

## Empirical Analysis of Impact of Social Media on Tourism through Branding & Promotional Strategies in India

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### ABSTRACT

This study is based on the empirical analysis. It attempts to explore the impact of social media on tourism through branding & promotional strategies in India. The research aims to identify strategies and challenges faced by industry experts in positioning India as a competitive tourist spot and propose areas for enhancement. The research methodology has various combinations of content analysis and empirical studies. The findings highlight the significance of effective positioning strategies in attracting tourists and creating economic & financial benefits. Challenges such as communication barriers, especially language and access to field experts were faced during the study. The study gives the scope for further research work with the option of greater time frame to analyze in-depth issues involved in social media and its impact on tourism in India. In nutshell this study contributes to understanding the implications and opportunities for increasing the branding and promotion strategies for promotion of tourism in India.

### **Introduction**

Tourism industry in India is one of the major service industries. The thrust given by the current regime to promote tourism is major agenda. Tourism industry is facilitation job creation, supply chain marketing and rapid development. In the era of technology & digital connectivity, social media plays important role. Tourists rely on their trusted networks through social media to gather & process the information as per their needs pertaining to tourism industry. Social media is a very important tool for industry experts to target their customers & clients. Social media

influences the branding & promotional strategies in India at various levels, be it government strategies or private players. Social media as a tool includes various components used by the industry expert to promote tourism, branding & promotion remains essential elements to achieve desired targets. Tourism includes in-bound and out-bound tourists, both the aspect of tourism helps the industry to maximize the profits, hence, enabling better branding & promotional capacities.

### **Some Conceptual Issues**

1. Tourism – Tourism is an activity whereby services related with tours, travel or arranging the visit & stay is carried on for certain amount of monetary benefits/gains.
2. In-Bound Tourism- Tourists coming from other countries or from within the country and visiting to other states are classified under in-bound tourists.
3. Out-Bound Tourism- Tourists visiting abroad/foreign countries are classified under the out-bound tourists.
4. Social Media- Facebook, Snapchats, WhatsApp, Instagram, Blogs, Youtube, Digital Media (e-News Papers, Advertisements of Television), and Twitter are classified under the category of social media. Social media includes all digital platforms facilitating the information & communication to various players involved in the tourism industry.
5. Tourists Destinations- Hotels, Resorts, Guides, Travel Agents/Agencies, Hotels and Destination specific tours- rural tourism, wellness/medical tourism and flora & fauna.
6. Tourism Industry- Tourism industry encompasses all the entities and factors which are closely knitted to execute the task of catering the needs of tourists in India.

### **Research Methodology**

A hybrid approach has been adopted to justify the objectives the study. Qualitative and quantitative tools are used to understand the problem and give the appropriate solution.

- Type of research design : Descriptive
- Data collection method : Primary Data and Secondary
- Research instrument : Questionnaire and Secondary Resources
- Sampling Area : Rajasthan, Delhi, Delhi NCR
- Sample Size:100 respondents
- Sampling technique/method : Convenient Sampling

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. Positioning strategies adopted to promote tourism through social media.
2. Branding & Promotion of tourism in India.

## Review of Literature

*Zarella (2010)* in his study concluded that the newspapers, television, advertisements, magazines, etc. are only a medium for communication system and it did not give the true & timely implications of the advertisements. The outcome cannot be seen and hence brought the social media as a prime factor as through availing social media it was completely possible to know the liking & disliking of the respondents and can act accordingly.

(*Matikiti, R., Mpinganjira, M. & Roberts Lombard, M., 2017*) in their study concluded that social media affects the attitude of the tourists by using the social networking platforms to plan the trips. It becomes the responsibility of these social platforms (social media) to provide all the required information that would help tourists in decision making.

As per the survey conducted by (*Octane survey, 2015*), it stated that the Facebook, Instagram, Blogs, YouTube are the four major social media platforms that were widely used to get the maximum amount of tourists and get their requirements and meet them from all over the world. Social media also made it easy for the customers to find out the corresponding information required for their visits across the country. In recent years social media has gained a huge popularity for online marketing. There has been a growth of 38% in these social media platforms between 2011 to 2015. Webcasts and online videos have seen remarkable growth in tourist engagement. Social Media marketing is preferred by 69% of Indian Marketers.

During the **primary data collection**, it was concluded that few influencing factors for tourists, like- feedback, information available on social media and recommendation from tour operator/local friend/earlier visitors. Most of the respondents were agreed that they were influenced by the feedback available online. Most of the tourists suggested giving detail text information about different tourist places/photos/videos and testimonials from different social media channels. Apart from these factors, suggestions were also there to provide below information's through social media-transportation/logistic details, timing and ticket charges of different destinations, accommodation/food/local market-related information, best time to visit different destinations, safety/security measures for tourists, and emergency control systems for different destinations.

### **FINDINGS**

1. 80% of the respondents some or the other way got the chance to do branding and positioning through social media.
2. 75 % respondents attempted to explore the possibility of expanding the scope of their business via the use of social media.
3. 43% Tour operators have used social media to influence travel decisions.
4. 33% Industry expert say that booking & planning trip can be influenced by social media.

5. Social media has enhanced in establishing better customer relationship.
6. Social media has promoted the brand awareness.
7. Social media and its content are directly related to penetrative marketing.
8. Various channels of social media are strong tools for matching the requirement of the industry.
9. Government agencies are unable to match up with the pace of private players; in turn this has created a kind of barrier for speedy promotion of tourism industry in India.
10. The Likert Scale technique is used to determine the feasibility of adopting social media in promotion of tourism industry-

A	b	c	d	E
<b>Fartoo little</b>	<b>Too little</b>	<b>Aboutright</b>	<b>Too much</b>	<b>Fartoo much</b>
2%	16%	51%	21%	10%

11. Analyzing the social media impact on strategy formulation and its impact, again the Likert Scale is used-

A	b	c	d	E
<b>None</b>	<b>Slight</b>	<b>Reasonable</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very</b>
3%	12%	60%	9%	16%

### Scope for Further Research Work

The present study has selected specific region of the Country (India). It has analyzed the role of social media from the perspective of the Industry Experts pertaining to tourism industry. Many more regions may be selected for analyzing the role of social media. Other components of social media and tourism industry may be included for empirical & quantitative analysis.

### Conclusion

Social media has penetrated in the tourism industry as a major tool for branding & positioning. It has given an edge to create reliable & sustainable way for branding and promotion of tourism of various

kinds. Social media helps the allied sector of the tourism industry to co-function with front players. Gone are the days where classical approach of marketing were used, the future of tourism industry is going to heavily based on the use of social media. The importance of collecting right of kind of information, appropriate user reviews & feedback is key to success.

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