

Role Of Travel Influencers In the Tourism Industry Among the Indian

Population

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Abstract

The rapid development of the social media has changed the tourism industry in terms of destination marketing and decision making in issues concerning traveling. The role of travel influencers has been brought to the fore as a potent opinion leader in the evolving digital space environment and can have a potent effect on the perceptions, credibility and destination choice of a tourist. The present study examines how travel influencers are significant in tourism industry among the Indian population, specifically, the credibility of the influencers, the contents, and the social media engagement as a factor that determines trust and awareness of the destination among tourists and their decision to travel. Primary data in the form of a structured questionnaire were collected using a sample of 200 respondents in India using descriptive and analytical research design. The data was analyzed through the SPSS using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and linear regression. Since the outcomes demonstrated that the effect of travel influencers on the tourism-related decisions is significant and positive, and the aspect of the credibility of influencers is the most significant predictor of tourist confidence and tourist intent, then the quality of the content and social media application. The study also found out that the content produced by the influencers enhances awareness of a destination and reduces the perceived risk of traveling and therefore, increases the confidence of the tourists in their travel choices. The research concludes that travel influencers play a strategic role in the current tourism promotion in India, and they aid in bridging the gap between destinations and travelers and proposes the application of credibility-based and responsible influencer collaboration to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Travel Influencers; Tourism Decision-Making; Influencer Credibility; Social Media Marketing.

1.INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen the tourism industry alter radically due to the rapid change in digital technologies and communication platforms. With the introduction of the social media, the manner in which tourists advertise, discover and rate tourist destinations has been transformed dramatically (Gulati, 2022). The traditional means of promotion such as brochures, travel fairs, print advertisements as well as the television commercials are no longer sufficient on their own to attract the attention of the consumer (Gupta et al., 2023). Instead, it has been replaced by the digital-driven marketing tactics in the marketing strategies in the tourism sector particularly those that revolve around content creators and peer-to-peer influence (Han & Chen, 2022). By

this, travel influencers have become one of the intermediaries between destinations and potential tourists and they specify the perceptions, expectations and decision making in traveling (Irfan et al., 2022).

1.1 Digital Transformation of Tourism Marketing

User-generated content, online reviews, visual storytelling, and sharing real information have contributed to the digital transformation of tourism marketing (Kilipiri et al., 2023). The social media allows the travelers to get access to destination related information in real time, compare options and visualize the experiences in the course of travelling before they make a decision (Mahalakshmi, 2023). In contrast to the traditional marketing, the digital platforms are two-way, which creates engagement, feedback, and the feeling of community (Mahapatra et al., 2025).

The content of traveling like photos, videos, reels, blogs, and vlogs have become one of the main sources of inspiration of tourists (Manojprasath et al., 2025). Influencers package destinations with aesthetic images and personal stories and market travel as an experience and something aspirational (Mr & Bhanusali, 2024). This type of experiential marketing has been shown to be especially useful in tourism, where information asymmetry is minimized and emotion resonates with destinations is increased (Palazzo et al., 2021).

1.2 Emergence of Travel Influencers as Opinion Leaders

Travel influencers serve as the opinion leaders of the tourism economy in the contemporary world. They are people who have large online communities through constant engagement in the sharing of travel experiences, destination and tourism insights, observation of various cultures, and advice on how to travel practically (Rajput & Gandhi, 2024). They have a perceived authenticity, relatability, and expertise, which allow them to be more effective in influencing the opinions and actions of the followers than traditional adverts.

The use of Instagram, YouTube and Facebook has increased the visibility and influence of travel influencers by allowing visual narration and connecting with a large number of people (Shah et al., 2024). Influencer content is usually perceived as truthful and characterized by experience by the followers, which leads to increased trust and credibility. In turn, influencer recommendations are very important when selecting destinations, choosing accommodation, planning activities, and even choosing the time of the trip.

1.3 Growing Relevance of Travel Influencers in the Indian Context

The impact of travel influencers in India has been growing at a very high rate because of the growing smartphone penetration, low-cost mobile data, and digitally active population (Sharma & Kumar, 2025). The demographic profile of the Indian population is very young, which, combined with the increasing disposable incomes and the development of the preference towards the type of tourism, which is more experience-driven, has preconditioned the presence of the conducive environment in which influencer-based tourism marketing could be successfully implemented. Indian tourists are turning to destinations that correspond to lifestyle desires, cultural interest, and social media exposure.

The decision making in the Indian context is frequently high involvement which entails serious monetary investment and emotional anticipations. Consequently, potential tourists are

dependent on the content of the influencers to gauge the safety, cost, accessibility and general experience of the destination (Thommandru et al., 2023). The influencers can be used to minimize perceived travel risks by providing first-hand information, live updates, and useful travel advice. Their task is even more important to popularize less popular destinations, domestic tourism, and areas rich in cultures, which might not have much traditional marketing.

1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Study

It is based on this that this study tries to explain how travel influencers can determine tourism-related decisions among the Indian population. It will investigate the importance of the influencer credibility, content quality and degree of interaction in the production of destination awareness, tourist trust and travel motivation (Upananda & Bandara, 2022). Tourism marketers, destination management organizations and policymakers seeking to utilize the digital impact to establish sustainable tourism in India are interested in these dynamics.

This research will add to the current body of tourism literature by investigating the increasing overlap between social media impact and tourism behavior and give practical findings on how the destination marketing processes in the digital environment continue to evolve.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the influence of travel influencers on tourism decision-making among the Indian population.
- To analyze the relationship between travel influencer credibility and tourist trust.
- To assess the impact of influencer-generated content on destination awareness and travel motivation.
- To evaluate the overall effectiveness of travel influencers as a tourism marketing tool in India.

2. REVIEW OF LITREATURE

Anubha and Shome (2021) explored the intention of Indian urban millennials to adopt electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) when it comes to making travel-related decisions, and the importance of consumer attitude acting as a mediator (Anubha & Shome, 2021). Their study has determined that the attitudes of the millennials prevailed in their aspirations to utilize the online reviews of the sites they are planning to visit and the use of social media materials in the trip planning process. The findings revealed that the attitudes towards the travel, which in its turn impacted the behavioral intentions positively, were positively affected by the perceived usefulness, credibility and informativeness of eWOM. The study has highlighted that the Indian millennials located in cities were increasingly becoming trustful in the impact of online peer-created content as opposed to the traditional promotional messages, thereby championing the increasing importance of online influence in the tourism decision-making process.

Babu et al. (2024) explored the impact of social media influencers in influencing responsible tourism behaviors and assessed the impacts of the communication done by influencers on the audience orientation and awareness (Babu et al., 2024). Their study established that influencers played a significant role in shaping ethical travel behaviour through the focus on sustainability, cultural sensitivity and environmental responsibility. The authors received an outcome that the

level of influencer authenticity and value congruence positively influenced the acceptance of the messages among them. The authors were able to conclude that responsible influencer marketing had a potential to positively influence the attitudes of tourists and encourage sustainable tourism choices in particular cases when influencers were perceived as credible and socially responsible.

Banerjee et al. (2025) studied the influence that an influencer marketing has on the decision-making process of the potential travelers in India (Banerjee et al., 2025). It was their results that the content created by influencers had a tremendous impact on destination awareness, a sense of trust, and travel intentions. The researchers discovered that credibility of the influencers, quality and level of involvement to be significant determinant of the degree of effectiveness in marketing. The findings of the research stated that the Indian travelers were increasingly relying on the recommendations provided by influencers with the intention of reducing the perceived risk and uncertainty regarding travel planning. The authors concluded that influencer marketing had emerged as a robust strategic resource in the Indian tourism system, notably in terms of the ability to shift the attitudes of younger and digital-oriented consumers.

Cholprasertsuk, Lawanwisut, and Thongrin (2020) discussed the importance of social media influencers in Thai tourism sector in terms of behavior, motivation of the travelers and influencing factors. Their research found that content created by influencers had a significant impact on the process of traveling motivation and destination choice of tourists (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). The authors discovered that visual attractiveness, narrative, and experience authenticity were important aspects that affected the destination perceptions of tourists. The research also found that social media influencers boosted the process of destination image development through real and presentable traveling stories. The results indicated that the influence of the influencers was especially significant among younger tourists as they use social media to get travel inspiration and planning actively.

Faisal and Dhusia (2022) analysed the relationship between the attributes of the social media travel influencers and the travel intentions of the tourists, and the research concentrated on the mediation effect of the source credibility. In their analysis, they found that the extent of influence of such factors influencing tourists as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness had a tremendous effect on the intentions of tourists to travel (Faisal & Dhusia, 2022). The results also implied that the impact of the influencer communication on the decision-making process was positively correlated to the credibility of the source since source credibility increased the degree of trust and reduced the perceived risk of travelling. The authors concluded that plausible influencers played significant roles in the attitude and intention of tourists and that authenticity and transparency in tourism marketing through people who influence is significant.

2.1 Research Gap

The literature reviewed confirmed that travel influencers and electronic word-of-mouth produced great impact on travel attitudes, destination awareness, and travel intentions. Nonetheless, the majority of the studies were either restricted to specific population groups like

urban millennials or concentrated on individual constructs i.e. influencer credibility, responsible tourism or travel intention. The international studies were also insightful with no contextual relevance to the diverse tourism market of India. Additionally, the study had minimal empirical investigation that concurrently addressed the credibility of influencers, tourist trust, destination awareness, and travel motivation in one comprehensive framework that was implemented in the Indian context. Hence, there was an evident gap in knowledge about the holistic influence of travel influencers as a tourism marketing tool among the general Indian population that the current study was planned to fill.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part defines the methodological process utilized to address the issue of travel influencers in influencing tourism-related choices among the Indian population. It describes the research design, the sampling structure, data gathering procedures, the variables and how they are measured, the hypothesis formulation and research analysis approaches.

3.1 Research Design

The current research was a descriptive and analytical research study in which the researchers sought to investigate the impact of travel influencers in the tourism decision-making process. The descriptive design assisted in realising the demographic factors of the respondents and the patterns with which they use social media, whereas the analytical design made it possible to examine the correlations between the attributes of a travel influencer and the tourism-related outcomes including destination awareness, tourist trust, and travel decision-making.

3.2 Sample Size and Study Area

The research has been carried out in the Indian population, i.e. among people who actively use the social media platforms and consider the content related to traveling. The convenience method of sampling was used to select 200 respondents. Students, working professionals and frequent travelers globally in various parts of India formed the sample and this ensured that the sample was quite diverse in terms of social media users regarding the study.

3.3 Data Collection Method

The study used both primary and secondary data. Structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data using a five-point Likert scale that is strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire assessed the perceptions of the respondents on the existence of travel influencers along with their impact on tourism behavior. To help support the theoretical and empirical model of the research, secondary data were collected in journals, books, research reports, and online academic databases.

3.4 Variables and Measurement

The research involved the analysis of both independent as well as dependent variables. The independent variables were the credibility of travel influencers, quality of the content, and social media involvement. The credibility of influencers was determined using the indicators of trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity. The quality of content was measured through informativeness, visual interest and relevance. Interaction was used to measure social media usage in the form of likes, comments and shares.

The dependent variables were travel decision-making, destination awareness and tourist trust. Travel decision-making was also the readiness of respondents to travel to the destinations suggested by travel influencers. Destination awareness checked how far the influencer content went to raise knowledge and interest in destinations. Tourist trust measured the trust that the respondents had in the reliability and honesty of influencer recommendations.

3.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study and the review of literature, the following hypotheses were formulated to empirically test the relationships between the study variables:

- **H₀₁:** Travel influencers do not have a significant impact on tourism decision-making among the Indian population.
- **H₁₁:** Travel influencers have a significant impact on tourism decision-making among the Indian population.
- **H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between influencer credibility and tourist trust.
- **H₁₂:** There is a significant relationship between influencer credibility and tourist trust.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The results obtained were coded and processed using Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis of the demographic data and the perceptions of the respondents was summarized through the descriptive statistics. The correlation analysis was used to determine the relations between independent and dependent variables. To test the hypothesis and objectively measure the research objectives, the linear regression test was applied to estimate the influence of the variables of the travel influencers on the tourist decision making and the degree of trust in the tourism business.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the author provides the analysis and interpretation of the data that was gathered with 200 respondents to conduct the research on the influence that travel influencers have on the tourism-related decision-making of the Indian population. This has been done by the means of analysis through the SPSS, which consists of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic details of the respondents were examined towards the comprehension of the demographic make-up of the sample in terms of age, gender, occupation and use of social media. Table 4.1 shows the demographic profile of the individuals who took part in the study in a more detailed manner. It outlines the sample size in accordance to the demographic factors that are important in seeking the background information of the sample and determining its suitability in analyzing the impact of travel influencers in tourism related decision-making among the Indian population.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 200)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	108	54.0
	Female	92	46.0
Age Group	18–25 years	78	39.0

	26–35 years	64	32.0
	36–45 years	38	19.0
	Above 45 years	20	10.0
Occupation	Student	72	36.0
	Working Professional	96	48.0
	Others	32	16.0

The demographic analysis reveals quite equal gender distribution where male respondents constituted 54 percent and female respondents 46 percent of the sample. It was noted that a large percentage of the respondents (71 percent) fell into the age bracket of 1835 years, which suggests that the study mostly sought the opinions of younger people who use the digital and social media platforms more. Concerning occupation, the largest group was made up of working professionals (48 percent) then students (36 percent). This distribution is appropriate as it implies that the sample was composed to a large extent of digitally active people who have a high probability of being exposed to travel influencers and can be used in the study of how influencer marketing affects tourism-related decisions.

The distribution of the age of respondents used in the study is shown in Figure 1. This number breaks the respondents into four age categories, 1825 years, 2635 years, 3645 years, and over 45 years to give a clear picture on age representation of sample used to analyse the role of travel influences in tourism decision making.

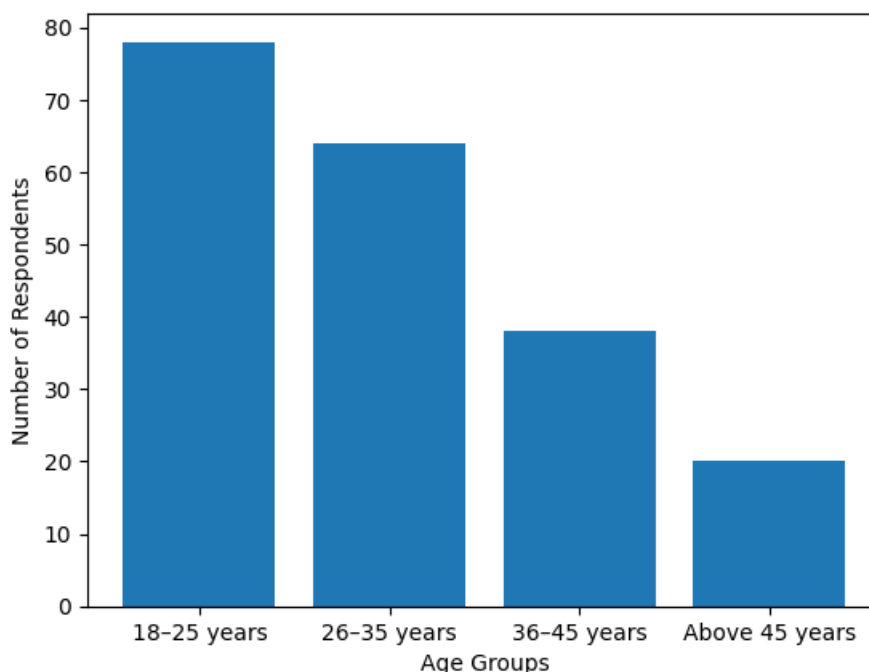


Figure 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

The number represents that the highest percentage of the respondents were those of age group 18-25 years and then 26-35 years. These two groups formed the majority of the sample and this illustrates the prevailing number of younger people in the sample. The people within the age

group of 36 to 45 years and over 45 years constituted a relatively smaller proportion. This age demographic indicates that the study mostly represents the opinion of more digitally active and younger people, who tend to use social media platforms and subscribe to travel influencers, which supports the applicability of the sample in investigating influencer motivated tourism behavior.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

The overall perception of respondents on travel influencers and tourism related outcomes were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 2 includes the descriptive statistics outcomes of the main study variables connected with the travel influencers and tourism outcomes. The table presents the means and SD of influencer credibility, content quality, social media engagement, destination awareness, tourist trust, and travel decision-making and gives the overview of the general perceptions of the respondents and the variation in their responses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influencer Credibility	3.98	0.62
Content Quality	4.12	0.58
Social Media Engagement	3.85	0.66
Destination Awareness	4.05	0.60
Tourist Trust	3.92	0.64
Travel Decision-Making	4.01	0.59

The findings have shown that the mean values of all study variables stand at above 3.80 of a five-point Likert scale, which is representative of a relatively positive perception of travel influencers among the respondents. The quality of the content recorded the greatest mean (Mean = 4.12), which indicates that informative content, visually appealing content, and relevant content by the influencers are significant influencing factors in the attraction and motivation of tourists. A high mean value was also registered under destination awareness (Mean = 4.05) implying that the content of travel influencers was useful in increasing the knowledge and interest of respondents in travel destinations. The positive role of influencers in terms of trust and tourism-related decisions was also indicated by the results of influencer credibility (Mean = 3.98) and travel decision-making (Mean = 4.01). The values of standard deviation of variables are relatively low, which implies uniformity in how the respondents perceive things according to their views, which adds strength to the validity of the identified trends.

The data presented in figure 2 shows the average scores of the main variables of the study, which are the influencer credibility, content quality, social media engagement, destination awareness, tourist trust and travel decision-making. The figure is a visual representation of the average perceptions of the respondents towards each of the variables on a five-point Likert scale.

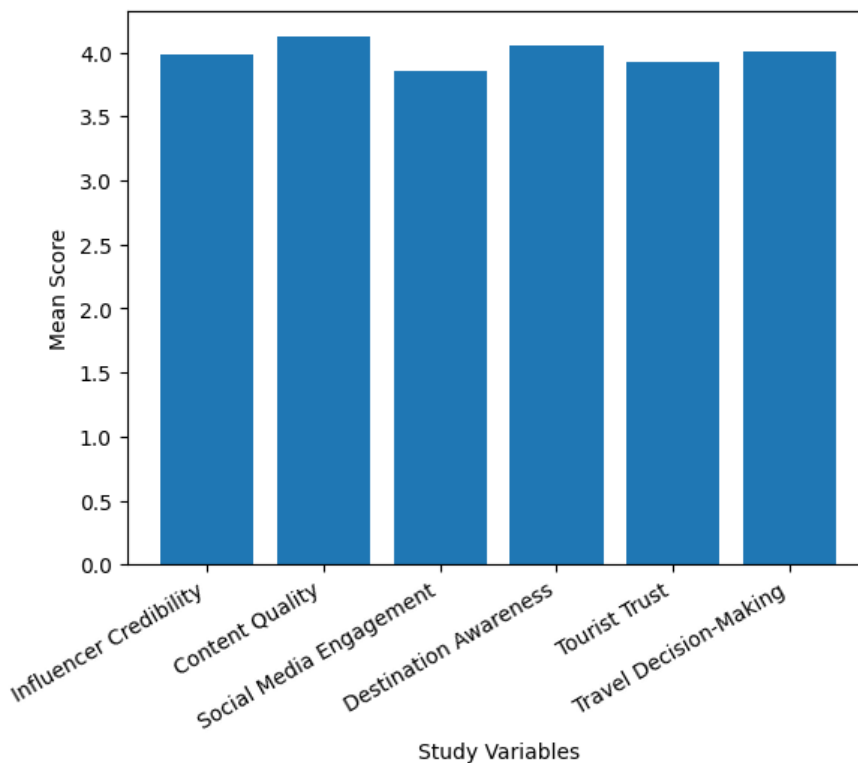


Figure 2: Mean Scores of Study Variables

The number 2 demonstrates that the mean scores obtained are above the middle of the scale, which implies that there is a positive perception on travel influencers and their impact on the results of tourism. The content quality is rated the best variable, then destination awareness, which justifies the significance of involving and informative influencer content to market tourism destinations. Mean values of influencer credibility and travel decision-making were also found to be relatively high, which implies that influencers with high levels of credibility have a strong influence on tourists choosing to trust them and make travel decisions. Compared to a slightly lower level of engagement with the social media and tourist trust, nevertheless, portrayed positive responses, which validates the impactful nature of the travel influencers on tourism behavior in the respondents.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was also done to test out the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. Table 3 gives the findings of the correlation analysis that was performed to check the strength and direction of correlations between the most important independent and dependent variables of the study, such as credibility of the influencers, quality of content, travel decision-making, and tourist trust. The correlation coefficients of Pearson are also reported to measure the extent of relationship between these variables.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Influencer Credibility	Content Quality	Travel Decision-Making	Tourist Trust

Influencer Credibility	1			
Content Quality	0.62**	1		
Travel Decision-Making	0.71**	0.68**	1	
Tourist Trust	0.74**	0.65**	0.69**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

The results of the correlation indicate that there are strong positive relationships between the study variables with statistical significance of 1 percent percentage ($p = 0.01$). Credibility of the influencer was positively correlated with tourist trust ($r = 0.74$), which means that the greater perceived credibility was, the more trust tourists placed in the recommendation of influencers. Likewise, credibility of the influencers was highly associated with the travel decision-making ($r = 0.71$) and it indicates that credible influencers had a significant role to play in influencing tourists willingness to visit the destinations suggested by the influencers. Quality of the content was also found to have a very strong positive connection with both the process of making travel decisions ($r = 0.68$) and tourist trust ($r = 0.65$), signifying the significance of interesting and informative content in shaping tourist behavior. Comprehensively, the results demonstrate that the credibility of the influencer and the quality of content are influential in the formation of trust and making tourism-related decisions by the respondents.

Figure 3 is a scatter diagram, and it represents the correlation between influencer credibility and tourist trust. The figure is a graphic illustration of the relationship between the credibility of the influencers in the views of respondents and the degree of trust they place on such travel-related advice posted by influencers.

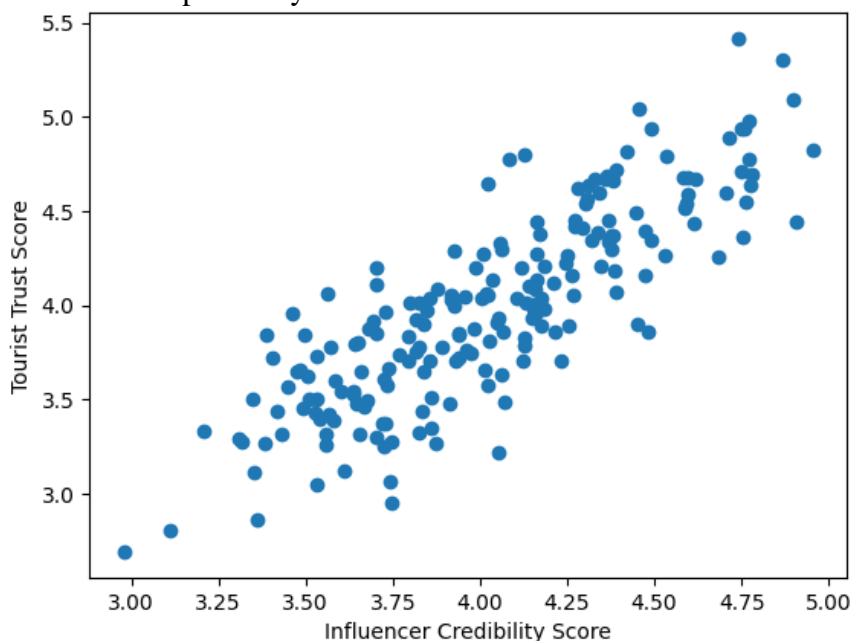


Figure 3: Relationship between Influencer Credibility and Tourist Trust

The figure shows that influencer credibility has a positive linear response with tourist trust. The more the perceived credibility of the travel influencers, the higher the tourist trust is demonstrated. This tendency shows that the respondents tend to trust the information and suggestions on the topic of traveling when this information is delivered by influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable, authentic, and trustworthy. The statistical results of the correlation analysis are supported by the visual pattern of the scatter plot, and empirically support the null hypothesis (H_0) being rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted, and the result of the correlation analysis proves that there is a significant relationship between influencer credibility and tourist trust.

4.4 Regression Analysis

The effects of attributes of travel influencers on the decision-making process in tourism were evaluated with the help of linear regression. Table 4 illustrates the outcome of the linear regression analysis, which was performed to consider the influence of the identified travel influencer attributes, i.e., the influencer credibility, content quality, and social media engagement, on the process of decision-making among tourists in the context of traveling. The table shows the standardized beta coefficients, t-value, significance level, and coefficient of determination (R^2) of the regression model.

Table 4: Regression Analysis – Influence on Travel Decision-Making

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Influencer Credibility	0.43	6.84	0.000
Content Quality	0.31	4.92	0.000
Social Media Engagement	0.27	4.15	0.001
R^2	0.62		

The regression findings reveal that the three relevant predictor variables were found to influence the process of making decisions on traveling significantly. The strongest predictor was influencer credibility (0.43, $p < 0.001$), which means that the tourists were prone to travel choices being determined by credible and trustworthy influencers. Another factor with a significant positive impact ($=.31$, $p=0.001$) was content quality, which has the significance of informative and pleasing influencer content to the decision to travel. The use of social media also played a very important role in the decision to travel (0.27, $p < 0.01$), which means that the more tourists interact with the content of influencers, the higher the intention to travel. The combined influence of the predictor variables has been found to explain 62 percent of the variations in the travel decision-making and hence the strong explanatory power of the regression model.

Figure 4 shows the proportionate role of the most important travel influencer attributes, i.e. the influencer credibility, the quality of the content and social media inclination to the travel decision-making of the tourists. The figure shows the standardized values of beta representing the regression analysis and enables one to visually compare the impact of each predictor variable.

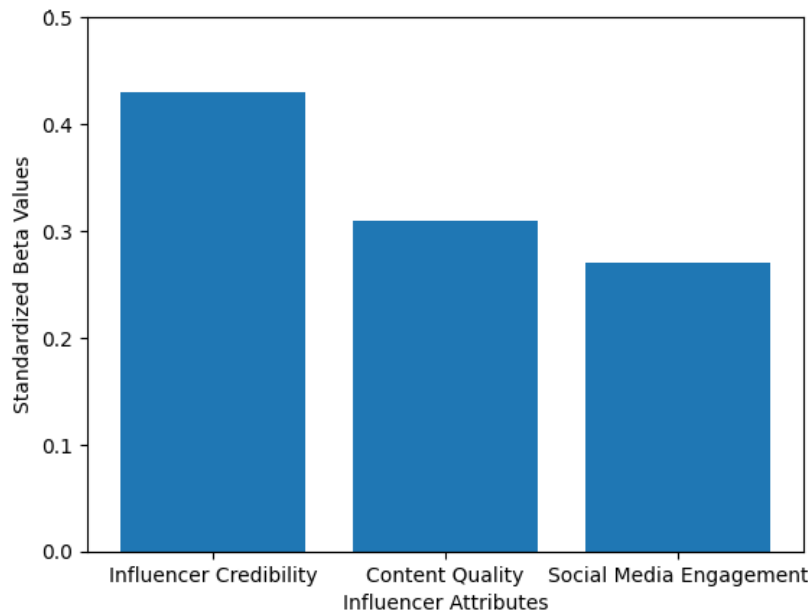


Figure 4: Contribution of Influencer Attributes to Travel Decision-Making

This figure is a clear indication that the credibility of the influencers had the largest contribution to the travel decision-making process based on the largest standardized beta value. This implies that the trustworthiness, expertise and authenticity of travel influencers became more significant to the tourists in making their decisions concerning travel. The quality of the content became the second most crucial factor and, therefore, the importance of information-focused and visually stimulating content to induce travel decisions became evident. The level of social media engagement was lower in comparison, but that too showed the significant input of the contributions, which means that the level of interaction like likes, comments, and shares supported the impact of travel influencers. General, the figure reinforces the regression result and proves the fact that the credibility of influencers is the most essential quality that affects tourism decision-making among the respondents.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 shows that the study has been performed to test the hypotheses related to the effect of influencers on the tourism decision-making process and correlations between influencer credibility and tourist trust. The table provides the summaries of hypothesis, statistical tests that have been performed, the level of significance and the final conclusion arrived at based on correlation and regression analyses.

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
H ₀₁ : Travel influencers do not significantly impact tourism decision-making	Regression	$p < 0.05$	Rejected
H ₁₁ : Travel influencers significantly impact tourism decision-making	Regression	Significant	Accepted
H ₀₂ : No significant relationship between influencer credibility and tourist trust	Correlation	$p < 0.05$	Rejected

H ₁₂ : Significant relationship between influencer credibility and tourist trust	Correlation	Significant	Accepted
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The null hypotheses were not accepted and the alternative hypotheses were accepted. The findings proved that the impact of travel influencers on tourism decision-making was substantial and that the credibility of an influencer had a high positive correlation with tourist trust among Indian citizens.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings of the study and describes them in regards to the objectives of the research and the available literature. This discussion would be carried out on the basis of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and hypothesis testing performed in SPSS.

5.1 Influence of Travel Influencers on Tourism Decision-Making

The results of the study served as a good pointer that the travel influencers play a significant role in the tourism decision making process among the Indian population. The descriptive statistics showed that the means of the travel decision-making were high implying that the respondents considered the suggestions of the influencers seriously when making plans to travel. The same was also validated by a regression analysis that discovered a high percentage of travel decisions was explained by influencer attributes.

The findings show that modern travelers are increasingly relying on the increased content created by influencers to evaluate destinations, places to stay as well as experiences. Instead of the standard advertising, the content of the influencers is more personal and experience-based, and it builds its power. It is a finding in line with the growth in understanding of influencer marketing as a strategic tool in tourism.

5.2 Role of Influencer Credibility in Building Tourist Trust

The close interaction between influencer credibility and tourist trust was one of the most significant researchers of the study. The analysis of the correlation showed that there is a strong positive relationship between these two variables, whereas the regression obtained the credibility of influencers as the best predictor of tourism decision-making.

This means that tourists will tend to believe and follow the recommendations of influencers who are considered learned, genuine and candid. The credibility is associated with lower perceived traveling risk particularly in a country such as India where the choice of destination is frequently accompanied by a high level of financial and emotional commitment. The results support the notion that influencer marketing in tourism is built on trust and credibility should be valued more than popularity or the number of followers.

5.3 Impact of Content Quality on Destination Awareness and Travel Motivation

The researchers established that the quality of the content is a significant element when boosting destination awareness and influencing the travel intention. The mean scores of content quality and destination awareness are high which implies that the respondents placed high importance on influencer content that was informative, visually appealing, and relevant.

Photos, videos and travel stories produced by the influencers assisted in helping the respondents to envisage the place they are visiting and help them understand what to expect on a trip. This does help the idea of experiential marketing, where the tourists are not only informed but also emotionally involved. According to the findings, quality content can create cognitive awareness as well as emotional attraction towards destinations and, therefore, becomes a potent source of tourism promotion.

5.4 Effect of Social Media Engagement on Tourism Behaviour

Whereas the role of social media involvement could not be as significant as credibility and content quality, it was still significant in influencing tourism behaviour. The regression analysis revealed that travel decision-making was greatly affected positively by engagement.

This implies that indicators of interactions like likes, comments, and shares make the content of an influencer more visible and popular. High engagement is a kind of social evidence, which will make tourists consider destinations as valuable and reliable. In this way, although engagement is not ultimately the cause of decisions, it enhances the overall effect of travel influencers as it solidifies the acceptance of the message.

5.5 Discussion in the Context of Previous Studies

The findings of the study are similar to the earlier researches that have been conducted in the Indian and the foreign environment. The applicability of influencer credibility, authenticity and trust upon the development of travel intentions have been emphasized in the former studies, and the current study illustrates the trends among the Indian tourists.

The results also align with the research paper which identifies the significance of influencer-generated content in reducing the perceived travel risk, as well as, a more favorable destination image. However, the given study contributes slightly to the already existing literature by introducing a credibility of influencers, the quality of their posts and the social media engagement within a single analytical model and, thus, offering a more comprehensive concept of the role of influencers in Indian tourism behavior.

5.6 Overall Implications of the Findings

On the whole, the findings indicate that travel influencers have become an important strategic force in tourist businesses. They are no longer seen as content producers but as relied upon gatekeepers of the destinations and the travelers. They impact on various phases of the tourist decision-making process such as creation of awareness and building of trust up to the final travel choice.

These findings have implications to a tourism marketer and policymaker in the sense that they affirm the need to implement credibility-based influencer tactics, facilitate authentic storytelling, and instill responsible tourism on web platforms. When incorporated into the tourism development project in the long term, the involvement of influencers may contribute to the creation of a more transparent, interactive, and sustainable tourism ecosystem in India.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current research explored how travel influencers affect the decision-making process concerning tourism among the Indian community, and the analysis has demonstrated that the concept of influencer marketing has become the potent device in the modern tourism industry.

The results showed that travel influencers play a big role in destination awareness, tourist trust, and decision-making regarding traveling. Credibility of the influencers was found to be the strongest force, then the quality of the content and the social media interaction is considered which means that the tourists rely on influencers who appear real, educated and open. The statistical findings also supported the idea that the credibility of communication by influencers decreases the perceived risk of traveling and increases self-confidence in destination decisions. In general, the research found that travel influencers are strategic in marketing tourism in India by creating a gap between destinations and the traveller, making tourism marketing more relatable, experiential and trust-based in the digital era.

- **Develop Power in Credibility-Influencer Collaboration:** Travel brands and tourism boards need to collaborate with influencers who are very authentic, informed, and communicative in relation to ethical aspects. The influencers must not be selected based on the number of followers alone but also on the basis of their credibility, which will help in the establishment of a better trust between the tourists and the preservation of the brand value in the long run.
- **Focus on Quality and Educational Value:** The travel marketers must give influencers a chance to create content beyond what seems beautiful and includes information that is useful such as the price of travelling, security, availability and cultural sensitivity. Authentic and educative details will also enhance the destination recognition and introduce a favorable effect on travel preferences made by tourists.
- **Market Responsible and Sustainable Tourism through Influencers:** Influencers will also be employed as the ambassadors of responsible tourism to display sustainable tourism, the local culture and environmental protection. The strategy will not only render the tourism destination in India appealing to the conscious travelers but also provide sustainability of tourism sector in India in the long-term.

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