

Role of Social Media in Promoting Sustainable Tourism in Kodagu

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Abstract: The relationship connecting the new media and tourism is the new paradigm of the industry's growth. Today travelers are the important players in local, national, and international tourism which can undergo significant shifts in attitudes and behavior that will promote security, stability, and sustainable development thanks to the potent effects of new media communications. Kodagu, is the most coveted and well-liked highland station in Karnataka state. Flush green environment, is surrounded by tall mountains, is perpetually foggy and tranquility. Today Kodagu is a hot spot for tourism with a geographical area of 4,102km, with a slender population of 554,519 (2011 Census). Sustainable tourism in Kodagu aims to support locals while preserving the region's rich biodiversity, scenic beauty, and cultural heritage. This approach emphasizes environmentally friendly accommodations, mindful travel, and engagement with local traditions and culture. By promoting environmentally responsible practices, Kodagu hopes to ensure that future generations can enjoy its unique landscapes and culture. New media and ICT will play vital role in Kodagu's frontline investments in sustainable tourism. New media Technologies are widely using all the phases of travelling pre-consumption, consumption and post consumption. In pre-consumption stage, through various new media platforms travelers identify and collect details of particular destination, itinerary, route, accommodation and transportation facilities. Next in the consumption phase, travelers extensively use various digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter by posting pictures, videos and texts. Lastly in the post-consumption phase, travelers will be sharing their overall tourism experience to friends and communities in the social media. The study included quantitative and qualitative data methods to gather information and results that, new media have become significant element towards sustainable tourism in Kodagu. The paper tries to analyze how new media can intervene and promote sustainable tourism by portraying a tourist site while comprehending the complexity of local circumstances and activities.

Keywords: New Media, sustainable tourism, ICT

INTRODUCTION:

The social media phenomena as the amazing ability to affect a wide range of sectors It appears that social media platforms have a significant impact on the travel and tourism sector. Among the first industries to use new technologies and solutions is the tourism sector. Through social media networks, the industry was able to enhance a number of procedures and provide travellers all over the world with better experiences. The relationship connecting the new media and tourism is the new paradigm of the industry's growth. In the India's state of Karnataka's southwest sits the scenic region known as Kodagu where area is renowned for its stunning natural surroundings, vibrant culture, and gracious people. Kodagu, a naturalist's haven set amidst the Western Ghats, offers a breathtaking backdrop to the area's undulating hills and verdant woods. The area is also well-known for its coffee and spice farms, which yield some of the world's best coffee and spices. Flush green environment, is surrounded by tall mountains, is perpetually foggy and tranquility. Today Kodagu is a hot spot for tourism with a geographical area of 4,102km. With a minute population of 554,519 (2011 Census) According to Kodagu tourism department nearly 40lakh people visited Kodagu's tourist destination in the year 2022-23. The tourism industry benefits greatly from the use of new media for marketing and promotion. It has made a good impact on protecting our natural and cultural heritage and on promoting the variety of the world tourism. The way the tourist industry operates has altered as a result of the social media revolution, which has a huge impact on the sustainable tourism industry. Sustainable tourism is the process of people managing change in a healthy environment, where resources, investments, technological advancement, and institutional change are all in line with and support the needs and aspirations of present-day and future generations of people. In 1982, the Indian government released its initial tourism policy. This strategy's objectives were to support sustainable tourism for long-term financial viability and the fusion of the socio-cultural framework to enhance India's brand image. Kerala, recognized as "God's own country" throughout the world, was possibly the first state in India to develop creative efforts for sustainable tourism. The tourism industry's operations have changed as a result of the development of social media as new technology, which has had a significant impact on the industry's long-term feasibility. The World-Wide Fund for Nature, the International Eco-Tourism Society, the Eco-Tourism Society of India, the Rainforest Alliance, Sustainable Travel International, and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council are just a few of the international and national organizations constantly promoting and disseminating information about sustainable tourism through new media technologies. Today people use different social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to communicate their day-to-day life style. This study aims to examine how new media platforms can promote environmentally friendly tourism in Kodagu. The study also discusses sustainable travel and associated products from the fore mentioned regions that ought to be promoted on social media sites.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to Blackshaw (2006), "Social media" refers to internet-based programmes that display user-generated material, which includes media impressions produced by users, usually based on pertinent experience, and stored or disseminated online for other users who may be influenced to view. Technically speaking, social media encompasses a wide range of programmes that let users "Post," "Tag," "Dig," or "Blog" on the internet. These applications produce a range of new and developing online knowledge sources that are developed, shared, and utilised by customers to educate one another about goods, services, brands, and issues. **Bhulais (1998)** claims that goods used for tourism are bought ahead of time and far from the location of consumption. As a result, fast and reliable information that is pertinent to the demands of visitors is essential to both customer happiness and the competitiveness of the destination. It's also important to remember that the travel and tourism sector leads the way in internet usage and online transactions. Social media is a crucial instrument for tourism marketing that can improve the reputation of the place, claim **Yadav and Arora (2012)**. In light of the aforementioned, travel agencies should consider social media platforms an essential component of their marketing plans. When compared to traditional media methods, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) discovered that social media platforms allow tourism locations to communicate with potential visitors more effectively and at a comparatively cheaper cost. The research makes it clear that social media serves as a communication tool that offers significant financial advantages to all parties involved. a recent state-of-the-art literature review (**Pourfakhimi et al., 2020**) found that academic research on the impact of electronic WOM on tourism and hospitality consumer behavior was fragmented and largely limited to investigating a small scope of its impact. It is evident from the literature that the role of social media in promoting awareness in sustainable tourism is quite a new concept. Furthermore, there is a paucity of the literature in the Indian context. The research makes clear that social media's function in raising awareness of sustainable tourism is a relatively novel idea. In addition, the literature in the Indian setting is scarce.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- Determine the key socioeconomic factors that Kodagu needs to craft towards sustainable tourism.
- To comprehend how social media works to promote eco-tourism travel and raise public awareness.
- To recognize sustainable tourism items in Kodagu.

AREA OF STUDY

The study area includes five taluks of Kodagu district. Madikeri taluk is a major tourist destination and is easily accessible to the researcher for conducting the present study. Primary data was collected from the major tourist destinations of Kodagu that is Madikeri and Kushalnagara taluk respectively.

Kodagu: The most stunning hill station in Karnataka is Kodagu (Coorg), the majestic, heavily forested area in the Western Ghats. It is located in the Western Ghats of southwest Karnataka and has an area of 4,102 square kilometres (1,584 square miles). With 548,561 residents as of 2001—13.74% of whom lived in the district's metropolitan centres—it was the least populated of Karnataka's thirty districts. Kodagu, which is tucked away in the verdant hills of southern India, offers stunning scenery, a vibrant culture, and enjoyable shopping. Travelling to Coorg, which is well-known for its breathtaking coffee farms, lively local customs, and friendly locals, offers a sensory-rich encounter. Whether you're browsing the busy markets or meandering through the lush hills, Kodagu has a certain appeal that makes it a memorable travel.

Research Methodology: The research methodology for the study was based on identifying tourist respondents from and outside India. The data was collected from 195 tourist respondents who were visiting Kodagu. Therefore, a structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed through google forms. The questionnaire contained a five-point Likert scale, one point for 'Strongly disagree,' two points for 'Disagree,' three points for Undecided; four points for 'Agree' and five points for 'Strongly agree'.

DISCUSSION

Information source about Tourist destinations

Source of Info	No	Percentage
Google Search	84	43.07
Blogs	2	1.02
Print Media	0	0
Travel Magazine	4	2.05
Website	18	9.23
Social media	68	34.87
Word of Mouth	14	7.07
Others	5	2.56
Total	195	

Sustainable tourism products in Kodagu

SL No	Particulars
1	Organic Coffee Plantation
2	Bird Watching
3	Eco-lodges/homestays
4	Traditional Coorgi cuisine
5	Rafting and Kayaking
6	Trekking and Hiking
7	Local handicrafts and artisan products
8	Tibetan Flea market
9	Cultural and traditional tourism
10	Archaeological tourism
11	Wildlife safari
12	Spices Tourism
13	Api tourism
14	Vinification Tourism
15	Pilgrimage Tourism

Awareness of sustainable tourism

Aware	No	Percentage
Yes	140	71.79
No	55	28.20
Total	195	

Preferred approach of planning holiday

Approach	No	Percentage
Self-planning	110	56.41
Travel agent planning	35	17.94
Planning with Tour agencies	50	25.64
Total	195	

Mode for booking travel tickets

Mode	No	Percentage
Online Travel mode	99	50.76
Travel website	64	32.82
Travel agents	32	16.41
Total	195	

Mode for hotel reservation

Mode	No	Percentage
Online booking	101	51.79
Company websites	62	31.79
Travel agents	32	16.41
Total	195	

Social media influence on travel preference.

Social media platform	Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	80	41.
X	19	9.74
Facebook	26	13.33
YouTube	62	31.79
Others	8	4.10
Total	195	

Respondent’s insight towards sustainable tourism.

Sl. No	Insight towards sustainable tourism.
1	Tourism helps in eradicating poverty.
2	Spiritual places influence travelling.
3	Tourism industry generates employment opportunity.
4	The traditional and cultural practices promote sustainability.
5	Tourism is a revenue generating industry for government.
6	Tourism flourishes local entrepreneurship.
7	Art and cultural festivals build tourism.
8	Social media platform provides handy information to the tourist.
9	Unique local festivals, fairs, carnivals influence tourist to visit.
10	Tourist arrival has positive impact on economic development of the region.

Recommendations

Kodagu is sanctified with natural flora and fauna which is mostly unexplored and therefore it holds a great tourism potential. As mentioned above most of the folks are engaged in manufacturing sustainable products like cane products and wine making. Sustainable resorts and home stays are built without harming nature and activities like bird watching, plantation walk, fishing, trekking, bee keeping and many more promote sustainability. Kodagu district is blessed with rich spices resource like coffee, cardamon, pepper tea along with Coorg honey and orange orchids. Kodagu tourism is often promoted in different social media platforms. International tourist especially tourist from ‘British Countries ‘visit often as British governed Kodagu for 113 years. Popular tourism events like Coorg carnival, flower show, exhibition in Raja seat and local festivals such as Kailpod, Puthari, Tula Sankaramana unique costume cuisine and jewelry needed to be promoted in different social media platforms. The district tourism department is making considerable efforts to promote sustainable tourism and tourism services on official website and social media.

In present era tourist hunt for more information through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube when compared to traditional media platforms. The findings of the study states that social media pages give more information regarding Kodagu tourism and Kodagu district tourism department in their official website provide QR codes for each tourist destinations where a traveler get every information of a particular spot with a simple scan.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL MEDIA IN TOURISM OF INDIA:

Social media has become an integral part of tourism marketing in India, with many government initiatives aimed at promoting the use of social media platforms to attract tourists. In this section, we will discuss some of the government’s initiatives and policies to promote the use of social media in tourism marketing in India.

Incredible India Facebook Page: The Ministry of Tourism launched the 'Incredible India' Face book page to promote tourism in India through social media. The page has over six million followers and showcases India's diverse tourism offerings, including historical sites, cultural heritage, wildlife, and adventure tourism. The page also shares information about events, festivals, and other attractions to encourage tourists to visit India.

Social Media Training Programs: The Ministry of Tourism has launched various training programs to develop skills in social media marketing among tourism professionals. For example, the ministry collaborated with the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) to offer a course on 'Digital Marketing in Tourism.' The course aims to enhance the digital marketing capabilities of tourism businesses to promote India as a tourist destination.

Digital India Campaign: The Digital India campaign is a government-led initiative aimed at promoting the use of digital technology in various sectors, including tourism. The campaign promotes the use of digital platforms such as social media, mobile applications, and websites to promote tourism and make travel easier for tourists. The campaign has led to the development of various digital initiatives, such as the e-visa facility, which allows foreign tourists to apply for a visa online.

Public-Private Partnership: The government has initiated public-private partnerships to promote social media in tourism marketing. For example, the Ministry of Tourism has collaborated with Google to create a 360-degree virtual tour of India's tourist destinations. This initiative aims to promote India as a tourist destination through immersive and interactive digital experiences.

Social Media Influencer Campaigns: The government has recognized the importance of social media influencers in promoting tourism in India. The Ministry of Tourism has partnered with various social media influencers to promote India as a tourist destination. For example, the ministry collaborated with famous Instagram influencers to promote lesser known tourist destinations in India. The influencers shared their experiences of visiting these destinations through their social media platforms, encouraging their followers to visit them too.

Online Campaigns: The government has launched various online campaigns to promote tourism in India. For example, the 'Dekho Apna Desh' campaign aims to promote domestic tourism in India by encouraging Indians to visit lesser-known tourist destinations. The campaign is promoted through social media platforms, and tourists are encouraged to share their experiences through social media using the hash tag Dekho Apna Desh.

Skill Development in Social Media Marketing: The Ministry of Tourism has also launched various training programs aimed at developing skills in social media marketing among tourism professionals. The initiative aims to enhance the digital marketing capabilities of tourism businesses, such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators, to promote India as a tourist destination.

CONCLUSION

The internet's growth over the years has caused a big change in how people around the world buy things. Tourism is an important business that brings in money and helps the local people be more independent and sustainable. Because of this, it needs an easy-to-reach strategic media tool for marketing. We can draw the conclusion from the study that actively promoting sustainable tourist sites on social media would make them more visible and easier for guests to get to. This study has taught us a lot about how to make tourism more sustainable in the chosen areas. The most important thing I learned was how social media use is connected to socially beneficial travel in economically poor areas. The two most important findings about views towards social goals were reducing poverty and giving women more power. It's also important to note that sustainable travel might not be the first choice for people who have never been on a trip before. So, if the idea of healthy tourism is promoted, it would work better to target people from the top and middle classes. In contrast to what was known before, the study suggests that older people use social media and the internet a lot. But this connection needs to be looked into more. The study found a number of different sustainable tourist goods that can be promoted and seen by as many people as possible on social media sites. Kodagu district tourism had a big presence on social media and websites marketing its different tourist goods, which is why it was picked for this study. As we've talked about, both old and new media are used to market sustainable tourism goods in Kodagu, such as temple tourism, handicrafts, and art, and especially for food products like wines. The above tourist goods have a huge chance to help make tourism in Kodagu district sustainable.

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