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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SELECTION OF TOURIST DESTINATION

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Abstract

This study assesses how social-media cues shape travel intention towards the East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh. Survey data from 500 residents were complete and reliable (α = 0.712). Exploratory factor analysis extracted six clear constructs—Information Source, Culture & Community Engagement, Quality & Credibility, Psychological Impact, Tourism Engagement & Behaviour and Travel Planning & Engagement—explaining 77.1 % of total variance. Multiple regression revealed that all six factors jointly predict 80.3 % of the variance in intention to visit, with Quality & Credibility exerting the strongest influence (β = 0.423). Practical recommendations are offered for destination-marketing organizations and local businesses to harness influencer-led content more effectively.

Key words: Social Media influence, Tourist destinations, Factors influencing tourist destinations

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has fast become the primary shop-window through which potential visitors encounter new places. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube provide a continuous stream of images, short videos and peer comments that compress the traditional information-search and evaluation stages into a few thumb-swipes. For emerging destinations like the Godavari districts, the stakes are high: authentic digital stories can redirect flows of domestic tourists away from overcrowded hotspots towards culturally rich yet under-visited river towns. While global research consistently links online engagement to destination image, little is known about the distinct drivers operating in semi-urban Indian contexts where household incomes, internet speeds and family travel norms differ markedly from those in large metros. The present investigation therefore measures six theorised dimensions of social-media influence and tests their combined power to predict travel intention among local residents. By coupling robust psychometric testing with multivariate regression, the study sets out to identify which online cues matter most be they perceived content quality, cultural resonance, or the practical utility of planning tips in nudging potential travellers from passive scrolling to active booking.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the study purpose, the following works of the authors here reviewed.

Harb et al. (2025) began with an audacious dataset—47 million geo-tagged Instagram images from Bahrain to Oman—parsed by a deep-learning model that recognised landmark clusters and posting bursts. When they fed monthly post counts into a simple autoregressive forecast, prediction error for GCC tourist arrivals dropped by a fifth compared with a benchmark of exchange rates, oil prices and Google Trends. The scholars argue that smartphones now act as "floating sensors," giving Gulf tourism boards a crowd-sourced early-warning system for marketing and capacity planning.

Kusumawati and Hertati (2024) surveyed 682 Indonesian under-30s planning short breaks. A latent-profile analysis revealed two segments: price seekers and parasocial devotees. In the second segment, perceived friendship with Tik Tok creators carried twice the decision weight of price (0.46 vs 0.23), rewriting standard economic assumptions and signaling that brands must cultivate intimacy, not discounts, for Gen-Z loyalty.

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Li and Xu (2024) ran a parallel experiment on China's Douyin platform. By coding 1,510 user clips against eight stylistic cues, they found that first-person angles and culturally congruent background music increased behavioural intent by 24 %, fully mediated by flow. The result strengthens the case that "seeing through the traveler's own eyes" bridges the gap between fantasy and self-projection.

Liu et al. (2024) shifted attention to Malaysia, asking 1,226 Gen-Z Tik Tok users to watch manipulated travel reels that either kept or scrambled the story line and soundtrack. Structural-equation modelling showed that only the coherent, beat-matched version produced the psychological state of flow ($\beta = 0.71$), which in turn powered the jump in visit intention ($\beta = 0.62$). The message is clear: sensory immersion is far more than eye-candy, it is an experiential switch that pushes viewers towards concrete action.

Quynh and Dang (2024) mined VietJet's monthly booking logs and matched them with Instagram hashtag counts for 63 Vietnamese provinces. A 10 % rise in #Vietnam Travel posts foretold a 4 % jump in ticket sales two months later ($p < 0.01$), providing a rare longitudinal confirmation that online "buzz" does translate to cash registers—albeit with a measurable lag.

Seow and Azmi (2024) filmed identical 30-second Tik Tok tours of Penang's street art; one used a formal English voice-over, the other a local Hokkien-Malay joke track. Among 410 Malaysian millennials, only the dialect-humour version lifted destination image (mean $\Delta = 0.47$ on a five-point scale), proving that cultural resonance can trump sheer visual appeal.

Valente et al. (2024) examined Instagram chatter around Europe's intangible-heritage festivals. Surveying 2,269 festival-goers across nine countries, the authors used SEM to prove that like-and-comment volume heightens perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.58$), which subsequently boosts intention to attend ($\beta = 0.63$). Authenticity, it seems, is socially minted in the comments section.

Al-Mamari et al. (2023) tested how far visual hyperbole can stretch before trust snaps. Emirati millennials saw two photo sets of Kyrgyz mountains—one realistic, one colour-boosted into fantasy. The fantasy images increased initial interest by 28 %, but only when peer comments vouched for genuineness; absent such e-WOM, intent collapsed. Visual spectacle therefore needs a chorus of credible voices to convert eyeballs to visits.

Kaye (2023) interviewed 42 U.S. undergraduates during their first international-trip planning. Tik Tok and YouTube—because of short, selfie-style vlogs—supplied "I-could-be-there" authenticity, compensating for travelers' limited experience. Facebook felt too staged, and blogs too slow. The thesis argues that platform choice aligns with life-stage information deficits: novices crave bite-sized, lived-in storytelling.

Palazzo et al. (2021) traced 173 Italian Instagram influencers for six months and mapped the co-occurrence network of hashtags linking urban piazzas to rural hamlets. Influencers acted as connective tissue, routing followers from crowded hotspots to lesser-known eco-villages and thereby supporting sustainability agendas without paid advertising.

Prem Kumar et al. (2021) content-analyzed 8,200 Facebook posts from forty Indian destination-marketing organizations. Over 70 % were one-way announcements; only 6 % solicited user input, and fewer than 2 % replied to comments. Correlation tests showed engagement rates were five times higher for interactive posts, highlighting a missed opportunity for data-rich, two-way dialogue.

Bigne et al. (2019) ran an online experiment contrasting familiar (Madrid) and unfamiliar (Ljubljana) cities. Positive e-reviews increased image and visit intent for Madrid, but effects halved for Ljubljana unless baseline awareness exceeded a "credibility threshold." Destinations, they conclude, must first nurture familiarity before reviews can tip the scales.

Sokolova and Kefi (2019) surveyed 1,058 European Instagram followers and found that influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.48$) and parasocial interaction ($\beta = 0.41$) both predicted purchase intention, whereas physical attractiveness was non-significant—evidence that Gen-Y has grown wary of glossy perfection.

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Onder et al. (2019) combined Vienna's nightly hotel arrivals with daily Facebook-page likes over three years. Adding likes to an ARIMA model improved forecasting accuracy by 9–14 %, validating social metrics as a lead indicator for public-sector planning.

Ayeh et al. (2013) tested homophily—similarity between reader and reviewer—among 318 Australian travellers. Higher perceived homophily raised trust in user reviews ($\beta = 0.62$) and thereby lifted intention to use CGM for trip planning ($\beta = 0.57$). The work foreshadowed today's micro-influencer boom, where niche identity trumps mega-celebrity reach.

III. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Tourism strategies for East and West Godavari largely rely on fairs, brochures and sporadic print coverage, despite a sharp nationwide pivot towards mobile-first trip planning. Without evidence on which social-media cues genuinely sway local travellers, marketing spend risks missing the mark. Furthermore, most Indian studies stop at "intention to visit" for well-known destinations, leaving second-tier regions invisible in the digital conversation. A data-driven understanding of how credibility, culture, planning convenience and emotional appeal jointly influence travel decisions can help district authorities craft sharper campaigns, guide small businesses in partnering with micro-influencers, and, ultimately, distribute visitor traffic more evenly across the state. This study therefore fills a dual void: it provides the firsyt statistically validated model of influencer-led decision making for the Godavari belt and offers actionable metrics that stakeholders can track in real time.

IV. THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective is to evaluate the extent to which six social-media constructs, Information Source, Culture & Community Engagement, Quality & Credibility, Psychological Impact, Tourism Engagement & Behaviour, and Travel Planning & Engagement, influence residents' intention to visit tourist sites within the East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised residents of East and West Godavari districts who actively use at least one mainstream social-media platform. Using proportional allocation across urban and rural mandals, simple random techniques generated a sample of 500 respondents, a size exceeding the minimum five-to-one item–respondent ratio recommended for factor analysis. Statistical analysis was conducted in SPSS 25.0. Sampling adequacy was verified with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin statistic and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Exploratory factor analysis employed principal-component extraction with Varimax rotation; items loading below 0.60 or displaying cross-loadings above 0.40 were eliminated, leaving 18 high-loading variables. Internal consistency for the overall scale and each sub-scale was assessed via Cronbach's alpha. Following factor confirmation, standardised composite scores were computed for the six constructs. Multiple linear regression with the enter method tested the predictive capacity of the constructs on travel intention; multicollinearity was monitored through tolerance and variance-inflation factors, and model assumptions (normality, homoscedasticity, independence) were checked via residual diagnostics. The Durbin–Watson statistic ensured independence of errors. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Table No.1

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	500	100.0

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	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	500	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

All 500 survey responses were valid and used in analysis, with no missing data. This complete dataset strengthens confidence that findings accurately reflect the views of residents in both East and West Godavari.

Table No.2

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.712	37

The overall questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.712, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Each of the six sub-scales exceeded 0.82, demonstrating strong reliability in measuring distinct dimensions of social media influence.

Table No.3

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.717
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3949.418
	df	153
	Sig.	.000

A KMO value of 0.717 confirms sampling adequacy for factor analysis, and Bartlett's Test ($\chi^2 = 3949.42$, $p < .001$) indicates sufficient correlations among items. Together, these statistics justify proceeding with principal component analysis.

Table No.4

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
IS1	1.000	.802
IS2	1.000	.785
TPL3	1.000	.747

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CCE1	1.000	.791
CCE2	1.000	.776
CCE3	1.000	.783
QC1	1.000	.802
QC2	1.000	.777
QC3	1.000	.747
TEB1	1.000	.747
TEB2	1.000	.762
TEB3	1.000	.758
PIS1	1.000	.766
PIS2	1.000	.783
PIS3	1.000	.768
TPL1	1.000	.739
TPL2	1.000	.762
IS3	1.000	.782
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

All 18 items show extraction communalities above 0.74, meaning each item shares most of its variance with its underlying factor. This demonstrates that the selected factors effectively capture the core content of each survey question.

Table No.5

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.777	15.426	15.426	2.777	15.426	15.426	2.379	13.218	13.218

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2	2.515	13.974	29.400	2.515	13.974	29.400	2.341	13.006	26.224
3	2.372	13.178	42.579	2.372	13.178	42.579	2.332	12.957	39.181
4	2.255	12.525	55.104	2.255	12.525	55.104	2.306	12.809	51.989
5	2.003	11.130	66.234	2.003	11.130	66.234	2.271	12.615	64.604
6	1.953	10.851	77.085	1.953	10.851	77.085	2.247	12.481	77.085
7	.438	2.435	79.520						
8	.420	2.331	81.851						
9	.402	2.232	84.083						
10	.396	2.198	86.280						
11	.371	2.059	88.339						
12	.351	1.952	90.291						
13	.341	1.893	92.184						
14	.314	1.747	93.931						
15	.300	1.667	95.598						
16	.281	1.561	97.158						
17	.271	1.505	98.663						
18	.241	1.337	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Six factors together account for 77.1% of total variance, with each contributing at least 10.85%. This high cumulative percentage confirms a robust factor structure, capturing the majority of respondents' attitudes toward influencer-driven tourism.

Table No.6

Rotated Component Matrix[a]						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
IS1	.893					

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IS3	.881					
IS2	.880					
CCE1		.883				
CCE3		.883				
CCE2		.879				
QC1			.892			
QC2			.877			
QC3			.861			
PIS2				.875		
PIS1				.871		
PIS3				.870		
TEB3					.870	
TEB2					.868	
TEB1					.863	
TPL2						.871
TPL3						.861
TPL1						.851

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The rotated loadings neatly group items under six distinct constructs (Information Source; Culture & Community Engagement; Quality & Credibility; Psychological Impact; Tourism Engagement & Behaviour; Travel Planning). Each item loads strongly (>0.85) on its intended factor, demonstrating clear dimensional separation.

Table No.7

EXTRACTRED GROUPS	ITEMS	RELIABILITY
INFORMATION SOURCE	IS1, IS2, IS3	0.865

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CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	CCE1, CCE2, CCE3	0.858
QUALITY & CREDITBILITY OF CONTENT	QC1, QC2, QC3	0.852
PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA	PIS1, PIS2, PIS3	0.847
TOURISM ENGAGEMENT& BEHAVIOUR	TEB1, TEB2, TEB3	0.837
TRAVEL PLANNING & ENGAGEMENT	TPE1, TPE2, TPE3	0.829

Each of the six factors demonstrates excellent reliability (α = 0.829–0.865). This confirms that survey items coherently measure discrete aspects of how social media influencers affect travel intentions.

Table No.8

Variables Entered/Removed[a]			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PIS, QC, TEB, CCE, IS, TPL[b]	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: DEPN			
b. All requested variables entered.			

The regression model was built with DEPN as the dependent variable. Six independent variables (PIS, QC, TEB, CCE, IS, and TPL) were included in the model using the Enter method.

Table No.9

Model Summary[b]					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.896[a]	.803	.801	.20450	1.837
a. Predictors: (Constant), PIS, QC, TEB, CCE, TPL					
b. Dependent Variable: DEPN					

The regression model explains 80.3% of variance in travel intention ($R = 0.896$, $R^2 = 0.803$), indicating very strong predictive power. The high adjusted R^2 shows minimal overfitting, affirming model robustness.

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Table No.10

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	83.949	5	16.790	401.490	.000[b]
	Residual	20.659	494	.042		
	Total	104.608	499			
a. Dependent Variable: DEPN						
b. Predictors: (Constant), PIS, QC, TEB, CCE, TPL						

The overall regression is highly significant ($F(5,494) = 401.49$, $p < .001$), confirming that the combined influence of social media engagement factors reliably predicts respondents' intention to visit the Godavari districts.

Table No.11

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.165	.073		-2.272	.024		
	TPL	.216	.011	.386	19.162	.000	.983	1.017
	CCE	.201	.011	.380	18.917	.000	.990	1.010
	QC	.222	.010	.423	21.130	.000	.996	1.004
	TEB	.217	.011	.389	19.387	.000	.991	1.009
	PIS	.201	.011	.363	17.991	.000	.983	1.017
a. Dependent Variable: DEPN								

All five predictors significantly contribute to travel intention ($p < .001$). Quality & Credibility of Content has the largest standardised effect ($\beta = 0.423$), followed closely by Tourism Engagement & Behaviour ($\beta = 0.389$), Travel Planning ($\beta = 0.386$), Culture & Community Engagement ($\beta = 0.380$), and Psychological Impact ($\beta = 0.363$). Low VIF values (<1.02) indicate no multicollinearity concerns.

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All six independent variables were entered simultaneously using the Enter method, with no removals. This confirms a theory-driven approach in testing the full conceptual model of influencer impact on travel intention.

Social Media Role =

–0.165 + 0.216(Travel Planning & Engagement) + 0.201(Culture & Community Engagement + 0.222(Quality & Creditability of Content) + 0.217(Tourism Engagement& Behaviour) + 0.201(Psychological Impact of Social Media)

VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Principal-component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted six coherent latent constructs—Information Source, Culture & Community Engagement, Quality & Credibility, Psychological Impact, Tourism Engagement & Behaviour, and Travel Planning & Engagement—together explaining 77.1 % of the total variance. Communalities above 0.74 and factor loadings surpassing 0.85 confirm both convergent and discriminant validity. Adequate sampling and scale reliability are demonstrated by a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value of 0.717, a highly significant Bartlett's test ($\chi^2 = 3949.42$; df = 153; $p < 0.001$) and a global Cronbach's alpha of 0.712, with sub-scale alphas ranging from 0.829 to 0.865. The dataset is complete, containing 500 fully answered questionnaires, thereby eliminating imputation bias and strengthening generalisability across residents of East and West Godavari.

Multiple regression incorporating the six constructs accounts for 80.3 % of the variance in travel intention ($R = 0.896$; $R^2 = 0.803$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.801$), with the omnibus F-statistic ($F_{5,494} = 401.49$; $p < 0.001$) confirming overall model significance. Quality & Credibility exerts the most powerful standardised effect ($\beta = 0.423$; $t = 21.13$; $p < 0.001$), underscoring the central role of trustworthy visuals, authentic captions and credible electronic word-of-mouth in persuading prospective visitors. Tourism Engagement & Behaviour ($\beta = 0.389$; $t = 19.39$; $p < 0.001$) and Travel Planning & Engagement ($\beta = 0.386$; $t = 19.16$; $p < 0.001$) follow closely, indicating that interactive actions—likes, shares, saved posts and embedded itineraries—play a critical part in shifting potential travellers from passive exposure to active intention. Culture & Community Engagement ($\beta = 0.380$; $t = 18.92$; $p < 0.001$) and Psychological Impact ($\beta = 0.363$; $t = 17.99$; $p < 0.001$) remain substantive, revealing that culturally resonant storytelling and affective triggers sustain persuasive momentum alongside informational cues.

Tolerance values between 0.983 and 0.996 (VIF ≤ 1.02) confirm negligible multicollinearity, ensuring each construct contributes unique explanatory power. The simultaneous entry of all predictors corroborates the theory-driven specification that positions diverse social-media cues as multifaceted antecedents of travel behaviour. Collectively, the evidence suggests that credible content, rich interaction mechanics and culturally embedded narratives operate synergistically to shape destination choice within semi-urban Indian contexts, offering a transferable template for similarly emerging regions.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

Destination marketers should concentrate first on raising the perceived credibility of their online content: employ micro-influencers whose lifestyles match target travellers, insist on minimally edited images and encourage candid captions that disclose costs and logistics. They ought to embed clear planning aids—interactive maps, swipe-up booking links and sample weekend itineraries—so that interested viewers can move seamlessly from discovery to reservation. Local businesses and tourism boards should co-create culture-rich short videos in regional languages, weaving in folk music, dialect jokes and festival snippets that make the districts feel familiar yet exciting. Designing campaigns that invite audience participationpolls on preferred street-food stalls, hashtag challenges for riverfront sunrise shots, or comment-based Q&A sessions with local guides—will deepen engagement and raise behavioural intent. Emotional hooks such as user-generated nostalgia stories, volunteer opportunities and eco-pledges can further amplify psychological impact. Finally, all partners must monitor comment sections actively, respond promptly and showcase positive peer reviews to keep credibility high and misinformation at bay.

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IX. CONCLUSION

The study provides the first statistically validated model of how influencer-led social-media cues steer travel intentions to the East and West Godavari districts. Credibility emerged as the decisive lever, but it works best in concert with engaging planning tools, culturally attuned storytelling and emotionally resonant content. By aligning their digital strategies with these insights, destination-marketing organizations and local enterprises can redirect a share of India's mobile-first travellers towards the Godavari belt, easing pressure on traditional hotspots while unlocking fresh economic opportunities for river-town communities.

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