



## INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VISITOR PERCEPTION IN AGODI GARDEN IBADAN, OYO STATE

**Olakunle Shakur, OLAWUYI (Ph.D.) and Mercy, UKPAI**  
**Tourism Studies, Osun State University,**  
**Osun State, Nigeria.**

**E-mail: [olakunle.olawuyi@uniosun.edu.ng](mailto:olakunle.olawuyi@uniosun.edu.ng),**  
**ORCID: 0000-0002-1800-6182,**

### **Abstract**

Social media applications are internet driven applications that allow people in different locations to connect with each other and share information amongst themselves. This century has experienced the innovation and development of different social media applications. They are engaged by different demographics for different reasons such as leisure, news, professional connection, social connection and so on. Common social media applications include facebook, 'X' formerly called twitter, Instagram amongst others. Agodi gardens is situated very close to Oyo State Secretariat's complex. The sample size for this study is 270 respondents as determined using cochran's formula. Therefore, questionnaire was administered to two hundred and seventy (270) respondents based on convenience sampling approach. Collected questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation). This study examined the influence of social media on visitor's perception at Agodi gardens, Ibadan. The objectives engaged were; examine type of social media used by the tourists and examine the information about Agodi garden retrieved by the tourists via social media. It is evident that prospective tourists collect impressive information about Agodi gardens from social media applications, specifically, facebook, Instagram, snapchat and 'X' formerly called twitter. There is therefore no doubt that social media has been significantly helpful to Agodi gardens, especially with respect to the fact that it has helped to provide information about tourist inflow to Agodi Gardens and it has helped in providing pertinent information about the facilities at the gardens to prospective tourists.

**Keywords: Facebook, Instagram, Tourists perception, Agodi gardens and Social media.**



## Background to the study

The tourism sector has experienced extraordinary growth in the recent time, thereby, leading to the transformation of different destinations to vibrant centres of economic prosperity as well as cultural exchange. The economic prosperity component of the importance of the tourism industry depicts wealth creation and distribution for people working in or living around tourism destinations. Any destination witnessing economic prosperity consequent upon tourism activities implies that such destination will have concurrent high number of visitors/tourists arrivals. Tourists form the integral component of tourism ecological build-up, because tourists preferences as well as perceptions impact the sustainable development and successes of such destination (Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides, 2021). Therefore, a tourism destination is expected to have a mechanism in place that will harvest the perception of tourist about the specific destination, so as to determine if improvement is necessary by the management of such organization.

Social media applications have been engaged by different individuals and business entities for different purposes in this digital era. Social media has undergone a transformative evolution in the 21st century, becoming an indispensable facet of contemporary society. The internet, social media, mobile applications as well as other digital platforms are not part of regular lifestyle of several billions of people in the world (Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Hughes, Carlson, Filieri, Jacobson, Jain, Karjaluoto, Kefi, Krishen, Kumar, Rahman, Raman, Rauschnabel, Rowley, Salo, Tran, and Wang, 2021). These importance of social media can also be engaged by tourism organizations in order to make service rendering and delivery better. It is notable that in this digital age, the advent of social media has revolutionized the way visitors engage with and perceive tourist destinations (Hossain, Al- Amin, Mani, Islam, Poli and Milon, 2024). Visitors can inquire and transact with tourism organizations easily with the aid of social media and tourism organizations can also easily retrieve customer feedbacks through social media applications. Social media has empowered visitors to document experiences, share recommendations, and interact with both fellow travelers and destination management organizations (Hussain, Alam, Malik, Tarhini, and Al Balushi, 2024). Tourists can share the experiences that they got from a tourism organization to people in different parts of the world through content creation on social media apps. Hossain et al. (2024) noted the pivotal role of social media apps, describing them as platforms enabling users to create and share content, fostering a sense of virtual interconnectedness. Afren (2024) opined that social media apps are dynamic platforms that allow people to actively engage with travel-related contents, share experiences, recommendations, as well as aspirations.

Some studies have been conducted by different scholars, for instance, Kim, Lee, Shin, and Yang, (2017) examined the transformative effect of social media on the information-seeking and decision-making processes of tourists; Lee (2020) examined the significance of online reviews and social media content in the realm of tourism management; Agyapong (2020) carried out research on social media impact on tourism destination; Sanjoy and Tanvir (2023)



carried out research on impact of social media on tourist decision making process; Afren (2024) examined the role of digital marketing promoting tourism business. A study of use of the social media in prompting travel, amongst other studies. It is therefore, pertinent to examine the visitors' perception of tourism destination as a result of their usage of social media, because, the intersection of social media and tourism is particularly relevant in the context of leisure destinations like Agodi Garden in Ibadan, Oyo State.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Concept of Social Media**

Social media has essentially transformed how human beings interact, communicate and disseminate information throughout the globe. It has shown a high transformative importance with respect to different human endeavors and engagements such as academics, shopping, businesses and so on (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Social media is made up of a wide range of internet-based software applications, social networking sites as well as platforms capable of enabling people to connect, communicate information about their profession and lives to one another (Hussain et al., 2024; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Mass media engaged for social connectivity could be referred to as social media (Afren, 2024). Its characteristics essentially revolve around the integration of social interaction, technology, as well as content creations, inclusive of channels such as online chat forums, social interaction and technologies. It is characterized by 'pro-consumerism' which is underscored by its interactive as well as networked attributes that allow users to consume and produce information at the same time (Grover et al., 2022).

Shaikh (2024) noted that in the era preceding the usage of social media socialization with people usually involved strategic planning as well as parental consultations, so as to ensure that only reliable friends were made and kept. The advent of digital technologies has significantly transformed the different activities of human beings from individualized decision making to organized methods (Hussain et al., 2024).

As time progressed from mid to late 90s, at a slow pace the traditional and conventional media outlets got replaced with social media outlets (Hang, 2024). One of the earliest platforms is Six Degrees, established in 1997 and shut down in 2001, subsequently, Friendster and MySpace were created in 2002 and 2003 respectively, Hi5 was created in 2003, Google's Orkut in 2004 and Facebook in 2004 (Shaikh, 2024). Afterwards, other notable user-friendly platforms have been created such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Wechat, Tiktok, amongst others. It is worthy of note that these platforms are essentially used for establishing and entrenching different types of communication, for instance, some are strictly for professional communication, while, some are essentially for friendly communication.

### **Social Media and Tourism**

Social media has been used for developing and better projecting different business endeavors. Martins, Martins, and Morais, (2025) opined that social media has led to the revolution of the operations and interactions of customers with organizations. It has been used by prospective tourists, tourists and tourism managers to meet their respective needs. Social media



applications have been engaged by tourist to make appropriate travel decisions. Contemporary researches show that social media platforms like Instagram, have positive impacts in shaping attitudinal perceptions of customers in making travel choices (Agung-Sudarmanto, 2023). Kristanto, Listyorini, and Ngatno, (2021) opined that social media could have positive effects on travel plans, specifically at challenging periods like pandemic. The information on social media applications could be used to either endear tourists or repel tourists from visiting tourism destinations. After a tourist has visited a tourism destination, perceptions and review of such tourist may be sent to the social media for prospective tourists to take a cue from. Kim et al. (2017) asserted that tourists have the ability of sharing their vacation experiences via social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube. This can form the basis upon which other prospective tourists may make their travel choices. Tourists in this contemporary era have the tendency of increasingly turning to social media as a fundamental source of information, thereby, sporadically, leading to changes in travel behavioral dispositions as well as decision making methods (Bu, Parkinson, & Thaichon, 2021). In this contemporary era a lot of people resort to social media to pick up advice and guides on their life choices, inclusive of tourism choices. In recent times, tourists' select a destination usually based on the advices of friends and families that they pick online (Berhanu and Raj, 2020). Martins et al. (2025) noted that the usage of social media as a tool in the travel and tourism industry has developed substantively, therefore having influence on tourists' options of vacation sites.

Tourism destinations can engage social media platforms to sensitize prospective tourists about their tourism offerings and intimate customers with their new offerings. Social media makes available one of the most important aspects of tourism destinations to create alertness for both prospective and targeted consumers (Berhanu and Raj, 2020). Dwivedi et al. (2019) noted that social media platforms give room for tourism businesses and brands to promote their attractions as well as influence opinions, consciousness and ideas in digitalized environments characterized with the intentions of customers being driven by the perceptions of their contemporaries. Rashideh (2020) opined that the tourism sector has successfully merged economy, technology and knowledge together, therefore, customers have better unfiltered access. Apart from sensitization of prospective tourists, social media platforms can also be engaged by prospective tourists to making bookings and reservations at a tourism destination. Martins et al. (2025) asserted that the influence of technology and social media on the tourism industry is deep, with the capacity to transform how tourists' book and experience travels as well as the operation of tourism organizations.

## **Methodology**

Ojo, Ajayi, and Majebi, (2017) noted that Agodi Gardens was established in 1967 to be a major recreation facility, it was initially referred to as Agodi Zoological. Agodi Gardens is sited in Ibadan town, Oyo State, Nigeria. It is situated very close to Oyo State secretariat, hence, it easy to access from any part of Ibadan. It essentially consists of different fascinating leisure facilities for instance, swimming pool, paint-ball game, horse riding, beautiful garden, virtual game section, amongst others. Omisore and Fagbemi (2020) asserted that the different facilities have enhanced general visitors' experiences, hence, Agodi Gardens is a recreational destination of

great value. It is notable that Agodi gardens got facelifted in recently. Helen and Praise (2020) opined that the facelift of Agodi gardens has substantively enhanced visitors' arrivals, which highlights the value of continuously investing in the maintenance and improvement of tourism destinations. For this study on the influence of social media on visitor perception of Agodi Garden, the sample size for this study is 270 respondents as determined using Cochran's formula for the sample size determination ( $N = z^2pq/e^2$ ). Respondents were selected using convenience sampling approach. The research instruments administered were questionnaires. Filled-out questionnaires were retrieved from on the spot from respondents. Collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically, frequency, percentage, mean and deviation.

1. Examine type of social media used by the tourists.
2. Examine the information about Agodi garden retrieved by the tourists via social media.

### Data Analysis

**Table 1: Responses of Respondents on types of social media**

Item	SA	A	D	SD
Tourist primarily use facebook to find information about Agodi gardens	46(17%)	123(45.3%)	92(34.1%)	9(3.3%)
Tourist use instagram to find information about agodi gardens	64(23.7%)	74(27.4%)	104(38.5%)	28(10.4%)
Tourist use snapchat to find information about Agod Gardens.	89(33%)	92(34.1%)	62(23%)	27(10%)
Tourists use X to find information about Agodi gardens	85(31.5%)	69(25.6%)	88(32.6%)	28(10.4%)
Tourists use telegram to find information about agodi gardens	-	31(11.5%)	106(39.3%)	133(49.3%)
Tourists use whatsapp to find information about Agodi gardens.	46(17%)	45(16.7%)	89(33%)	90(33.3%)
Tourists use tiktok to find information about Agodi gardens		7(2.6%)	138(51.1%)	125(46.3%)

**Source: Author Field Survey, 2024**

The table above shows that 46 respondents strongly agreed and 123 agreed that that tourists primarily use Facebook to find information about Agodi Gardens. 74 respondents agreed and 104 disagreed that tourists primarily use Instagram to find information about Agodi Gardens. 89 respondents strongly agreed and 92 respondents agreed that tourists primarily use Snapchat to find information about Agodi Gardens. 85 respondents strongly agreed and 69 agreed that tourists primarily use X to find information about Agodi Gardens. 106 respondents disagreed and 133 strongly disagreed that tourists primarily use Telegram to find information about Agodi Gardens. 89 respondents disagreed and 90 respondents strongly disagreed that tourists primarily use WhatsApp to find information about Agodi Gardens. 138 respondents disagreed and 125 respondents strongly disagreed that tourists primarily use TikTok to find information about Agodi Gardens.



**Table 2: Responses of Respondents about the Information that Tourists retrieved from social media about Agodi Gardens**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Rank
Social media provides information about tourists in flow at Agodi gardens	138(51.1%)	125(46.3%)	7(2.6%)	-	1.60	0.51	5 <sup>th</sup>
Social media provides information about facilities at Agodi gardens	103(38.1%)	69(25.6%)	98(36.3%)	-	1.40	0.51	7 <sup>th</sup>
Social media provides information about different events done at Agodi gardens.	91(33.7%)	81(30%)	98(36.3%)	-	1.80	0.41	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Social media provides information about the employees of Agodi gardens.	138(51.1%)	100(37%)	32(11.9%)	-	2.40	0.83	1 <sup>st</sup>
Social media provides information about the security level apparatus at Agodi gardens	68(25.2%)	202(74.8%)	-	-	1.80	0.41	4 <sup>th</sup>
The reviews on social media influenced my decision to visit agodi gardens	133(49.3%)	137(50.7%)	-	-	1.40	0.51	6 <sup>th</sup>
The photos and videos of Agodi gardens on social media accurately represented the actual site.	218(80.7%)	24(8.9%)	28(10.4%)	-	2.00	0.93	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Summary					12.40	4.11	

**Source: Author Field Survey, 2024**

The table above shows that 138 respondents strongly agreed and 125 agreed that social media provides information about tourists in flow at Agodi Gardens. 103 respondents strongly agreed and 69 agreed that social media provides information about facilities at Agodi Gardens. 91 respondents strongly agreed, 81 agreed and 98 disagreed that social media provides information about different events done at Agodi Gardens. 138 respondents strongly agreed and 100 agreed that social media provides information about the employees of Agodi Gardens. 68 respondents strongly agreed and 202 agreed that social media provides information about the security level apparatus at Agodi Gardens. 133 respondents strongly agreed and 137 agreed that the reviews on social media influenced their decision to visit Agodi Gardens. 218 respondents strongly agreed and 24 respondents agreed that the photos and videos of Agodi Gardens on social media accurately represented the actual site. The indicator for the role of social media in providing information about Agodi Gardens (12.40±4.11) was rated critically based on their mean values, as follows: Social media provides information about tourist inflow at Agodi Gardens (1.60±0.51), social media provides information about facilities at Agodi Gardens (1.40±0.51), social media provides information about different events held at Agodi Gardens (1.80±0.41),



social media provides information about the employees of Agodi Gardens (2.40±0.83), social media provides information about the security level apparatus at Agodi Gardens (1.80±0.41), the reviews on social media influenced my decision to visit Agodi Gardens (1.40±0.51), and the photos and videos of Agodi Gardens on social media accurately represented the actual site (2.00±0.93).

**Table 3: Respondents responses about how retrieved information has shaped the perception of the tourists**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Rank
Social media content positively influences tourists' perceptions of Agodi gardens	151(55.9%)	119(44.1%)	-	-	1.80	0.41	4 <sup>th</sup>
How can destinations manage and control the information available to tourists to shape a positive perception of their location	53(19.6%)	212(78.5%)	5(1.9%)	-	2.20	0.41	1 <sup>st</sup>
Positive social media reviews increase tourists' likelihood of visiting Agodi gardens	189(70%)	76(28.1%)	5(1.9%)	-	1.80	0.77	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Negative comments on social media deter tourists from visiting Agodi gardens	136(50.4%)	134(49.6%)	-	-	1.40	0.51	6 <sup>th</sup>
Social media content has altered tourists planned activities at Agodi gardens	127(47%)	143(53%)	-	-	1.80	0.41	3 <sup>rd</sup>
I felt more excited about visiting Agodi gardens after seeing its portrayal on social media	121(44.8%)	149(55.2%)	-	-	1.60	0.51	5 <sup>th</sup>
Summary					10.60	2.92	

**Source: Author Field Survey, 2024**

The table above shows that 151 respondents strongly agreed and 119 agreed that social media content positively influences tourists' perceptions of Agodi Gardens. 53 strongly agreed and 212 agreed that destinations can manage and control the information available to tourists to shape a positive perception of their location. 189 respondents strongly agreed and 76 agreed that positive social media reviews increase tourists' likelihood of visiting Agodi Gardens. 136 strongly agreed and 134 agreed that negative comments on social media deter tourists from visiting Agodi Gardens. 127 strongly agreed and 143 agreed that social media content has altered tourists' planned activities at Agodi Gardens. 121 strongly agreed and 149 agreed that they felt more excited about visiting Agodi Gardens after seeing its portrayal on social media.



The indicator for the influence of social media on tourist perceptions of Agodi Gardens ( $10.60\pm 2.92$ ) was rated critically based on their mean values, as follows: Social media content positively influences tourists' perceptions of Agodi Gardens ( $1.80\pm 0.41$ ), managing and controlling the information available to tourists to shape a positive perception of their location ( $2.20\pm 0.41$ ), positive social media reviews increase tourists' likelihood of visiting Agodi Gardens ( $1.80\pm 0.77$ ), negative comments on social media deter tourists from visiting Agodi Gardens ( $1.40\pm 0.51$ ), social media content has altered tourists' planned activities at Agodi Gardens ( $1.80\pm 0.41$ ), and feeling more excited about visiting Agodi Gardens after seeing its portrayal on social media ( $1.60\pm 0.51$ ).

## Discussion

An impressively large number of the respondents (169) pointed out that tourists primarily use Facebook to find information about Agodi Gardens. Facebook is different by default, because members of the same “network” have the capacity of viewing each other’s profiles, save the owner of the profile locked his/her profile (Hussain et al., 2024). It is notable that the respondents generally found information about Agodi Gardens from facebook, Instagram, snapchat and X. While, most of the respondents didn’t find information about Agodi gardens from Telegram, whatsapp and TikTok. Islam (2021) noted that with smartphones, travel, ideas, and feedback on Facebook, Twitter, or Flickr, three-thirds of international travelers access social media platforms.

It is notable that social media has significantly helped Agodi gardens with the following based on the position of the respondents: it has helped to provide information about tourist inflow to Agodi Gardens; it has helped in providing pertinent information about the facilities at the gardens to prospective tourists; it has helped to make available relevant information about different events held in Agodi gardens; it makes it easy to access information about employees of Agodi gardens; provides information about the security on and around Agodi gardens; it has substantively influenced the decision of tourists to visit the garden. Social media has substantively improved the way travelers retrieve information that they require to make travel decision-making (Hang, 2024). The ranking shows that the most important significance of social media is that it provides information about the employees of Agodi Gardens ( $2.40\pm 0.83$ ), followed by the fact that photos and videos of Agodi Gardens on social media accurately represented the actual site ( $2.00\pm 0.93$ ), among others. With this, prospective tourists form their perception about a tourism destination based on the information evident on the social media. Moro and Rita (2018) opined that that social media's app usage by a business entity can influence the consumers perception of a brand’s product and services, for instance, customer satisfaction and purchase intentions. Filieri et al. (2020) identified the significance of user-generated reviews on TripAdvisor, stating that original feedback from other travelers helps to build trust as well as credibility, which are very important for tourism sites seeking to pull new tourists. Islam (2021) opined that social media strategies help in implementing and promoting destinations through offering of insights on markets and consumers engaged for building and changing the organization.



It is evident that the majority of the respondents noted that social media contents positively impact tourist's perceptions of Agodi Gardens. It is evident that Agodi gardens can manage and control the information available to tourists to shape a positive perception of their location. Positive social media reviews increase tourists' likelihood of visiting Agodi Gardens. Negative comments on social media deter tourists from visiting Agodi Gardens. Social media contents have altered tourists planned activities at Agodi Gardens. Majority of the respondents felt more excited about visiting Agodi Gardens after seeing its portrayal on social media. In a nutshell, most of the respondents checked social media applications for Agodi gardens before visiting the gardens and such what they saw online motivated them to travel to the destination. Some scholars asserted that Facebook plays an important role at the pre-trip phase because it makes available pertinent information useful for planning and concluding travel decisions (Jadhav et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2012). A particular category on Instagram is travel, that essentially triggers the curiosity of users as well as increase their motivation to visit specific locations (Morais et al., 2022).

### **Conclusion**

It is evident that prospective tourists collect impressive information about Agodi gardens from social media applications. The social media applications that have a lot of information about Agodi gardens are facebook, Instagram, snapchat and 'X' formerly called twitter. The information Agodi garden has on these social media applications may be information that was intentionally uploaded by the management of Agodi gardens, or they may be information that was posted by people that had visited the destination for leisure. There is therefore no doubt that social media has been significantly helpful to Agodi gardens, especially with respect to the fact that it has helped to provide information about tourist inflow to Agodi Gardens and it has helped in providing pertinent information about the facilities at the gardens to prospective tourists. Hence, the information that prospective tourists collected from social media before visiting Agodi gardens helped shaped their opinions about the destination.



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