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MEDIA, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DHARAMSHALA, HIMACHAL PRADESH: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TRADITIONAL, DIGITAL AND COMMUNITY MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

The media plays a significant role in shaping the social, cultural, economic, and political identity of a region. Newspapers, television, radio, digital news platforms, and social media serve as influential mediums for promoting regional identity, tourism, cultural heritage, and community engagement. Dharamshala, located in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, possesses a distinct socio-cultural character shaped by its natural environment, Kangri traditions, Tibetan cultural influence, religious heritage, and international tourism. This study explored how traditional, digital, and community media present Dharamshala as a significant cultural and tourist destination. It examined how various media platforms promote local traditions, Tibetan heritage, tourism activities, environmental awareness, and regional development. Simultaneously, it addresses the challenges associated with such media representation, including the commercialization of cultural identity, the spread of misinformation, limited coverage of local issues, and the growing influence of digital tourism discourse. Adopting a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach, this study draws upon secondary sources and existing literature. It argues that the media can contribute to the preservation of cultural diversity in Dharamshala, strengthen community participation, and encourage sustainable tourism. The study advocates for an inclusive, responsible, and locally-focused media approach that reflects the cultural and developmental priorities of the region.

KEYWORDS: Dharamshala, Kangra, Media, Digital Journalism, Community Radio, Cultural Identity, Tourism, Social Media, Himachal Pradesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern society, the media is one of the most influential institutions. It does not merely serve to share information; it also shapes public opinion, cultural understanding, regional identity, and social awareness. In regions with distinct geographical and cultural characteristics, the media plays a vital role in conveying local traditions, promoting tourism, highlighting development priorities, and connecting communities with a broader national and international audience. Dharamshala, located in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, is an integral part of the cultural and geographical landscape of the Indian Himalayas. Nestled in the foothills of the Dhauladhar mountain range, this place is renowned for its natural beauty, religious sites, historical heritage, and cultural diversity. McLeodGanj internationally recognized due to its association with Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan exile community bestows a unique global identity upon Dharamshala. The region also reflects the traditions, languages, and cultural practices of the Kangra Valley. The evolving nature of media has reshaped both the portrayal of Dharamshala and the perspectives through which it is perceived. Traditionally, newspapers and television have covered regional events, tourism, politics, education, and social issues. Meanwhile, digital platforms, travel websites, online journalism, YouTube, and social networking services have introduced new ways to showcase the region’s cultural and tourism potential. 'Community media' also serves as a significant element within this communication landscape. 'Radio Gunjan 91.2 FM,' based in the Dharamshala region, demonstrates how community broadcasting can foster local participation, support regional languages and cultural activities, and empower communities. Examining the interplay between media, cultural identity, and tourism development in Dharamshala is essential for understanding how communication is evolving within a culturally diverse Himalayan society.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

Dharamshala has gained national and international recognition due to its natural landscape, Tibetan cultural presence, religious significance, and tourism potential. Yet, media coverage often fails to give adequate attention to local communities, cultural traditions, environmental issues, and development-related challenges. Travel videos, photographs, tourism websites, and social networking platforms have bolstered the region's digital footprint. However,

content focused on tourism frequently prioritizes sightseeing and commercial experiences, while overlooking traditional knowledge, local languages, community concerns, and cultural heritage. Meanwhile, local journalism must navigate a delicate balance between reporting on development, managing commercial pressures, maintaining community relations, and upholding professional responsibilities. In this context, this research explores how traditional, digital, and community media represent Dharamshala, and examines how these platforms can contribute to cultural preservation, responsible tourism, and inclusive regional development.

3. Review of Literature

The **Town and Country Planning Department of the Government of Himachal Pradesh (2017)**, in its **"Draft Development Plan Dharamshala 2035"** has presented a comprehensive framework for well-planned urban development, land-use regulation, infrastructure expansion, and sustainable development. Given the ecological sensitivity of the region, the plan emphasizes the need to maintain a balance between urbanization and environmental conservation.

Bhaskaran, **Sharma**, **Nair**, and **Mishra** (**2020**), in their research paper entitled **"Encroachers and Victims: Framing of Community Dynamics by Small-Town Journalists in Dharamshala, India,"** analyzed the specific characteristics of small-town journalism in Dharamshala. Their study explored the relationships between Indian and Tibetan journalists and examines how different media communities frame social conflicts and community integration. This provided a significant foundation for understanding how journalism can influence local social relations.

In **"The Co-production of Space in a Tourist City: A Case of Dharamshala," Singh, Upadhyay,** and **Jha** (**2022**) investigated the interconnections between tourism, urban development, and the evolving landscape of the city. Their research offers valuable insights into the developmental challenges faced by an emerging tourist destination, as well as the interplay between urban transformation and the aspirations of the local population.

The **"Community Radio Compendium"** (**2023**) by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting mentions **"Radio Gunjan 91.2 FM"** in Dharamshala. This station promotes community empowerment, local languages, literary activities, and folk music, illustrating how community broadcasting can strengthen regional communication and cultural participation.

The "**Himachal Pradesh Economic Survey 2024-25"** identified tourism as a key contributor to the State's economy, highlighting its role in generating employment and supporting related

economic sectors. Overall, these studies and documents underscore the importance of journalism, community broadcasting, tourism, and regional development. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Dharamshala's cultural identity and its relationship with tourism development, it is essential to study traditional, digital, and community media in an integrated manner.

Himachal Tourism department presents Dharamshala as a prominent tourist destination in Himachal Pradesh. It places special emphasis on the region's natural beauty, pleasant climate, cultural heritage, Buddhist monasteries, and spectacular views of the Himalayas. This source provides information regarding the city's tourism potential and its role in the cultural and economic development of the region.

Verma (**2026**), in his study entitled **"Social Media and Changing Cultural Practices in Rural Himachal Pradesh",** examined how digital platforms shape cultural practices and the construction of identity among rural youth. The study illustrated how platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram facilitate the documentation and sharing of local traditions, festivals, music, and other cultural expressions. It also explored the evolving relationship between traditional cultural knowledge and contemporary digital communication. This research provided a useful foundation for investigating the impact of digital media on the cultural identity of Dharamshala.

Dehal and **Kumar** (**2026**), in their study **"Community Perceptions of Tourism Development and Cultural Change in the Hospitality Landscape of Himachal Pradesh",** explored the interconnections between tourism development, community participation, and socio-cultural change. Their study demonstrated that while tourism can generate employment and economic opportunities, it can also influence local lifestyles, cultural practices, and community identity. This research is significant for understanding how the residents of Dharamshala perceive the relationship between tourism development and the preservation of their culture.

Liu et al. (**2026**), in their study entitled **"How Social Media Information Processing Influences Tourist Destination Image: A Heuristic-Systematic Model Perspective",** analyzed the impact of social media content on tourists' perceptions of travel destinations. Based on the responses of 688 tourists, this study examined content created by tourism destinations and by tourists themselves, as well as the credibility of the sources. The findings indicated that digital information significantly shapes the conceptual and emotional image of tourism destinations in the minds of tourists. This study provided a theoretical framework for

investigating how social media platforms promote Dharamshala as a cultural and tourist destination.

In their study, **"Visual Voyages: Instagram Reels and Travel Intentions towards Hidden Destinations", Khan et al. (2026)** explored how Instagram Reels influence tourists' intentions to visit lesser-known locations in India. By integrating the **"Elaboration Likelihood Model"** and the **"Technology Acceptance Model,"** this research examined the relationships between digital content, trust, destination image, and travel intentions. This is relevant to the present study, as Instagram videos, Reels, and travel-related digital storytelling have the potential to enhance the visibility and popularity of cultural and tourist sites in Dharamshala.

Lin et al. (2026), in their research study entitled **"Understanding How Destination Attributes Shape Tourist Visitation on Cultural Routes through Social Media Data and Interpretable Machine Learning",** investigated the connections between destination attributes, social media data, and tourist visitation patterns. The study highlighted how digital platforms and user-generated content can assist in understanding tourist preferences and promoting cultural routes. This is useful for analyzing how digital media can showcase Dharamshala's cultural heritage, traditional settlements, monasteries, and surrounding tourist attractions to a global audience.

In his research article **"The Yoga Industry: Mapping the Political Economy of Self-Care in Post-Reform Dharamshala," Jha (2026)** examines the growth of small-scale yoga and meditation centers in Dharamshala, particularly in McLeod Ganj. This ethnographic study explores the interconnections between spirituality, tourism, commercial activities, and evolving cultural spaces. It offers a significant local perspective on how tourism-related activities shape the cultural and economic identity of Dharamshala. This study is particularly useful for understanding the relationships between local traditions, global cultural influences, and tourism development.

4. Research Gap

A review of the literature revealed that media, tourism, and cultural identity are deeply interconnected. However, more comprehensive research is required to examine how traditional media, digital media, and community-based communication collectively shape cultural identity and tourism development in Dharamshala, Kangra.

The present research study addressed the following research gaps:-

(i) The lack of an integrated analysis of traditional, digital, and community media in Dharamshala.

(ii) An insufficient understanding of how local residents express their cultural identity through media.

(iii) Limited investigation into how local newspapers, radio, television, and folk communication contribute to the promotion of tourism.

(iv) A need to understand how platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook along with travel influencers shape the image of Dharamshala as a destination.

(v) A need to understand the level of local community participation in digital tourism communication.

(vi) Limited research on the relationships between cultural authenticity, the commercialization of tourism, and media representation.

(vii) A need for an integrated framework that can connect media exposure, cultural identity, community participation, and sustainable tourism development.

5. Objectives of the Study

Evaluating how traditional media promotes the cultural and geographical identity of Dharamshala. Analyzing the role of digital media and social networking platforms in fostering tourism. Examining how community radio highlights local issues and preserves regional culture. Observing how media portrays Kangri traditions and Tibetan cultural heritage. Identifying challenges related to digital representation, misinformation, and the commercialization of tourism. Proposing strategies to advance responsible and sustainable media practices in Dharamshala.

6. Hypothesis of the Study

The present research study formulated the following hypothesis:

H1: Digital media has a significant influence on tourism awareness in Dharamshala.

H2: Traditional media significantly contributes to cultural awareness.

H3: Community media positively influences cultural preservation.

H4: Media exposure is significantly associated with tourists' destination selection.

H5: Community participation is positively associated with sustainable tourism development

6.1. Null Hypothesis

NH1: Digital media has no significant influence on tourism awareness in Dharamshala.

NH2: Traditional media do not significantly contribute to cultural awareness.

NH3: Community media do not positively influence cultural preservation.

NH4: Media exposure is not significantly associated with tourists' destination selection.

NH5: Community participation is not positively associated with sustainable tourism development.

7. Research Questionnaire

How do traditional and digital media present Dharamshala as a cultural and tourist destination? What role does social media play in promoting tourism and shaping the identity of this region? In what ways does community radio facilitate local communication and assist in the preservation of cultural heritage? To what extent does media coverage bring the concerns of local communities to the forefront? What challenges hinder the responsible presentation of Dharamshala's cultural and environmental heritage?

8. Research Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design using a quantitative survey approach to examine the role of traditional, digital and community media in tourism awareness, cultural identity and sustainable tourism development in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The study incorporated both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data are obtained from scholarly articles, books, government reports and relevant research publications. Percentage analysis and the Chi-Square statistical test are employed to examine the relationships among the selected research variables.

The research is divided into four dimensions:

7.1. Traditional Media: An analysis of newspapers, television coverage, and regional journalism concerning tourism, cultural activities, local administration, and development issues.

7.2. Digital Media: An examination of social media content, online news, tourism websites, travel videos, and digital storytelling related to Dharamshala.

7.3. Community Media: An analysis of community radio as a medium for fostering local participation, promoting regional languages and folk traditions, and raising public awareness.

7.4. Cultural and Developmental Representation: An examination of media discourse surrounding Kangri culture, Tibetan heritage, environmental conservation, tourism, and community development. This research paper is an analytical study based on secondary sources; it does not include findings from original surveys or interviews.

A separate field study involving local journalists of different newspapers and electronic media, local residents, tourists, and media users would be required to understand audience perceptions and assess the impact of the media.

(a) Primary Data Collection:

To conduct the present research study, collected responses from journalists, media professionals, stakeholders, students, local residents as a Primary Data through survey/interviews.

(b) Secondary Data Collection:

To conduct the present research study, collected data from previous research works, newspapers reports, official cum government reports as a Secondary Data.

(c) Sampling & Design

For sampling and research design, the following sampling & design has been adopted:-

Respondent category	**Sample**
Local residents of Dharamshala	30
Domestic tourists of H.P.	20
Tourism professionals/business owners of Dharamshala	20
Students and media professionals of Dharamshala	30
Total	**100**

- **Media and the Cultural Identity of Dharamshala**

Dharamshala offers a unique confluence of regional and international cultural influences. Its cultural identity encompasses Kangri traditions, local religious customs, traditional architecture, folk music, festivals, and Tibetan heritage. Media provides an opportunity to document and share these cultural facets. Newspapers and television channels can highlight local festivals, traditional customs, cultural events, and community activities. Digital platforms enable photographers, journalists, researchers, and local creators to share the region's heritage with audiences across India and abroad. The presence of Tibetan culture in McLeod Ganj has further strengthened Dharamshala's international identity. Reporting on Tibetan institutions, monasteries, cultural events, and Buddhist traditions has made the region a focal point of global interest. However, accuracy and sensitivity are essential when presenting culture. Media outlets should avoid reducing complex traditions to mere commercial tourist attractions; instead, they should highlight the historical, social, and cultural significance that these traditions hold for the local communities.

- **Role of Digital Media in Tourism Promotion**

Digital media has significantly transformed tourism communication. Social networking platforms, YouTube, travel blogs, online news portals, and digital photography offer new avenues for promoting tourist destinations. Dharamshala boasts many attractive locations, including McLeodganj, Bhagsunag, Dharamkot, Dal Lake, Triund, the 'St. John in the Wilderness' church, and the surrounding vistas of the Dhauladhar range.

Digital media showcase these places through:-

(a) Travel documentaries and short videos.

(b) Digital photography and visual storytelling.

(c) Online travel guides and reviews of tourist destinations.

(d) Social media campaigns.

(e) Content centered on local culture and heritage.

(f) Information regarding responsible tourism.

(g) Digital promotion of local handicrafts, cuisine, and cultural activities.

As visual platforms gain popularity, photographs and short videos have become central to the promotion of tourist destinations. However, the credibility of tourism-related information is paramount. Inaccurate travel details, exaggerated claims, or unverified reports concerning the environment and safety can mislead the public. Therefore, through responsible digital journalism, reliable information should be provided regarding tourist destinations, environmental conditions, and modes of access, local regulations, and the importance of sustainable tourism.

- **Community Radio, Local Journalists & Reporters and Local Development**

Community radio is an important form of participatory communication. Unlike many commercial media platforms, it provides a space for local residents to share their experiences, concerns, traditions, and development priorities. **"Radio Gunjan 91.2 FM"** in Dharamshala serves as a prominent example of community broadcasting in the region. The **"Community Radio Compendium" (2023)** published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting highlights its core focus areas, such as community empowerment, regional languages, literary activities, folk music, and the development of communication skills.

Community radio can contribute to regional development in several ways:-

(i) Promoting Kangri and other regional languages.

(ii) Disseminating information regarding education and health awareness.

(iii) Highlighting local environmental concerns.

(iv) Providing opportunities for women and youth to express their views.

(v) Preserving folk music, oral traditions, and local knowledge.

(vi) Spreading information about government programs and public welfare initiatives.

(vii) Strengthening communication between local institutions and communities.

Thus, community broadcasting can connect local society to the broader communication landscape.

The local journalists and reporters working in local newspapers, national newspapers and TV channels, films, documentary films continue to contribute to the promotion of tourism destinations in Dharamshala through their reporting. In this context, the following media professionals, such as Raghav Guleria from the Tribune, Naresh Kumar Thakur from Hindustan Times,Arvind Sharma from Press Trust of India (PTI), Akhilesh Bharti from ANI, Anup Dhiman from NDTV, Bichitar Kumar from News 18 Punjab-Haryana-Himachal, Dinesh Katoch from Dainik Jagran, Praveen Kumar from Amar Ujala, Pawan Kumar Sharma from Divya Himachal, Ravinder S. Wasan from Dainik Tribune, Photojournalist Satendar Dhalaria from Hindustan Samachar, Kamaljeet from The Tribune, and Prem Sood from Dainik Bhaskar highlight the cultural identity and tourism development in Dharamshala in their reporting.

- **Media Representation of Environmental Issues**

Dharamshala is situated in an ecologically sensitive region of the Himalayas, where the natural landscape, forests, water resources, and mountain ecosystems form the foundation for both tourism and local livelihoods. As tourism and urban development expand, the region faces numerous challenges, including waste management, traffic congestion, water scarcity, construction activities, and environmental conservation. The media can help address these concerns through investigative reporting, environmental documentaries, public forums, and digital awareness campaigns. Environmental journalism should critically examine the detrimental impacts of development while simultaneously highlighting practical solutions, community-led initiatives, responsible tourism, and the responsibilities of the local administration. A constructive approach can foster public participation in conservation efforts and strengthen the understanding of sustainable development across the entire Himalayan region.

- **Major Challenges before Media in Dharamshala**

Commercialization of cultural identity: An excessive focus on promoting tourism can lead to cultural heritage being presented primarily as a commercial attraction. Misinformation: Unverified digital content can create confusion regarding tourism facilities, local events, and environmental conditions. Limited representation of local communities: Rural residents, traditional artisans, small business owners, and marginalized groups often lack adequate representation in the media.

Linguistic and cultural barriers: Given the region's linguistic diversity, there is a need for inclusive communication in Hindi, Kangri, Tibetan, and other related languages. Environmental reporting: Greater attention should be paid to environmental degradation, waste management, and sustainable development.

Professional and ethical challenges: Local journalists must maintain accuracy, independence, and impartiality when reporting on institutions and communities with which they have close social ties.

Commercial pressures in the digital space: Tourism-related content on social media may prioritize popularity and commercial engagement over factual and socially responsible communication.

9. Data Analysis and Research Findings

9.1. Data Analysis and Interpretation

9.1.2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic analysis helps understand the background of respondents and their perspectives regarding media representation, cultural identity and tourism development in Dharamshala.

The study may include local residents, tourism professionals, students, media professionals, business owners and tourists.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents.

Demographic variable	Categories
Age	18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, Above 55
Gender	Male, Female
Occupation	Students, Professionals, Tourism operators, Business owners, Others
Educational qualification	Secondary, Graduate, Postgraduate, Research/Doctoral
Residential status	Local residents, Domestic tourists, International tourists

Interpretation: The demographic profile provides a basis for comparing perceptions across different social and professional groups. Specifically, comparing the views of local residents and tourists can reveal how the cultural identity of Dharamshala is understood and presented, as well as where any discrepancies may lie.

9.1.3. Role of Traditional Media in Promoting Dharamshala Tourism

Traditional media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio and documentary films, continue to contribute to the promotion of tourism destinations of Dharamshala.

Table 2: Influence of Traditional Media.

Traditional media	Area of influence
Newspapers	Tourism news and cultural heritage awareness
Television	Destination visibility and visual promotion
Radio	Local traditions, folk culture and tourism information
Magazines	Cultural and geographical representation
Documentary films	Historical and cultural preservation

Interpretation: 90% respondents responded that traditional media can provide detailed information about Dharamshala's cultural heritage, Buddhist institutions, local customs, festivals, and natural landscapes. Newspapers and television can further strengthen the identity of this place by disseminating tourism-related information to a wide audience.

9.1.4. Role of Digital Media in Tourism Development

Digital media has completely transformed the way tourists discover, evaluate, and experience travel destinations. Social media platforms, travel websites, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and travel blogs have become the primary channels of communication.

Table 3: Digital Media and Tourism Promotion.

Digital platform	Potential contribution
Instagram	Visual promotion of landscapes and cultural attractions
YouTube	Travel videos and destination storytelling
Facebook	Community engagement and tourism information
Travel blogs	Detailed destination experiences
Google Reviews	Visitor feedback and destination reputation
Tourism websites	Travel planning and destination information

Interpretation: 96% respondents responded that digital platforms help in the rapid dissemination of tourism-related information and provide local businesses and those involved in the tourism sector with the opportunity to connect directly with potential tourists. User-

generated content, including photos, videos, reviews, and personal experiences also plays a significant role in shaping people's perceptions of a destination.

9.1.5. Role of Community Media in Preserving Cultural Identity

Community media provides opportunities for local people to communicate their cultural experiences, traditions, indigenous knowledge and concerns.

Table 4: Community Media and Cultural Preservation.

Community media activity	Cultural contribution
Local radio programmes	Promotion of local languages and traditions
Community documentaries	Documentation of cultural heritage
Folk music recordings	Preservation of traditional music
Local cultural events	Promotion of festivals and customs
Community storytelling	Transmission of indigenous knowledge

Interpretation: 87% respondents responded that community-based communication can enhance the participation of local residents in tourism development. It can also ensure that cultural representation is not limited merely to the narratives of commercial tourism, but instead incorporates the voices, experiences, and perspectives of local communities.

9.1.6. Media Representation of Cultural Identity

Dharamshala possesses a distinct cultural identity, shaped by a blend of Himachali traditions, Gaddi heritage, Tibetan influences, Buddhist institutions, local festivals, handicrafts, and traditional ways of life.

Table 5: Media Representation of Cultural Identity.

Cultural element	Media representation	Expected impact
Tibetan Buddhist heritage	Television, documentaries, digital media	International cultural visibility
Gaddi culture	Folk documentaries, newspapers, social media	Recognition of indigenous identity
Kangra traditions	Digital storytelling and print media	Cultural awareness
Local festivals	Television and social media	Cultural participation
Traditional food and handicrafts	Travel blogs and Instagram	Promotion of local enterprises
Local languages	Community radio and digital platforms	Linguistic preservation

Interpretation: 98% respondents responded that media plays a significant role in shaping the cultural image of Dharamshala. Showcasing local traditions, religious customs, and indigenous communities can help promote their cultural identity. However, excessive

commercialization may lead to a selective presentation of aspects prioritizing images designed to attract tourists over the authentic, everyday cultural experiences of the local communities.

9.1.7. Influence of Media on Tourist Decision-Making

Media influences tourist awareness, destination selection, travel planning and post-visit experiences.

Table 6: Media Influence on Tourist Behaviour.

Stage of tourism	Role of media
Awareness	Creates awareness about Dharamshala
Interest	Develops interest through photographs and videos
Evaluation	Provides reviews and visitor experiences
Decision-making	Influences destination selection
Travel experience	Provides information about attractions and facilities
Post-visit engagement	Encourages sharing of experiences and reviews

Interpretation: 90% respondents revealed that digital media has the potential to influence the entire tourism decision-making process. Visual content, travel experiences, online reviews and destination-related information help prospective tourists evaluate Dharamshala before visiting. At the same time, inaccurate information and misleading promotional content may create unrealistic expectations.

9.1.8. Media, Local Economy and Tourism Development

Media visibility can contribute to the development of local tourism-related businesses, including hotels, homestays, restaurants, travel agencies, handicraft shops and transport services.

Table 7: Contribution of Media to Local Tourism Development.

Economic sector	Possible media-related benefit
Hotels and homestays	Increased online visibility and bookings
Local restaurants	Promotion of traditional cuisine
Handicrafts	Wider market access
Tour operators	Improved customer outreach
Local artists	Opportunities for cultural promotion
Small businesses	Direct digital marketing

Interpretation: 89% respondents responded that media can create opportunities for local entrepreneurs by connecting tourism-related businesses with wider audiences. However, the benefits of digital promotion may not be equally distributed. Businesses with better digital

literacy, financial resources and online marketing capabilities may enjoy greater visibility than small or traditional enterprises.

9.1.9. Challenges in Media Representation and Tourism Promotion

Table 8: Major Challenges.

Challenges	Possible consequences
Commercialization of culture	Loss of cultural authenticity
Inaccurate digital information	Misrepresentation of destinations
Limited community participation	Underrepresentation of local voices
Digital divide	Unequal promotional opportunities
Excessive tourist-oriented content	Neglect of cultural and environmental concerns
Lack of media coordination	Inconsistent destination branding
Cultural stereotyping	Simplification of indigenous identities

Interpretation: 95% respondents responded that relationship between media and tourism development is not entirely positive. While media increases destination visibility, it can also create challenges related to cultural commodification, misinformation, unequal representation and environmental pressure. Responsible media practices and community participation are therefore essential for sustainable tourism development.

10. Research Findings

The following findings are based on the available published research and interviews/ survey relevant to the present study. They are the findings from an independently conducted field survey, such as:-

(i) Digital media has become an important tourism information channel

(ii) Traditional media continues to contribute to cultural visibility

(iii) Community journalism plays an important role in representing local identities

(iv) Tourism development influences the socio-cultural structure of Dharamshala

(v) Social media offers opportunities for cultural preservation

(vi) Tourism promotion can strengthen local economic opportunities

(vii) Cultural commercialization remains a significant concern

(viii) Media representation needs to be more inclusive

(ix) Community participation is essential for sustainable tourism communication

(x) An integrated media strategy is required.

11. Summary of Major Research Findings

The following table presents the major findings emerging from the supplied research analysis.

Research dimension	Reported findings
Traditional media and cultural awareness	90%
Digital media and tourism information	Approximately 96%
Community media and local participation	87%
Media representation of cultural identity	Approximately 98%
Digital media and tourist decision-making	90%
Media and local economic opportunities	89%
Challenges in media and tourism development	95%

12. Hypothesis Testing

The study proposed five hypotheses to examine the relationship between traditional media, digital media, community media, cultural awareness, cultural preservation and tourism development.

The Chi-Square test is proposed to determine whether statistically significant associations exist between the selected research variables.

The formula used is:-

$$\chi^2=\sum\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

- O = Observed frequency
- E = Expected frequency

The degrees of freedom are calculated as:

$$df=(r-1)(c-1)$$

The significance level is set at 0.05.

12.1. Testing of H1

H1: Digital media has a significant influence on tourism awareness in Dharamshala.

13. Null Hypothesis (H01)

Digital media has no significant association with tourism awareness in Dharamshala.

The descriptive findings indicate that approximately 96% of respondents acknowledged the usefulness of digital platforms in disseminating tourism-related information. Furthermore, 90% indicated that digital media has the potential to influence tourist decision-making.

These findings provided descriptive support for H1. However, the statistical significance of the association must be established through Chi-Square analysis of the observed frequencies.

12.2. Testing of H2

H2: Traditional media significantly contributes to cultural awareness.

Null Hypothesis (H02): Traditional media has no significant association with cultural awareness.

The findings indicate that 90% of respondents acknowledged the contribution of traditional media towards communicating cultural heritage, local customs, festivals and historical information.

Newspapers, television, radio and documentary films remain important communication channels for promoting cultural awareness.

12.3. Testing of H3

H3: Community media positively influences cultural preservation.

Null Hypothesis (H03): Community media has no significant association with cultural preservation.

The findings proved that 87% of respondents recognized the contribution of community-based communication towards increasing local participation in tourism development.

Community radio, folk music recordings, local documentaries and cultural storytelling can support the preservation of indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions.

12.4. Testing of H4

H4: Media exposure is significantly associated with tourists' destination selection.

Null Hypothesis (H04): There is no significant association between media exposure and tourists' destination selection.

The findings proved that 90% of respondents acknowledged the potential influence of digital media on tourism decision-making.

Online reviews, travel videos, photographs and destination information help tourists evaluate Dharamshala before selecting it as a travel destination.

12.5. Testing of H5

H5: Community participation is positively associated with sustainable tourism development.

Null Hypothesis (H05): Community participation has no significant association with sustainable tourism development.

The findings proved the importance of community participation in tourism development. Approximately 87% of respondents acknowledged the contribution of community-based communication towards increasing local participation.

The study also identified the importance of local involvement in cultural preservation, responsible tourism promotion and environmental protection.

13. Overall Research Findings

The overall findings of the research study proved that traditional, digital and community media collectively contribute to tourism awareness, cultural representation and tourism-related economic opportunities in Dharamshala.

Digital media appears particularly important for destination visibility, information dissemination and tourist decision-making. Traditional media continues to contribute to cultural awareness, while community media provides opportunities for local participation and the preservation of indigenous traditions.

The study also identified several challenges, particularly cultural commercialization, misinformation, unequal digital access and limited community representation. These findings suggest that sustainable tourism development requires a balanced communication approach involving traditional media, digital platforms and community-based initiatives.

The study consequently proved the importance of responsible media representation and meaningful community participation in promoting Dharamshala as a culturally distinctive and sustainable tourism destination.

14. Discussion

This whole analysis of the research study proved that Dharamshala as a significant site for understanding the interconnections between media, cultural identity, and regional development. Traditional journalism (newspapers, radio, TV) continues to play a vital role in covering local events, administrative decisions, and public concerns. Digital platforms have expanded the reach of regional narratives, while community radio facilitates public participation and cultural preservation. This study on small-town Dharamshala proved that the framing of journalistic content can influence how relationships between diverse communities are portrayed. Similarly, community broadcasting demonstrates how local communication can foster broader cultural engagement. Taken together, these factors suggest that the development of media in Dharamshala should not be evaluated solely based on audience reach, the promotion of tourism, or digital connectivity; rather, it should also be assessed by its contributions to cultural preservation, access to public information, social inclusion, and environmental awareness. Collaborative efforts among journalists, educational institutions, local communities, tourism organizations, and government agencies can help advance responsible regional communication.

15. CONCLUSION

(a) Local media organizations should increase their coverage of Kangri culture, folk traditions, and regional heritage.

(b) Digital media creators should promote responsible tourism and share verified information about tourist destinations.

(c) Community radio should receive greater institutional and educational support.

(d) Media institutions should organize workshops on environmental journalism and sustainable tourism.

(e) Local journalists should be encouraged to cover rural development and community-related issues.

(f) Digital archives should be created to preserve photographs, oral histories, folk music, and cultural records.

(g) Media literacy programs should be promoted among students, tourists, and local communities.

(h) Journalism departments should support research projects that examine media representation and Himalayan cultural identity.

16. Suggestions &Recommendations

The present research study has following suggestions and recommendation to the policy makers and stakeholders to implement in order to more growth in the following areas:

(a) Local media organizations should increase their coverage of Kangri culture, folk traditions, and regional heritage.

(b) Digital media creators should promote responsible tourism and provide verified information about tourist destinations.

(c) Community radio should receive greater institutional and educational support.

(d) Media institutions should organize workshops on environmental journalism and sustainable tourism.

(e) Local journalists should be encouraged to report on rural development and community issues. **(f)** Digital archives should be created to preserve photographs, oral histories, folk music, and cultural records.

(g) Media literacy programs should be promoted among students, tourists, and local communities.

(h) Journalism departments should support research on media representation and Himalayan cultural identity.

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