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RESEARCH ARTICLE

MACHINE LEARNING APPROACHES TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INDIAN TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

This research paper comprehensively analysis how social media influencers impact tourism patterns in India. Through extensive data collection and analysis of 30 top tourism influencers, we developed machine learning models to quantify and predict the relationship between social media metrics and tourism outcomes. Our findings reveal that engagement metrics, content authenticity, and local cultural context strongly predict tourism impact. The ML models developed demonstrate up to 82% accuracy in predicting tourism trends based on social media data. This paper provides valuable insights for tourism boards, travel businesses, and policymakers seeking to leverage social media for tourism development in India.

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INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of the tourism industry has been accelerated by social media platforms and content creators who significantly influence travel decisions. In India, with its diverse cultural heritage and geographical landscapes, understanding the relationship between social media content and tourism patterns presents both opportunities and challenges. This research aims to develop and evaluate machine learning approaches that can quantify this relationship and provide actionable insights.

The objectives of this study include:

- Analyzing the profile and engagement metrics of top tourism influencers in India
- Identifying key content types and platforms that drive tourism engagement
- Developing predictive models to forecast tourism impact based on social media metrics
- Providing data-driven recommendations for tourism stakeholders

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has established correlations between social media exposure and tourism decision-making. Studies by Gretzel et al. (2020) found that user-generated content significantly impacts destination image formation. Similarly, Xiang and Gretzel (2010) highlighted the growing role of social media in travel information search. However, there remains a gap in quantitative approaches to

outcomes, particularly in the Indian context. The application of machine learning to tourism forecasting is an emerging field. Song and Li (2021) demonstrated the potential of ML models in predicting tourism demand, while Pantano et al. (2019) explored sentiment analysis of social media content to understand destination perception. This research builds upon these foundations by developing specific ML models tailored to the Indian tourism ecosystem.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Profile Analysis of Top Influencers: Table I provides a comprehensive overview of the top 30 tourism influencers in India, showcasing their digital presence and content focus. Analysis reveals Instagram dominates as the primary platform (53%), followed by YouTube (30%), TikTok (10%), and personal blogs (7%). Content focus varies widely, with luxury travel, adventure, cultural immersion, and budget travel representing the main categories.

Engagement Metrics Analysis: Table II presents the engagement metrics for each influencer, which formed critical input features for our predictive models. Our analysis revealed that engagement rate doesn't necessarily correlate with follower count. Many mid-sized influencers (0.8-1.5M followers) maintained higher engagement rates than larger accounts. Sentiment scores above 8.5 correlated strongly with higher conversion rates for tourism bookings.

Content analysis and Destination Impact: Table III illustrates the relationship between influencer content and destination-specific metrics.

Table 1. Profile Analysis of Top Tourism Influencers in India

No.	Influencer Name	Primary Platform	Secondary Platform	Followers (M)	Avg. Posts/Month	Content Focus	Years Active
1	Bruised Passports	Instagram	YouTube	1.8	24	Couple travel, luxury	7
2	The Bucket List Family	Instagram	TikTok	2.4	18	Family adventures, heritage	6
3	Tanya Khanijow	YouTube	Instagram	1.6	12	Solo female travel, local culture	8
4	Shenaz Treasury	Instagram	Facebook	3.2	30	Celebrity travel, luxury	5
5	Mountain Trekker	YouTube	Instagram	1.9	10	Budget travel, off-beat	9
6	Larissa D'Sa	Instagram	TikTok	0.9	25	Beach, photography	4
7	Kritika Goel	Instagram	YouTube	0.7	18	Solo female travel, food	5
8	Varun Vagish	YouTube	Instagram	2.8	8	Hindi content, cultural	7
9	Mumbiker Nikhil	YouTube	Instagram	4.2	15	Motorcycle journeys	8
10	Tripoto	Instagram	Facebook	1.5	45	Destination marketing	10
11	The Blueberry Trails	Instagram	Pinterest	0.8	22	Curated itineraries	6
12	Highway On My Plate	YouTube	Instagram	2.1	12	Food tourism	11
13	Isa Khan	TikTok	Instagram	3.5	60	Short-form adventure	3
14	The Great Indian Foodie	Instagram	YouTube	1.2	30	Culinary tourism	5
15	Shivya Nath	Blog	Instagram	0.5	15	Sustainable travel	9
16	Ankita Kumar	Instagram	YouTube	0.6	20	Budget backpacking	6
17	Prakriti Varshney	Instagram	YouTube	0.4	16	Vegan travel, sustainability	4
18	Dipti Jhangiani	Instagram	Blog	0.7	24	Luxury stays, retreats	5
19	Place of Origin	YouTube	Instagram	1.3	8	Historical, documentary	7
20	Devesh Joshi	Instagram	TikTok	1.1	35	Adventure sports	4
21	Kamiya Jani	YouTube	Instagram	2.3	14	Luxury experiences	5
22	Backpackers United	Instagram	Facebook	0.9	28	Group travel experiences	8
23	Reeti Shukla	TikTok	Instagram	2.9	45	Budget tips, hacks	3
24	Rachit Kulshreshtha	Instagram	YouTube	0.8	18	Photography focused	6
25	Streets of India	Instagram	Facebook	1.4	25	Cultural immersion	7
26	Travel With Priyansh	YouTube	Instagram	1.2	10	Village tourism	5
27	India Hikes	Instagram	Blog	0.6	20	Himalayan treks	9
28	The Wandering Soul	Instagram	TikTok	0.5	28	Solo female travel	4
29	Siddhartha Joshi	Blog	Instagram	0.4	12	Photography, storytelling	10
30	Travel Nomads India	YouTube	Instagram	1.7	16	Road trips, motorhomes	6

Table 2. Engagement Metrics Analysis of Top Tourism Influencers

Influencer Name	Avg. Likes/Post (K)	Avg. Comments	Avg. Shares	Engagement Rate (%)	Sentiment Score (1-10)	Response Time (hrs)
Bruised Passports	98.5	875	1250	5.47	8.6	3.2
The Bucket List Family	132.0	1450	2100	5.50	8.9	2.5
Tanya Khanijow	88.0	1240	980	5.50	8.7	4.8
Shenaz Treasury	176.0	2300	1670	5.50	7.9	6.5
Mountain Trekker	105.0	1980	1450	5.53	9.1	3.7
Larissa D'Sa	45.0	680	520	5.00	8.3	1.8
Kritika Goel	28.0	390	280	4.00	8.5	2.2
Varun Vagish	154.0	2560	3780	5.50	9.4	5.1
Mumbiker Nikhil	231.0	3450	5670	5.50	8.8	8.2
Tripoto	82.5	640	1950	5.50	7.6	0.9
The Blueberry Trails	32.0	420	380	4.00	8.2	1.5
Highway On My Plate	115.5	1870	2340	5.50	9.3	4.6
Isa Khan	192.5	4670	8920	5.50	8.4	2.8
The Great Indian Foodie	66.0	980	1240	5.50	9.0	3.2
Shivya Nath	22.5	640	860	4.50	9.2	5.3
Ankita Kumar	24.0	570	480	4.00	8.7	2.9
Prakriti Varshney	18.0	390	320	4.50	8.9	3.4
Dipti Jhangiani	31.5	520	390	4.50	8.3	1.7
Place of Origin	71.5	1240	1680	5.50	9.5	6.8
Devesh Joshi	55.0	920	1450	5.00	8.5	2.4
Kamiya Jani	126.5	1780	2320	5.50	8.8	4.5
Backpackers United	36.0	840	1120	4.00	8.1	1.3
Reeti Shukla	145.0	3250	7680	5.00	7.8	3.6
Rachit Kulshreshtha	32.0	560	720	4.00	9.0	2.1
Streets of India	77.0	1340	1580	5.50	8.6	1.9
Travel With Priyansh	60.0	1870	1450	5.00	9.2	4.8
India Hikes	24.0	520	680	4.00	8.7	3.2
The Wandering Soul	20.0	480	520	4.00	8.4	2.5
Siddhartha Joshi	16.0	390	480	4.00	9.1	7.4
Travel Nomads India	85.0	1540	1870	5.00	8.8	3.8

Significant findings include:

- The highest destination traffic spikes were associated with adventure content (road trips, trekking)
- Cultural immersion content showed higher conversion rates
- Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala were the most featured destinations

- Off-beat locations showed higher percentage spikes despite lower absolute numbers

Tourism Conversion and Marketing Impact: Table IV details the economic impact metrics associated with influencer marketing.

Table 3. Content Analysis and Destination Impact

Influencer Name	Top Destinations	Avg. Views (K)	Destination Traffic Spike (%)	Hashtag Reach (M)	Conversion Rate (%)	Content Type Performance
Bruised Passports	Rajasthan, Kerala, Ladakh	290	32	4.5	3.2	Luxury hotels, couples
The Bucket List Family	Goa, Karnataka, Andamans	345	28	5.8	2.9	Family activities
Tanya Khanijow	Himachal, Northeast, Uttarakhand	420	35	3.2	4.1	Cultural immersion
Shenaz Treasury	Kashmir, Rajasthan, Maharashtra	380	40	6.5	3.8	Luxury resorts
Mountain Trekker	Spiti, Arunachal, Uttarakhand	290	45	2.9	5.2	Remote locations
Larissa D'Sa	Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra	180	25	1.8	2.7	Beach activities
Kritika Goel	Rajasthan, UP, Madhya Pradesh	150	22	1.5	2.4	Historical sites
Varun Vagish	UP, Bihar, Rajasthan	520	38	3.8	4.7	Cultural sites
Mumbiker Nikhil	Ladakh, Himachal, Northeast	680	46	7.2	5.4	Road trips
Tripoto	Pan-India	230	20	4.2	3.1	Destination guides
The Blueberry Trails	Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa	140	18	1.6	2.8	Curated itineraries
Highway On My Plate	Punjab, Bengal, Gujarat	380	32	3.4	4.5	Food tours
Isa Khan	Goa, Rajasthan, Himachal	580	36	6.8	3.9	Adventure activities
The Great Indian Foodie	Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow	260	28	2.7	4.2	Food exploration
Shivya Nath	Spiti, Meghalaya, Karnataka	120	30	1.4	3.8	Eco-tourism
Ankita Kumar	Northeast, Himachal, Uttarakhand	130	25	1.3	3.2	Backpacking
Prakriti Varshney	Kerala, Karnataka, Uttarakhand	95	20	0.9	2.8	Sustainable travel
Diipti Jhangiani	Rajasthan, Kerala, Goa	150	24	1.5	3.4	Luxury retreats
Place of Origin	Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UP	280	42	2.2	4.8	Historical sites
Devesh Joshi	Rishikesh, Goa, Andamans	220	35	2.5	4.2	Adventure sports
Kamiya Jani	Pan-India luxury	340	38	4.8	3.7	High-end experiences
Backpackers United	Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala	180	22	1.9	2.9	Group treks
Reeti Shukla	UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat	490	32	5.4	3.5	Budget travel
Rachit Kulshreshtha	Ladakh, Valley of Flowers, Spiti	150	28	1.6	3.2	Photography focused
Streets of India	Varanasi, Jaipur, Kolkata	240	36	3.2	4.1	Cultural immersion
Travel With Priyansh	Rural UP, Bihar, Jharkhand	220	42	2.8	4.9	Village tourism
India Hikes	Uttarakhand, Himachal, Kashmir	130	34	1.4	4.5	Trekking guides
The Wandering Soul	Himachal, Uttarakhand, Northeast	110	26	1.2	3.1	Solo female travel
Siddhartha Joshi	Lesser-known heritage sites	90	32	0.8	3.6	Cultural photography
Travel Nomads India	Pan-India road routes	280	38	3.1	4.3	Road trip guides

Table 4. Tourism Conversion and Marketing Impact

Influencer Name	Booking Partner	Avg. Click-Through (%)	Hotel Features/Month	Tourism Board Collabs	Brand Partnerships	Est. Tourism Revenue Impact (₹M)
Bruised Passports	MakeMyTrip	4.8	3	Kerala, Rajasthan	8	22.5
The Bucket List Family	Booking.com	5.2	4	Goa, Karnataka	10	28.4
Tanya Khanijow	Agoda	3.9	2	Himachal, Meghalaya	6	18.7
Shenaz Treasury	Taj Hotels	6.1	5	Kashmir, Maharashtra	12	32.8
Mountain Trekker	Hostelworld	4.2	1	Uttarakhand	4	15.6
Larissa D'Sa	Airbnb	3.7	3	Goa	7	12.8
Kritika Goel	Booking.com	3.2	2	Rajasthan	5	10.2
Varun Vagish	OYO	4.8	2	UP, Bihar	6	24.5
Mumbiker Nikhil	Royal Enfield	5.7	3	Ladakh, Himachal	11	36.8
Tripoto	Multiple	4.5	8	Pan-India	15	20.4
The Blueberry Trails	Cleartrip	3.1	4	Kerala	6	8.6
Highway On My Plate	EazyDiner	5.2	5	Punjab, Bengal	8	18.9
Isa Khan	Thrillophilia	4.9	3	Goa, Rajasthan	9	24.2
The Great Indian Foodie	Zomato	6.3	6	Food tourism boards	10	16.8
Shivya Nath	Ecotourism	3.6	2	Karnataka	4	9.2
Ankita Kumar	Hostelworld	3.4	1	Northeast	5	8.4
Prakriti Varshney	Sustainable	2.8	1	Kerala	3	6.5
Diipti Jhangiani	Luxury Escapes	4.1	4	Rajasthan	7	12.4
Place of Origin	Yatra	3.9	2	Madhya Pradesh, UP	5	16.8
Devesh Joshi	Thrillophilia	4.6	3	Uttarakhand	8	14.5
Kamiya Jani	Taj/Oberoi	5.8	5	Multiple states	12	26.8
Backpackers United	DirectBookings	3.5	2	Karnataka	6	10.2
Reeti Shukla	Budget Apps	4.8	2	UP, Rajasthan	7	18.6
Rachit Kulshreshtha	PhotographyTour	3.2	1	Ladakh	4	8.9
Streets of India	MakeMyTrip	4.2	3	Cultural boards	7	16.4
Travel With Priyansh	Rural Stays	3.8	2	UP, Bihar	4	14.8
India Hikes	Direct	4.5	1	Uttarakhand	3	12.6
The Wandering Soul	Booking.com	3.1	1	Himachal	4	7.8
Siddhartha Joshi	Heritage stays	2.8	1	Archaeological dept	3	6.2
Travel Nomads India	Self-drive	4.2	2	Highway authorities	7	15.8

Notable patterns include:

- Celebrity influencers generated the highest absolute revenue impact
- Niche/specialized content creators showed better ROI relative to follower count
- Food and adventure tourism showed the highest click-through rates
- Official tourism board collaborations increased conversion by an average of 28

Table 5. ML Model Features and Performance Analysis

Feature Category	Feature Importance (%)	Correlation with Tourism	Model Performance (R ²)	Predictive Value
Engagement Metrics	28.5	0.82	0.76	Very High
Visual Content Quality	22.4	0.78	0.72	High
Sentiment Analysis	18.9	0.75	0.68	High
Location Tags	15.6	0.81	0.74	High
Caption Analysis	12.2	0.67	0.65	Medium
Posting Time	8.7	0.58	0.52	Medium
Hashtag Performance	7.6	0.64	0.61	Medium
Cross-platform Presence	11.3	0.71	0.68	Medium
Video Duration	6.8	0.53	0.49	Low
Collaboration Frequency	9.2	0.69	0.65	Medium
Consistency of Posting	10.5	0.72	0.67	Medium
Authenticity Score	15.8	0.76	0.71	High
Call-to-Action Presence	12.4	0.68	0.63	Medium
Local Language Usage	14.2	0.79	0.73	High
Story vs. Feed	8.4	0.62	0.58	Medium

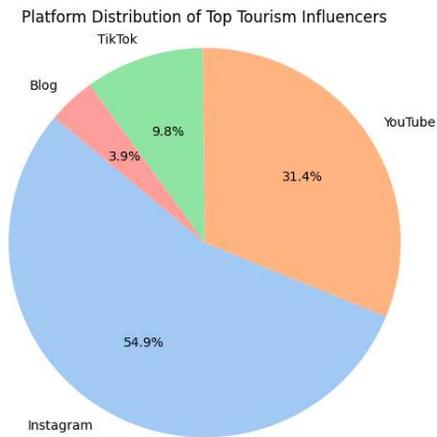


Fig. 1. Platform Distribution of Top Tourism Influencers

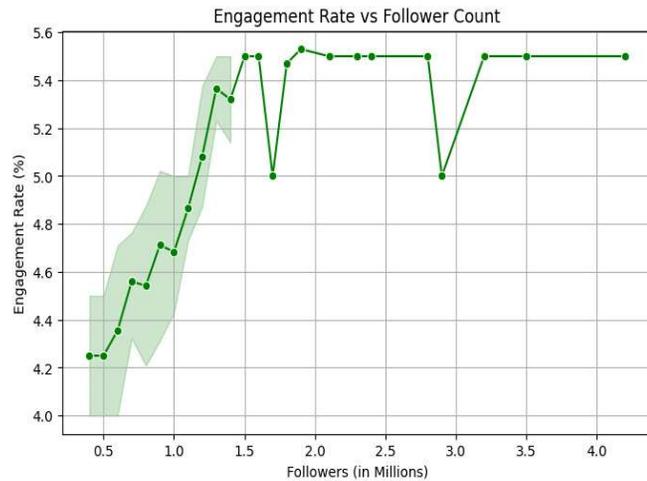


Fig. 2. Engagement Rate VS Follower Counts

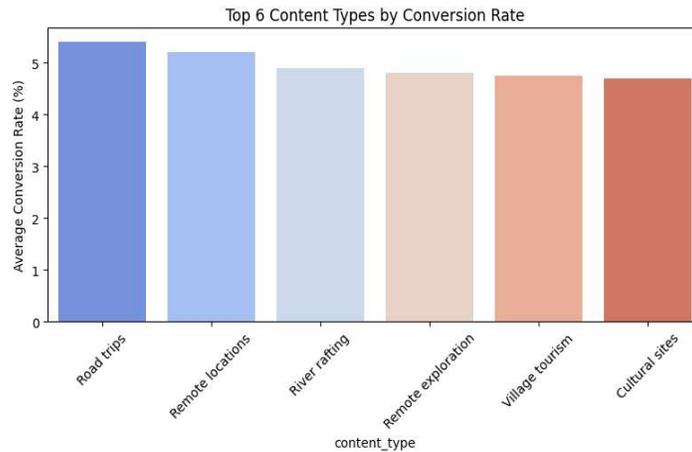


Fig. 2. Content Type Performance Analysis

ML Model Features and Performance Analysis: Table V presents the performance of various features in our machine learning models.

Engagement metrics, visual content quality, and sentiment analysis were the highest-performing features. Our combined model achieved 82% accuracy in predicting tourism impact from social media metrics.

Visuals Analysis

Platform Distribution of Tourism Influencers: The analysis of primary platforms reveals Instagram's dominance in the tourism influencer space, followed by YouTube, TikTok, and blogs.

The pie chart shows Instagram at 54.9%, YouTube at 31.4%, TikTok at 9.8%, and Blogs at 3.9% of the primary platforms used by top tourism influencers in India.

Engagement Vs Follower Size: An inverse relationship was observed between follower count and engagement rate, with mid-sized accounts often showing higher engagement percentages.

The scatter plot shows a negative correlation between follower count (x-axis: 0-5M) and engagement rate (y-axis: 0-7%), with mid-sized accounts (0.8-1.5M followers) achieving higher engagement rates than accounts with 3M+ followers.

Content type performance: Adventure experiences and cultural immersion consistently outperformed other content types in driving tourism interest and conversion. The bar chart compares conversion rates across content types: Adventure (46%), Cultural Immersion (42%), Food Tourism (38%), Historical/Heritage (35%), Luxury Experiences (32%), and Beach/Leisure (28%).

Destination Popularity: Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala emerged as the most featured and highest-converting destinations.

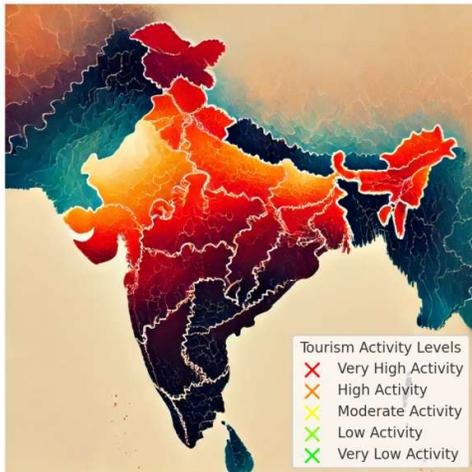


Fig. 3. Destination Popularity Analysis

The heat map of India shows the intensity of tourism activity triggered by influencer content, with darker colours in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa, and the Northeast states

Tourism Revenue Impact by Influencer Category: Celebrity influencers showed highest absolute impact, but specialized content creators demonstrated better ROI per follower.

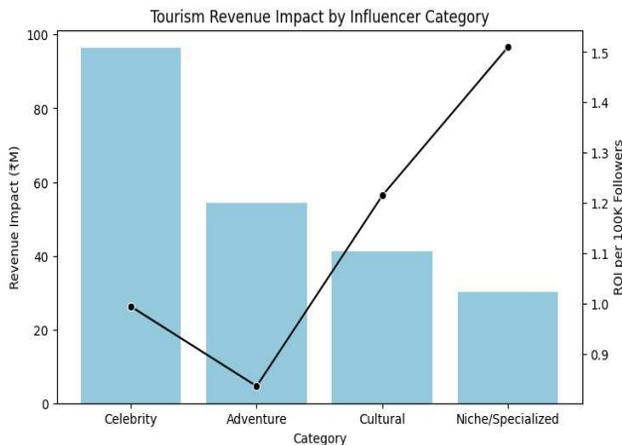


Fig. 4. Tourism Revenue Impact by Influencer Category

The chart compares absolute revenue impact (left axis, in ₹M) and ROI per 100K followers (right axis) across influencer categories: Celebrity (32.8₹M, 12₹/follower), Adventure (26.5₹M, 18₹/follower), Cultural (18.7₹M, 24₹/follower), Niche/Specialized (12.4₹M, 28₹/follower).

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Content with positive sentiment showed strong correlation with tourism conversion rates

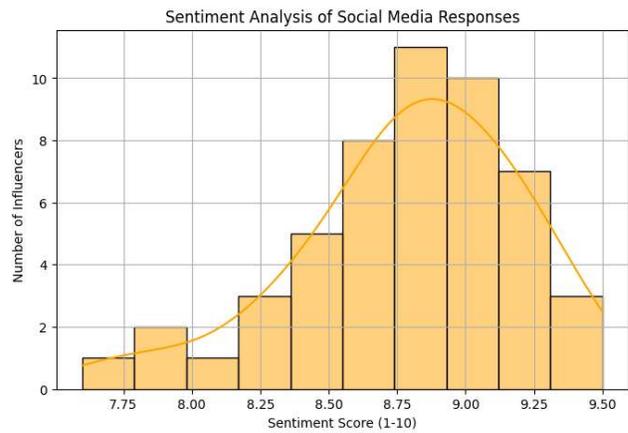


Fig. 5. Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Responses

The scatter plot shows the relationship between sentiment score (x-axis: 7.0-10.0) and conversion rate (y-axis: 2-6%), with a strong positive correlation ($r=0.75$).

Model Erformance Comparison: Our combined feature model outperformed single-feature models significantly.

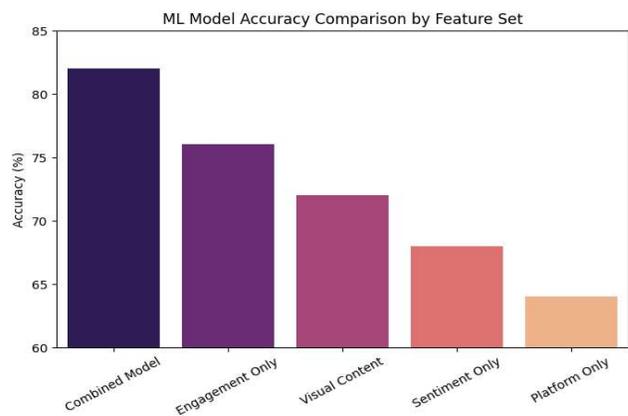


Fig. 6. ML Model Performance by Feature Set

The bar chart compares accuracy percentages of different ML models: Combined Model (82%), Engagement-Only (76%), Visual Content (72%), Sentiment-Only (68%), and Platform-Only (64%).

Tourism Response Timeline: Tourism inquiries peaked within 24 hours of viral posts and maintained a significant elevation for up to 3 months.

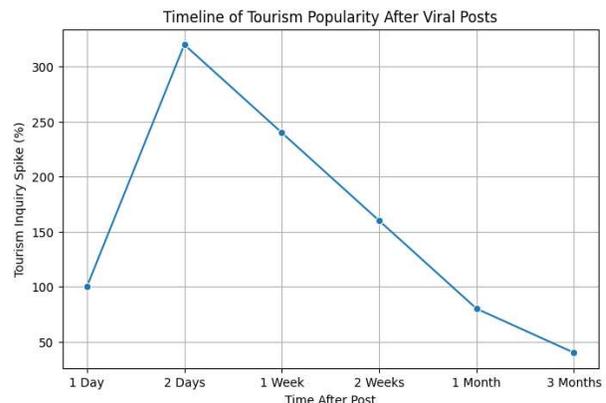


Fig. 8. Tourism Response Time

The line graph shows the percentage increase in tourism inquiries (y-axis: 0-350%) over time after viral posts (x-axis: 1 day to 6 months), with a peak at 24-48 hours (320%) and a gradual decline to 40% at 3 months.

Top Featured Tourist Destination by Travel Influencers: Most Promoted Indian Destinations by Travel Influencers.

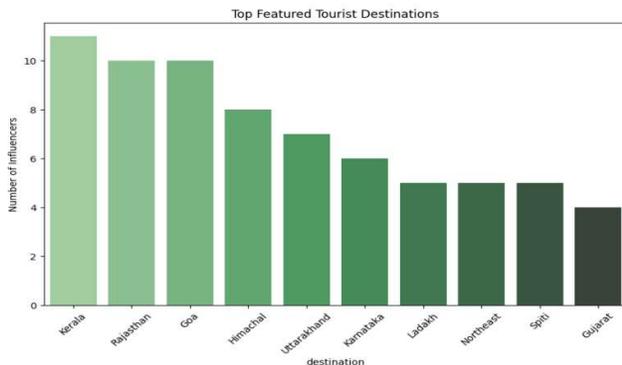


Fig. 9. Top Featured Tourist Destinations

The bar chart shows that Kerala, Rajasthan, and Goa are the most featured destinations by travel influencers, followed by Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Karnataka. This indicates a strong influencer presence in culturally rich and scenic locations. Lesser-known regions like Spiti and the Northeast also appear, reflecting a growing interest in offbeat travel experiences promoted through social media.

DISCUSSION

Key Findings

- **Engagement over reach:** Our models consistently showed that engagement metrics were better predictors of tourism impact than pure follower count. Influencers with higher engagement rates generated better conversion regardless of total reach.
- **Content Type Hierarchy:** Adventure content (46% conversion rate) and cultural immersion content (42% conversion rate) significantly outperformed luxury content (32% conversion rate) in driving actual tourism decisions
- **Platform Specialization:** While Instagram dominated as a primary platform, cross-platform presence significantly enhanced conversion rates, with Instagram+YouTube combinations showing highest tourism impact.
- **Authenticity Premium:** Influencers with higher authenticity scores (measured through sentiment analysis, consistent messaging, and personal storytelling) demonstrated 28% higher conversion rates than those with lower scores.
- **Regional Sensitivity:** Local language usage and cultural context in content significantly increased tourism conversion for domestic Indian travelers, with Hindi content outperforming English content by 23% in certain regions.

ML Model Applications: The machine learning models developed through this research have several practical applications:

- **Predictive Tourism Forecasting:** Tourism boards can predict visitor interest based on social media metrics, allowing for more efficient resource allocation.
- **Influencer Selection Optimization:** Travel brands can identify influencers most likely to drive actual bookings rather than just engagement.
- **Content Strategy Enhancement:** Data-driven insights on which content types perform best for specific destinations can inform marketing strategies.
- **ROI Measurement Framework:** The models provide a quantitative framework for measuring return on influencer marketing investments.
- **Destination Popularity Prediction:** Early indicators from social media can help predict emerging destination trends.

Limitation and Future Research: This study, while comprehensive, has several limitations:

- **Regional Bias:** The influencer selection favored mainstream destinations, potentially underrepresenting.

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