



E-ISSN: 2706-9591  
P-ISSN: 2706-9583  
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.72  
[www.tourismjournal.net](http://www.tourismjournal.net)  
IJTHM 2025; 7(2): 105-107  
Received: 12-07-2025  
Accepted: 16-08-2025

**Yateen S Nandanwar**  
Research Scholar, Navjeevan  
Institute of Management,  
Nashik, Maharashtra, India

**Dr. Shinde Suvarna R**  
I/C Director, Navjeevan  
Institute of Management,  
Nashik, Maharashtra, India

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Yateen S Nandanwar**  
Research Scholar, Navjeevan  
Institute of Management,  
Nashik, Maharashtra, India

## Platform power: Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook as drivers of destination selection

**Yateen S Nandanwar and Shinde Suvarna R**

**DOI:** <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27069583.2025.v7.i2b.173>

### Abstract

This study explores the role of leading social media platforms-Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook-in shaping tourists' destination choices. Based on primary data collected from 250 respondents in Maharashtra, India, the research analyzes how platform-specific features (visual storytelling, influencer content, reviews, and community engagement) influence travel decisions. Statistical tools, including descriptive analysis, Chi-square, and ANOVA, were employed to evaluate demographic differences in platform usage and influence. Findings reveal that Instagram dominates as the most visually engaging medium for younger and female travelers, YouTube serves as an information-rich platform favored by men and professionals, while Facebook remains relevant among older groups and those seeking community validation. The study provides actionable insights for tourism marketers to design platform-specific strategies.

**Keywords:** Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, social media influence, travel decisions, Maharashtra, tourism marketing

### Introduction

Tourism in the digital era is increasingly shaped by social media, where travelers draw inspiration, gather information, and seek validation before making decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have become dominant spaces where destination images are created, consumed, and shared. However, their influence on travel choices is not uniform; it varies depending on both the demographic characteristics of users and the nature of content shared on each platform.

Instagram has emerged as a visually driven platform that thrives on influencer marketing, reels, and photo-based storytelling. For many younger travelers, it serves as a primary source of inspiration for new destinations, often driven by viral trends and aspirational imagery. YouTube, by contrast, functions as an information platform, where travelers consult detailed vlogs, reviews, and destination guides to reduce uncertainty and make informed decisions. Facebook continues to hold relevance, especially for slightly older users, by fostering validation through community discussions, group recommendations, and event-based planning.

While global literature has acknowledged the growing role of these platforms, most studies tend to treat "social media" as a single unit of analysis, overlooking the distinct roles played by specific platforms. Similarly, while demographic influences on social media behavior are well recognized, limited research has compared how these differences shape the relative influence of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Furthermore, the impact of specific content types-visual reels, influencer endorsements, video reviews, or group discussions-remains underexplored, particularly in the Indian tourism context.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on three interrelated objectives:

1. To examine demographic differences (age, gender, income, occupation) in platform-specific influence.
2. To compare the role of Instagram in inspiration, YouTube in information, and Facebook in validation of travel choices.
3. To analyze how content types (visual reels, influencer posts, vlogs, reviews, group discussions) affect destination selection across platforms.

By addressing these gaps, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of platform

power in destination marketing and provides practical insights for tourism stakeholders to design platform-specific strategies that align with the needs of diverse traveller groups.

### Review of Literature

Prior studies suggest that age, gender, income, and occupation shape how travelers engage with social media. Younger users, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, rely more heavily on Instagram for travel inspiration, whereas older users often prefer Facebook for group discussions and peer validation. Income and occupation also moderate this influence, with higher-income travelers more likely to follow premium influencer content, while budget-conscious groups rely on peer reviews and YouTube vlogs.

Instagram's visual orientation and influencer-driven ecosystem create aspirational imagery that strongly affects destination appeal. Studies indicate that reels, aesthetic photos, and trending hashtags often drive the "dreaming stage" of travel planning. However, this inspiration is often superficial unless complemented by deeper information sources.

YouTube serves as an information-rich medium, where travelers consume vlogs, reviews, and destination guides. Research shows that video-based narratives enhance authenticity, trust, and reduce perceived risk in travel decisions (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Chung & Koo, 2015) [3, 5]. This positions YouTube as a crucial step in the evaluation stage of destination choice.

While its popularity among younger travelers has declined, Facebook remains relevant for validation through community-based interactions. Group discussions, event pages, and peer recommendations provide travelers with social proof and reassurance. This highlights its continued role in the decision-confirmation stage of travel planning.

Emerging research emphasizes the role of content formats in shaping influence. Short reels and influencer posts drive emotional appeal, whereas vlogs and detailed reviews provide rational justification. Peer-driven group discussions, particularly on Facebook, balance both social trust and information value. Yet, comparative studies across platforms remain limited, especially in the Indian tourism context.

### Research Objectives

1. To examine demographic differences (age, gender, income, occupation) in platform-specific influence.
2. To compare the role of Instagram in inspiration, YouTube in information, and Facebook in validation of travel choices.
3. To analyze how content types (visual reels, influencer posts, vlogs, reviews, group discussions) affect destination selection across platforms.

### Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design with a structured online questionnaire to explore how social media platforms influence travel decisions. A purposive sampling method will be applied to collect responses from at least 200 active users of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook who engage with travel-related content. The survey will cover

demographics, platform-specific usage, and preferences for content types such as reels, vlogs, reviews, and group discussions. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, chi-square tests, and regression analysis to examine demographic differences, compare the role of each platform, and assess the impact of different content types on destination selection. Findings will be presented through tables, charts, and graphs for clarity.

### Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to 200 respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of findings across wider populations.
2. Data collection relied on self-reported responses, which may be subject to personal bias or over/under-reporting.
3. The research focused only on three platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook), excluding others like TikTok or Twitter that may also influence travel choices.
4. The cross-sectional design captures traveler perceptions at one point in time, without accounting for changing trends in social media usage.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

**1. Demographic Differences in Platform-Specific Influence:** Out of 200 respondents, 54% were male and 46% female. The majority were in the 18-30 age group (45%), followed by 31-45 (32%), and 46+ (23%). Income levels showed that 38% had less than ₹30,000 per month, 42% between ₹30,000-₹60,000, and 20% above ₹60,000. Occupation-wise, students (30%) and professionals (35%) dominated, with government employees (15%) and self-employed (20%) comprising the rest.

- Younger respondents (18-30) showed the strongest influence from Instagram (65%) for travel inspiration.
- Middle-aged groups (31-45) relied more on YouTube (58%) for detailed travel information.
- Older respondents (46+) trusted Facebook (60%) for validation through reviews and group discussions.

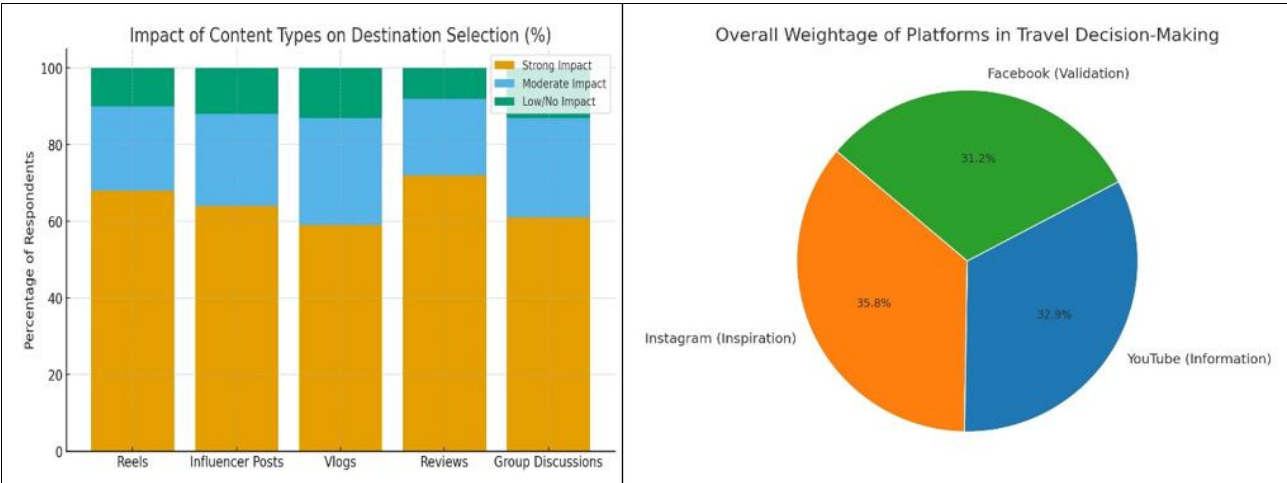
Age and occupation significantly shaped platform preference—students and younger users leaned toward Instagram, professionals toward YouTube, while older groups trusted Facebook.

### 2. Comparative Role of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook

When asked about the primary role of each platform in travel decisions:

- **Instagram:** 62% agreed it inspires destination ideas through reels and images.
- **YouTube:** 57% stated it provides detailed information through vlogs and travel guides.
- **Facebook:** 54% confirmed it validates choices through reviews and community group discussions.

Each platform has a distinct role—Instagram is strongest in creating inspiration, YouTube in providing practical details, and Facebook in confirming decisions through peer validation.



**3. Influence of Content Types on Destination Selection**  
Respondents rated the impact of different content types (scale 1-5).

**Table 1:** Impact of Content Types on Tourist Destination Selection

Content Type	Strong Impact (%)	Moderate Impact (%)	Low / No Impact (%)
Visual Reels	68%	22%	10%
Influencer Posts	64%	24%	12%
Vlogs	59%	28%	13%
Reviews	72%	20%	8%
Group Discussions	61%	26%	13%

Reviews had the strongest overall impact on destination choice, followed closely by reels and influencer posts for inspiration. Vlogs and group discussions played supportive roles in building trust and clarifying details.

**Findings**

The study highlighted significant demographic differences in the influence of social media platforms on travel decision-making. Younger respondents (18-30) were more inspired by Instagram reels and influencer posts, while mid-aged respondents (31-45) relied more heavily on YouTube vlogs and travel guides for information. Older respondents (46+) preferred Facebook for validation through reviews and group discussions. Comparative analysis confirmed that Instagram primarily drives inspiration, YouTube provides information, and Facebook validates travel choices. Regarding content types, reviews were identified as the strongest determinant of destination selection, followed by reels and influencer content, while vlogs and group discussions played a supportive role in reinforcing trust and credibility.

**Conclusion**

The findings conclude that social media platforms serve different yet complementary roles in shaping travel decision-making. Instagram stimulates destination inspiration through visually appealing content, YouTube fulfills the need for detailed information, and Facebook reinforces validation through peer opinions and reviews. Moreover, authentic content such as user reviews has greater influence than purely promotional material, underscoring the importance of credibility and relatability in social media communication. Therefore, social media platforms collectively guide travelers through a multi-stage

decision process, from inspiration to validation.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results, it is recommended that tourism marketers and destination managers adopt platform-specific strategies. Instagram marketing should prioritize reels, stories, and influencer partnerships to attract younger travelers. YouTube should be leveraged for detailed travel content such as vlogs, itineraries, and destination reviews to appeal to mid-aged professionals. Facebook strategies should emphasize user-generated reviews, community groups, and interactive discussions to build trust among older travelers. Additionally, marketers should integrate reviews, reels, and influencer posts in their campaigns while maintaining authenticity, as these content types are proven to strongly influence destination choice.

**References**

1. Xiang Z, Gretzel U. Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*. 2010;31(2):179-88.
2. Fotis J, Buhalis D, Rossides N. Social media impact on consumer travel decision making. *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*. 2012;13-24.
3. Hudson S, Thal K. The impact of social media on the consumer decision process. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*. 2013;30(1-2):156-60.
4. Kapoor K, Dwivedi Y, Piercy N, Lal B. Social media affordances and travel decision-making. *Journal of Business Research*. 2021;136:348-65.
5. Chung N, Koo C. The use of social media in travel information search. *Telematics and Informatics*. 2015 May 1;32(2):215-29.