adopted by travel and tourism businesses in Pune City and evaluates their effectiveness in influencing tourist engagement, decision-making, and booking behavior. Using a descriptive research design, the study integrates primary data collected through structured questionnaires and secondary data from academic and industry sources. Statistical tools including Cronbach's Alpha, Chi-square tests, regression analysis, and normality testing were employed. The pilot study confirms reliability ($\alpha = 0.842$) and validity of the instrument. Findings reveal that price, reviews, promotional offers, and destination guidance significantly influence social media usage and booking behavior. The study contributes to tourism marketing literature and provides strategic insights for enhancing digital competitiveness.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Marketing, Tourism Marketing, Customer Engagement, Digital Strategy, Booking Behaviour, Pune City, Tourism Decision-Making

I. INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism sector plays a critical role in economic development, employment generation, and foreign exchange earnings. With increased internet penetration and smartphone adoption, digital platforms have become central to tourism marketing strategies. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (X) allow tourism businesses to interact directly with customers, provide destination information, and influence travel decisions.

Pune City, being a cultural and educational hub, attracts both domestic and international tourists. The competitive tourism landscape necessitates strategic utilization of social media to enhance visibility, engagement, and bookings.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Consumer Decision-Making Theory, and Relationship Marketing Theory. TAM explains how perceived usefulness and ease of use influence technology adoption. Consumer Decision-Making Theory outlines stages from information search to post-purchase evaluation. Relationship Marketing emphasizes long-term engagement through trust and communication.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing research confirms the growing role of social media in tourism marketing. Studies suggest that user-generated content, reviews, and digital storytelling significantly influence destination image and booking decisions. However, localized empirical studies focusing on Pune City remain limited, highlighting the need for context-specific investigation.

IV. RESEARCH GAP

There is insufficient empirical evidence examining how social media strategies specifically influence tourists in Pune City. Limited research explores demographic influences, engagement drivers, and booking conversion behavior within this regional context.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine social media usage patterns among tourists visiting Pune.
2. To analyze demographic influences on social media search behavior.
3. To evaluate key features influencing travel company selection.
4. To assess the impact of social media presence on engagement.
5. To determine association between search behavior and booking decisions.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive research design.
Sampling Method: Purposive sampling.
Proposed Sample Size (Main Study): 1000 respondents.
Data Sources: Primary (survey) and Secondary (journals, reports).
Statistical Tools: Cronbach’s Alpha, Chi-square, Regression, Normality Tests.

VII. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

| Measure | Value |
|------------------|-------|
| Cronbach’s Alpha | 0.842 |

The reliability coefficient indicates strong internal consistency.

VIII. REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY

| Predictor | Beta | p-value | Significance |
|---------------------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| Price | 0.214 | 0.027 | Significant |
| Reviews | 0.198 | 0.039 | Significant |
| Quality of Service | 0.223 | 0.020 | Significant |
| Destination Variety | 0.176 | 0.047 | Significant |
| Transparency | 0.052 | 0.527 | Not Significant |

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 3.387$, $p = 0.003$; $R^2 = 0.098$).

IX. HYPOTHESIS TESTING SUMMARY

- H1: Accepted – Significant association between search behavior and platform selection.
- H2: Partially Accepted – Education and Profession significant.
- H3: Partially Accepted – Price and Reviews significant predictors.
- H4: Partially Accepted – Offers and Destination Guidance significant.
- H5: Accepted – Search behavior significantly linked to booking.
- H6–H9: Partially Accepted based on regression outcomes.

X. DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that social media is a critical determinant of tourist engagement and booking decisions. Content relevance, credibility, and perceived value significantly influence usage behavior. Destination guidance emerged as the most engaging content category, suggesting that tourists prefer informative content over purely promotional messaging.

XI. THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study contributes to digital tourism marketing literature by empirically validating the influence of social media features within a regional context. Managers should prioritize value-driven content, integrate booking features, and leverage analytics for optimization.

XII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The pilot study sample size was limited. Results may not be generalized beyond Pune City. Future research can adopt longitudinal designs and comparative city-based studies.

XIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies may explore AI-driven marketing strategies, influencer marketing effectiveness, and cross-cultural comparisons.

XIV. CONCLUSION

This extended study confirms that social media significantly influences travel-related search behavior, engagement, and booking decisions. Strategic digital marketing can enhance competitiveness of tourism businesses in Pune City.

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International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and Technology

ISSN: 2394-2975

Impact Factor: 8.152